

**AGENDA ITEM:**

<b>REPORT TO:</b> Meeting of the	<b>MERSEYSIDE FIRE &amp; RESCUE AUTHORITY</b>
<b>DATE:</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> SEPTEMBER, 2013</b>
<b>REPORT NO.</b>	<b>CFO/102/13</b>
<b>REPORTING OFFICER:</b>	<b>DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE</b>
<b>CONTACT OFFICER:</b>	<b>DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE, KIERAN TIMMINS, EXT. 4202</b>
<b>OFFICERS CONSULTED:</b>	
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>A STRATEGIC OVERVIEW OF ESTATES – IDENTIFICATION OF KEY PRIORITIES</b>

**APPENDIX A                      TITLE                      A STRATEGIC REVIEW OF ESTATES**

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Purpose of Report

1. To review the property portfolio of the Authority and to make recommendations for savings in the light of the forecast significant reductions in funding. (These are discussed in more detail in report CFO/103/13, elsewhere on the Agenda.

Recommendation

2. It is recommended that Members note the report and :-
  - (i) Approve the recommendations as set out on page 21 and 22 of Appendix A, specifically;

**Recommendations**

- 1) The Authority must identify strategic mergers that allow operational response to be maintained whilst improving community and firefighter facilities and reducing costs.

Having assessed the location of the newer stations and the operational response needs of the service the Chief Fire Officer has identified that the two key geographic options where strategic mergers should be considered following consultation are:-

a) Wirral:

Merging West Kirby and Upton to create a much improved station with extensive community facilities at Greasby, which would allow response standards to be maintained whilst improving the capability for community partnerships.

In addition, consideration might be given to the opportunities for the future development of Heswall. This site is commercially attractive and working with private/public partners may create opportunities to improve facilities or relocate services.

b) St Helens and Knowsley:

Members have already approved in principle the working up of a feasibility study for the merger of Huyton and Whiston fire stations at Prescott. There are a number of merger options to be considered across St Helen's and Knowsley including Huyton/Whiston, St Helens/Eccleston or Whiston/Eccleston

The Chief Fire Officer will report back with detailed proposals on how to take these recommendations forward.

- 2) For all stations the aim should be to encourage partners to create community hubs and to share costs, reduce wasted space and provide better facilities. Reserves should be used for invest to save schemes which deliver longer revenue streams from partners.
- 3) The Authority should sensibly invest in small scale works that would improve fire-fighter and community facilities at older stations in the short term. £0.5m of the capital investment reserve should be set aside to support those works.
- 4) The CFO should review the facilities at the TDA and report in full on what improvements and investments are required to ensure firefighter safety.
- 5) The following key projects will also be progressed:-

Plans are in place to **improve LLAR accommodation facilities** at Newton and Formby where additional land has been acquired and accommodation blocks will be built on site.

The new Joint Command and Control Centre with the police (including the refurbishment of HQ and the development of a new secondary MACC) is a major multi million pound project. Much of the focus of estates (and other support teams) will be on the delivery of this by May 2014 target.

A number of other **mid-scale projects** are already planned:

- Replace diesel tanks
- 5 year electrical testing
- Upton Training Tower
- Kensington Training Tower
- Demolish Claires Building at Liverpool City Community station

(ii) Request the Chief Fire Officer to report back with detailed proposals on :-

- (a) Options for Station mergers in Wirral
- (b) Options for Station mergers in St Helens and Knowsley
- (c) The future investment in the Training and Development Academy (TDA)

### Introduction & Background

3. Merseyside faces an unprecedented financial challenge for the foreseeable future, that will inevitably see the Service contract further despite the reduction from 42 fire appliances to 28 as a result of the cuts due to CSR 10.
4. Work has been undertaken to review the Authority's built estate, and a full report is attached as Appendix A.
5. The review assesses the estate under the following key headings :-
  - (a) Locations and Community Risk
  - (b) Comparison with other Fire and Rescue Services
  - (c) Building condition
  - (d) Operational response
  - (e) Fire Stations as Community Hubs
  - (f) Financial Implicationsand makes recommendations for the focus of future work.
6. Further reports will be brought back for the Authority to consider with detailed proposals. Any changes to station disposition would be subject to full public consultation.
7. Any changes recommended would ensure that our stations and facilities:
  - become more accessible to the public
  - Overcome problems with the existing site/ building which would be beneficial to users with a disability.
  - Fulfil our statutory duty under the Single Equality Act by bringing our stations/ buildings up to modern build standards with regard to access and facilities.
  - Improve the arrangements for female firefighters.

### Equality & Diversity Implications

8. Of Merseyside's building stock, about half are newer buildings, which are open and accessible to the community. The remainder are in poorer condition, and do not meet modern standards.
9. It is hoped that any building projects would deliver the same level of community regeneration that was delivered at the Toxteth Firefit Hub and is being delivered at the JCC (8 apprenticeships per site). A preferred sustainability partner will be procured to support all future projects.
10. Any relocation of stations would potentially have an impact on communities served.

### Staff Implications

11. The aim of this report is to deliver excellent buildings for all staff, that are in the best possible locations to support operational response.

### Legal Implications

12. None immediately arising out of this report. However, as work progresses there may need to be leases and/ or other property transactions drawn up.

### Financial Implications & Value for Money

13. The current operating cost of the estate is approximately £3.3m per annum. Total debt servicing costs are about £6m pa. Inroads into these costs cannot be made without reducing the asset base.

### Risk Management, Health & Safety, and Environmental Implications

14. Newer buildings provide a safer environment for Firefighters and "greener" buildings.

### Contribution to Our Mission – To Achieve; Safer Stronger Communities – Safe Effective Firefighters

15. Fire stations are valued community assets. As buildings and training locations, they are vital for maintaining Firefighter safety and effectiveness.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Strategic Overview of Estates (App A)

**\*Glossary of Terms**