

Accommodation Schemes update

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

For further information about this report please contact Alan Taylor, Chief Fire Officer, on 01743 260225 or Andrew Kelcey, Head of Resources, on 01743 260240.

1 Purpose of Report

This report is to advise the Fire Authority of the current position with the Shrewsbury and Wellington accommodation schemes.

2 Recommendations

The Fire Authority is asked to note:

- a) the current position with both schemes; and
- b) that the Urgency Committee is able to consider and approve the necessary legal agreements on the transfer of the freehold land known as 'Wellington Fire Station' to TCAT in accordance with the decision previously approved by the Fire Authority on 16 July 2008, if a decision is required in a timescale incompatible with planned Fire Authority meetings.

3 Background

The Fire Authority have previously approved the principle of transferring the freehold land at Wellington Fire Station to Telford College of Arts and Technology (TCAT) and the basis on which this could happen subject to full authorisation only to be made subject to a fully costed report being provided.

They have also approved investigation of schemes to redevelop the Shrewsbury site, following Integrated Risk Management Planning (IRMP) determining that St Michaels Street remained the most appropriate site for operational response in Shrewsbury. This paper provides an update on progress with these schemes.

4 Wellington Co-location with Telford College of Arts and Technology (“TCAT”)

The Learning and Skills Council (“LSC”) funding has been approved for construction of the new college buildings, incorporating the Wellington Fire Station.

Designs are being prepared and images are available for Members to view. The first draft of the station internal accommodation has been provided and, although there are a number of issues to be resolved, this is generally acceptable. These proposals have been consulted with station staff and managers and further consultation will be carried out as the plans are finalised.

TCAT intend starting building work in the summer of 2009, for a period of 18 - 24 months. In order to accommodate this programme it will be necessary for the Authority to vacate the existing station by May/June 2009 and work is ongoing to find temporary accommodation either in temporary buildings on the TCAT site or in the vicinity of the current location.

It is not intended that the Authority enter into any commitments with regard to temporary accommodation until a formal agreement is reached between the Fire Authority and TCAT. This may result in delays to the TCAT programme if this is not resolved quickly. However, the Urgency Committee has the power to exercise any powers and duties of the Authority with regard to matters relating to the Fire and Rescue Authority in situations of urgency.

It was expected that the legal agreements would be brought to this meeting formalising the understanding between the Fire Authority and TCAT. However, due to the complexity of the agreements and specific legal negotiations (particularly related to the protection of the Authority’s position at the end of the building lease) this has not been possible.

5 Shrewsbury Redevelopment

A Shrewsbury based Architect has been appointed as lead consultant for this scheme to initially develop our needs and manage the works to completion.

Due to changes in market conditions, particularly affecting the sale value of released land at Shrewsbury, options are being reviewed and the move of our Workshops facility off-site is being reconsidered. Other options being considered are relocation of some or all of the Headquarters functions to our building at Telford. Consideration is also being given to incorporating additional works at Telford in to this project which (together with Wellington) would enable completion of the Authority’s accommodation strategy and ensure that all accommodation met our core needs.

6 Financial Implications

The costs associated with the provision of temporary accommodation at Wellington are not yet known. TCAT will meet the costs of providing the location of the temporary site but the Fire Authority will be required to meet the cost of the provision of temporary buildings, the removal of the buildings and the making good of the site. These costs will be better understood when the legal agreements are presented to Members, when capital and revenue implications will also be assessed.

A comparative valuation exercise has been carried out by the Authority taking into consideration the current market value of the site, the market value of a 50 year lease of land and buildings at a peppercorn rent together with a transfer of a 'suitable' freehold site (such a freehold site to be subject to leaseback for a term of 50 years to TCAT) and it is considered that this arrangement does represent value for money for the Authority.

7 Legal Comment

The Urgency Committee has the power under their Terms of Reference to exercise any powers and duties of the Authority with regard to matters relating to the Fire and Rescue Authority.

Negotiations are taking place between legal advisors at present to ensure the legal agreements that are required for this project are robust and are in the best interests of the Authority.

8 Equality Impact Assessment

An equality impact assessment has not been carried out on this paper; however impact assessments will be carried out on the buildings, which are being designed to be fully accessible.

9 Appendices

There are no appendices attached to this report.

10 Background Papers

Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority, 16 July 2008, Paper 19 - Wellington Fire Station Co-location with TCAT

Strategy and Resources Committee, 18 September 2008, Paper 15 - Wellington Fire Station Co-location with TCAT

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	*