

## MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

MEETING OF THE:	POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE		
DATE:	1 <sup>ST</sup> APRIL 2014	REPORT NO:	CFO/032/14
PRESENTING OFFICER	DEPUTY CHIEF FIRE OFFICER		
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	DEB APPLETON	REPORT AUTHOR:	WENDY KENYON
OFFICERS CONSULTED:	WENDY KENYON STEWART WOODS STRATEGIC EQUALITY MEMBERS		
TITLE OF REPORT:	ACCESS AUDIT REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ESTATES WORK		

APPENDICES:	APPENDIX 1:	ACCESS AUDIT SUMMARY
	APPENDIX 2:	ACCESS AUDIT COST BY PRIORITY & DISTRICT
	APPENDIX 3:	COST SUMMARY BY TYPE
	APPENDIX 4:	AUDIT COST SCHEDULE -2013
	APPENDIX 5:	ACCESS AUDIT – KIRKBY STATION.
	APPENDIX 6:	PROPOSED SCHEDULE OF PRIORITY 1 AND FEMALE FF WORK TO BE CARRIED OUT

### Purpose of Report

1. To provide Members with a brief summary of the recent Access Audits carried out across 22 Stations and to provide Members with the necessary information for decisions to be made about what improvement work should be completed, by when and at what cost.

### Recommendation

2. That Members;
  - a) approve the work required to make improvements for Female Firefighter facilities (changing and washing facilities) as highlighted in Appendices 1, 2 & 3, starting with those stations that currently have female Firefighters in post. This work is deemed a priority to be completed commencing April 2014
  - b) approve the Priority 1 work highlighted in Appendix 6 which also lists the recommended phasing for works across stations. This work is deemed to be a priority for 2014/15 estates work streams.
  - c) approve specific additional work recommended from Priority 2,3 and 4 as deemed appropriate by Estates Manager (e.g. Signage) highlighted in Appendix 2
  - d) note that costs are budgeted figures (already contained within existing budgets) based on industry guides and best value will be obtained in accordance with MFRS standing orders.
  - e) agree that ongoing monitoring of the access audit work will be reported by the Estates

Manager as part of the Estates Equality and Diversity action plan quarterly progress report, discussed at Strategic Equality Group meetings.

## **Introduction and Background**

3. This report provides a summary of the 22 Access audit reports produced by David Trowler Associates and provides recommendations on the priorities for work to be completed. The Access audit report is summarised in the following documents:
- **Appendix 1** Overall Access Summary report for 22 stations audited showing what is accessible in relation to :
    - Public enquiries access
    - Safe Haven access
    - Meeting room access
    - Female Firefighter facilities
    - Corporate signage
    - Access to the building, Internal circulation, toilets, employee facilities and communal facilities
  - **Appendix 2** provides an overall Summary of the priorities for access improvement and costs. The priorities are as follows:
    - **Priority 1** – Work required to ensure the services are accessible to the public. These are improvements that will assist in complying with Equality Act 2010 (essential )
    - **Priority 2** - Improvements to overcome problems with existing site/building which would be beneficial to users with impairment, but not required by Equality Act 2010 (improvement )
    - **Priority 3** – Recommendations considered best practice or to suit a potential future employee. Best practice is considered to be work that is not required to fulfil a statutory duty but which would bring the item/area concerned up to a modern standard with regard to access /facilities
    - **Priority 4** - Recommendations affecting accommodation only used by operational personnel.
    - **Recommendations about Facilities for Female Firefighters- Operational only**
  - **Appendix 3** provides an overall cost summary by access type
  - **Appendix 4** provides information on the standardised costing schedule
  - **Appendix 5** gives an example of a full access audit report for information purposes only (Kirkby fire station)
  - **Appendix 6** is a revised schedule of Priority 1 works using a number of weightings to establish the overall importance and priority for works required. Consideration has been given to the following :
    - Whether the station is one of the 10 Key stations

- Whether the station is in a district with limited up to date community facilities
  - Whether the Station is likely to be subject to Merger or Closures
  - Utilisation of station for partnerships and community work
4. No PFI stations have been audited as access for all was an integral part of the design of these new community fire stations. Not only do the PFI designs comply with legislative requirements for accessibility, they embody the spirit of inclusion, helping the Service in its goal to attract a more inclusive workforce and engage with the entire community, including hard-to-reach groups.
  5. PFI Stations have been included in the attached summary reports only to highlight districts which have fully compliant PFI stations within them.
  6. The standardised audit cost schedule has been produced in line with industry 'rule of thumb guides' and is for budget purposes only. Best value will be obtained in accordance with MFRS standing orders.
  7. The government has announced yet further funding cuts for 2015/16 and intends to continue cutting beyond this. The current forecast is that the Authority will face a significant deficit. The Estates strategy document has highlighted and Authority Members have already approved in principle, the working up of a feasibility studies for station mergers. Works resulting from the access audits should be scheduled taking cognizance of these feasibility studies and the volume of community use at each station.
  8. An access audit is being arranged for the JCC / SHQ refurbishment project to ensure that the building is assessed for access to achieve the same standard as all other buildings/stations. Outcomes of the report will be shared with SMG members in due course
  9. Any new requests for community groups to access stations that require priority 1 access works to take place will be monitored and discussed with Diversity Consultation Manager and District Managers on a case by case basis, until all stations are fully accessible.
  10. District Managers will be given electronic copies of the access audits for their Districts to help manage their community usage on stations that require access work.

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#### **Equality and Diversity Implications**

11. Access Audits are positive in relation to Equality and Diversity as they help to improve our understanding about the issues that the disabled community may face when accessing our buildings and services. It has also considered the needs of Female Firefighters in relation to basic washing, sleeping and changing facilities.

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#### **Staff Implications**

12. The impact of the Access Audit work will be positive on staff across the Service as buildings and stations will be upgraded to make them more accessible, especially for Disabled staff and Female Firefighters.

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#### **Legal Implications**

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13. The Equality Act 2010 makes clear that public organisations should review their services in relation to the needs of the 9 protected groups (Age, Disability, Gender, Race, Religion & Belief, Transgender, Sexual Orientation, Marriage and Civil Partnerships, Sex/Gender and Pregnancy and Maternity). This also includes access arrangements to community based services. The Access Audit helps to assess access to those buildings and services for Disabled people.
14. **Please note that the Audit report refers to DDA (Disability Discrimination Act) which has been superseded by the Equality Act 2010.**

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#### **Financial Implications & Value for Money**

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15. The current 5 year capital budget has a provision of £139,000 for Equality Act works, £89,000 for 13/14 with the remaining £50,000 over the period 2013/14 to 2017/18.
16. A reserve of £510,000 for Equality Act works was approved in CFO/080/13 from the under spend in Year End 2012/13.
17. Whilst no major capital refurbishments have been planned until feasibility studies are completed, a small scale works capital budget was approved to improve fire-fighter and community facilities. £500,000 of the capital investment reserve was set aside to support these works.

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

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18. Risks of failure to meet statutory obligations as set out in paragraph 11. Health and safety implications for disabled staff and partners (for example) currently, before the works are completed

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#### **Contribution to Our Mission: *Safer Stronger Communities – Safe Effective Firefighters***

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19. The Authority recognises that fire stations do not just exist for incident response but have a vital role in prevention and protection. Historically, few people would say that Fire Stations were inviting places with fire appliances barely visible behind closed doors. Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority's vision is of true community hubs that provide a range of services working together to make Merseyside safer and stronger.
20. The stations very much belong to local communities and they need to be fully accessible to meet the needs of the community. Community Stations offer:
  - Inviting & welcoming community rooms and break out spaces.
  - Flexible facilities for our diverse community groups.
  - The community an increased sense of ownership.

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**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

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**CFO/111/11** If this report follows on from another, list the previous report(s)

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**GLOSSARY OF TERMS**

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