

Wellington Fire Station Co-location with TCAT

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

For further information about this report please contact Alan Taylor, Chief Fire Officer, on 01743 260201 or Paul Raymond, Deputy Chief Fire Officer on 01743 260203.

1 Purpose of Report

This report is to advise the Authority of the current position with proposals to co-locate Wellington Fire Station in to the new college planned by Telford College of Arts and Technology (TCAT)

2 Recommendations

The Fire Authority is asked to:

- a) Note the provisions of this report;
- b) Confirm the principle of transferring our Wellington site to TCAT in exchange for a 50-year lease on a new building and the provision of a site suitable for construction of a fire station on termination. Full authorisation only to be made subject to a fully costed report being provided; and
- c) Authorise Officers to continue work on the development of this scheme.

3 Background

The Service has been approached by TCAT who wish to obtain land occupied by Wellington fire station to enable future development of the college. The Service has considered how it could support TCAT without compromising the delivery of community safety in the area and, having considered relocation to a number of other sites in the area, believes that a proposed joint-use building will enable the ongoing provision of services in the area, together with the following additional benefits:

- Closer links with college students for Community Fire Safety (CFS) education
- Close links with student population who represent many of our target groups for recruitment.
- Working closely with one of the top performing colleges in the country will bring performance benefits for the whole service.
- The College will run work experience / Princes Trust / Duke of Edinburgh Awards scheme on our behalf.
- World class building environment for our staff.
- Open access to all College facilities for our staff e.g. lecture rooms, refectory and gym.
- Redesign work will include improved access for RDS firefighters onto the station.

4 Current Position

In consultation with the Chair of the Authority, the Service has negotiated an in-principle agreement to transfer our land to TCAT in exchange for a 50-year rent free lease to occupy parts of the college that meet our needs for a wholetime station. This in-principle agreement is subject to Fire Authority approval and this is now sought.

In order to protect the Authority's position at the end of the lease, the lease may be renegotiated or terminated, at which point TCAT will be obliged to provide the Service with a plot of land suitable for development of a new fire station. The Authority will be responsible for all costs associated with construction of a new building, however rebuilding of the existing building will have been necessary within this timescale.

Service charges for utilities and services will be based on historical costs and/or the true cost incurred by TCAT in providing these services and should not be significantly different to the cost of providing the current building.

This agreement has been established to enable TCAT to demonstrate feasibility of the scheme and to seek funding from the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) for the development. TCAT expect to learn the outcome of their bid within 2-3 months with work expected to start in March / April 2009 for completion by September 2011.

5 Staff Consultation

Staff at Wellington will be affected by the proposal, both in disruption during the construction phase and from a change in working practices following the works. The affected staff are being consulted about the purpose for this change and the facilities to be provided. They will be fully consulted during design development.

Wider staff consultation is being conducted through the Integrated Risk Management Planning (IRMP) consultation programme.

6 Temporary Accommodation

During the works it will be necessary to provide temporary accommodation for the station. This will not be funded by the LSC and it will be necessary for the Service to fund this work, estimated at £150-200,000 for a period of 12 - 18 months. For information, this cost is similar to the cost of providing a disabled access lift within the existing building, which would be necessary if the building were to remain in the long term.

Agreement has been reached with TCAT regarding the provision of land suitable for the temporary accommodation.

7 Financial Implications

The Service has negotiated an in-principle position that we will provide the existing land and buildings to TCAT in exchange for a 50 year rent free lease on new accommodation which meets our current and predicted future needs. At the end of the lease period TCAT will provide the Authority with land suitable for the construction of a new fire station.

A full valuation of the land, the 50-year rent free lease and the commitment to provide land at the end of the lease, will be carried out and this information provided to the Fire Authority at the time any formal decision is required.

It will be necessary for the Authority to fund the cost of temporary accommodation, estimated at £150-200,000.

It will be necessary for the Authority to consider allocation of funding for the construction of a new station in 50 years time, in the event that a renewal of the lease cannot be negotiated.

All the financial information required will be provided to enable the Authority to reach a view on the value for money offered by the project, and to approve any necessary capital or revenue budgets, should the formal decision be to proceed with the project.

8 Legal Comment

The Authorities legal advisors have been consulted regarding this proposal. They advise that it will be necessary to ensure the documentation contains an obligation on TCAT to provide the Fire Authority with land suitable for a new Fire Station if the lease is not renewed.

The Authority is able to enter into such an agreement if it represents, and is able to demonstrate, value for money.

9 Equality Impact Assessment

An Equality Impact Assessment has not been carried out on this proposal. If approved the design of the college and fire station buildings will be subject to a full equality assessment and construction to current accessibility standards.

10 Appendices

There are no appendices attached to this report.

11 Background Papers

Strategy and Resources Committee

25 January 2007, Paper 14 (Exempt) – Opportunity for Relocation of Wellington Fire Station.

Implications of all of the following have been considered and, where they are significant (i.e. marked with an asterisk), the implications are detailed within the report itself.

Balanced Score Card		Integrated Risk Management Planning	*
Business Continuity Planning		Legal	*
Capacity		Member Involvement	*
Civil Contingencies Act		National Framework	
Comprehensive Performance Assessment		Operational Assurance	
Efficiency Savings	*	Retained	
Environmental		Risk and Insurance	
Financial	*	Staff	*
Fire Control/Fire Link		Strategic Planning	
Information Communications and Technology		West Midlands Regional Management Board	
Freedom of Information / Data Protection / Environmental Information		Equality Impact Assessment	*