

**Status of Report:** *Public*

**Meeting:** Combined Fire Authority

**Date:** 10 February 2021

**Subject:** Training Facility – Service Leadership and Development Centre:  
Project Update.

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**For:** Information only

### **Purpose**

1. This report provides the Combined Fire Authority (CFA) with an update on the progress of the design and build of the Service's new Training Facility – Leadership and Development Centre.

### **Recommendation**

2. It is recommended that the CFA acknowledge and note:
  - a) The time it will take to review the utilisation of the operational estate for training purposes means that progress with the Training Facility – Service Leadership and Development Centre project will appear to have slowed; and
  - b) The need to consider alternative sites for fire behaviour training and support functions only; and
  - c) That a further progress update be presented to the CFA at its meeting on 16 June 2021.

### **Executive Summary**

3. At its meeting on 16 December 2020, the CFA recognised the risk around the ability to secure a favourable land deal at Desford suitable to build a dirty training site. It further recognised the need to seek alternative, market rate sites for dirty training.
4. This report provides an update on project progress and highlights risks, and measures being taken to mitigate those risks. It further re-iterates the need to take a pause in the project process to assess new factors that are impacting on the proposed output.
5. The increasing likelihood of not achieving a favourable land deal at Desford and consequently having to pay market rates for an alternative site has caused the project team to initiate searches for suitable alternatives and re-assess the

requirements of the dirty site. Ongoing discussion with Caterpillar is ongoing as the site suitability is favourable.

## **Background**

6. At its meeting in December 2020, the CFA acknowledged that market forces and the COVID-19 situation had changed how training was delivered for LFRS. It further acknowledged that maximising the use of the existing estate would reap financial benefit.

## **Progress**

7. This report follows the Christmas period where there has been a two-week shut down across many public and private sector organisations, including Caterpillar and elements of LFRS. This has had an impact on progress in the reporting period.
8. LFRS senior management have challenged the Learning and Development team to consider their need for delivering dirty training in terms of the have-to-have requirements and to consider COVID-19 driven remote training and maximising the use of the existing estate. A consolidated requirements schedule is in the process of being produced focussing on the minimum provision of being able to deliver real fire breathing apparatus training. Training must continue to meet the operational requirements of the Service
9. A property agent has been commissioned to identify potential sites within Leicestershire and asked to consider arterial route access, local planning uses and a size suitable for a Fire Behaviour Unit and supporting infrastructure only which is around 1.5 – 2.5 acres.
10. It is anticipated that by the CFA meeting on 16 June 2021 the value managed requirement will be agreed and a shortlist of suitable market rate sites will have been identified. This will, in the event of further delays from, or an unfavourable deal offered by Caterpillar, allow the project team to propose a leaner option that considers the likely future financial limitations.

## **Opportunities**

11. The project team continues to work with the Learning and Development team to assess the training requirements and overlay these onto the existing estate and assets.
12. By utilising existing assets and reducing the new requirement to fire behaviour training and support functions alone, there is an opportunity to pay market value for a reduced sized site within the project budget.
13. By utilising existing estate and assets there is an opportunity to build an upgrade of the operational estate into the project.

## Next Steps

14. The project team continue to work with senior LFRS personnel to ensure that the requirement captures the change in approach given the fundamental shift in the property market and the need to focus on LFRS owned assets in the first instance.
15. The project team will continue to attempt to secure a favourable land deal at Desford in conjunction with searching for alternative sites. A further update will be presented to the CFA at its meeting on 16 June 2021 regarding progress, focussing on movement on the land deal at Desford, availability of suitable alternative sites and a rationalisation of the use of existing assets.
16. The user requirements for the dirty training site will be developed / agreed based on three size-based specifications to meet minimum provisions through to delivery of all practical training on one site. The minimum provision is to build a fire behaviour unit with necessary supporting structures, which dependant on the size of the site, could restrict the level of activity able to be facilitated. The same buildings on larger plots of land increases capacity and capability. The most suitable specification will be determined once land availability is established.
17. User requirements to facilitate clean training will be agreed, assessing the existing estate to determine the locations where developments are needed to accommodate them.

## **Report Implications/Impact**

18. Legal (including crime and disorder)
  - a) All stages of the design and build will comply with CFA Procedure Rules, Contract Procurement Rules and Financial procedure Rules
  - b) Redevelopment or refurbishment work is likely to require planning permission and approvals from building control.
  - c) Legal support will be provided by the County Council's Legal Team in the usual way.
19. Financial (including value for money, benefits and efficiencies)
  - a) An earmarked reserve of circa £6m is available to support this project. Utilising the refurbishment of existing infrastructure will significantly reduce the need for additional funding requirements – representing reduced scope as a control within current financial uncertainty.
  - b) At this stage it is not feasible to achieve cost certainty.
  - c) Caterpillar at Desford represents an opportunity to secure provision or use of land at a much-reduced rate.

- d) The sum of £90,000 has been set aside for this project to develop the business case.
- e) The table below identifies a potential overspend of £720. This may be reduced following a measure of actual works carried out.
- f) The option to ‘buy-in’ fire behaviour, Breathing Apparatus training has been discounted by cost benefit analysis undertaken in 2019 and included in previous CFA reports.

<b>Table 2 – Current Project Budget Overview</b>			
<b>Item</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Spend to Date</b>
PM	LCC Project Manager	£19,500	£19,500
Surveying	Topographical surveys of Loughborough and Desford	£2,020	£12,020
RIBA 0+ Report	Consultancy support	£20,950	£20,950
2 no. RIBA 2 Reports	Consultancy and architectural support	£48,250	£5,200
		<b>£90,720</b>	<b>£57,670</b>

20. Risk (including corporate and operational, health and safety and any impact on the continuity of service delivery)

- a) LFRS current resource expertise in this area is limited, therefore the entire programme of works is being led by the Estates and Building Services (EBS) department of Leicester City Council.
- b) To mitigate risks around project delivery, the building design and construction process will be undertaken within the shared framework of Royal Institute of Building Architects (RIBA) Plan of Work 2013.
- c) A detailed risk log is included in the business case and key issues are outlined below:
  - i. This proposal addresses the risk around a potential land deal at Desford by considering reducing the requirements and thus the footprint of a dirty site.
  - ii. Limiting the scale and nature of development at the Loughborough site will reduce the risk that planning conditions may be too onerous. In particular, re-developing the existing site into a “clean” training

environment will negate any future planning conditions likely to be imposed by the provision of a new Fire Behaviour Unit on the site.  
Note – The existing Fire Training Unit does not include carbonaceous capability. i.e. it does not produce products of combustion/thick black smoke.

- iii. Split site effectively scales back initial proposals removing risk of not being in budget.
  - iv. Split site will significantly reduce the risk of requiring temporary accommodation whilst work is undertaken.
  - v. Split site significantly reduces the risk of breaching CFA's VAT Partial Exemption. If this were to occur, then all CFA supplies rated as exempt VAT will not be recoverable from Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs and would incur significant cost to the CFA. The impact of VAT will be fully assessed and calculated as part of the overall financial evaluation.
  - vi. The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors' Building Cost Information Service is forecasting that tender prices will rise between 4.5% and 5.5% every year at least. The risk of a rise thereafter is potentially aggravated by Brexit and the post Covid-19 impact has yet to be quantified.
- d) Focusing on a split site with Caterpillar is dependent on the continuation of Caterpillar's willingness to collaborate and agree reduced rates. It is accepted that this is an "eggs in one basket" scenario. The split site option will reduce developer costs in the event of having to source and build from the open market.

21. Staff, Service Users and Stakeholders (including the Equality Impact Assessment)

- a) Refurbishment and redevelopment work can have a significant impact on operational personnel and their ability to provide continuity of service. If temporary accommodation is required, it should be of a standard that is fit for purpose and provides the firefighters with the facilities required to remain effective.
- b) In accord with the LFRS People Strategy there has been early engagement with staff and representative bodies regarding user requirements and subsequent design specifications within the program of works.
- c) All changes will be subject to a People Impact Assessment and transport plans within Project methodology. i.e. identify impact on travel for staff/environment.
- d) Split site may increase travel for instructional staff.
- e) Re-development of the Loughborough site would include a refurbishment of the Fire Station and would provide an opportunity to improve the use of the site by Staff, Service Users and Stakeholders.

## 22. Environmental

- a) Following completion of the build, environmental issues are potentially improved based on the use of modern building techniques and materials (subject to the identified risks on the complexity of building services).
- b) Design and build of the Fire Behaviour Unit will include engagement with the Environment Agency to ensure emissions are within prescribed limits.
- c) Split site may increase travel for instructional staff.
- d) The re-development and refurbishment involved in a split site will allow integration of modern methods of construction, and their environmental effects, in existing infrastructure.
- e) The profile of staff movements will be assessed with a view to achieving these in the most environmentally friendly way including electric vehicles and different ways of working. For example, to introduce multi-site working arrangements to reduce financial costs and impact on the environment.

## 23. Impact upon “Our Plan” Objectives

- a) An improved estate should contribute towards LRFS aims to ‘respond effectively to incidents’ and having ‘an engaged and productive workforce’. Improvements should also present ‘value for money’ as running costs and ongoing maintenance costs should reduce.
- b) The provision of a new Development Centre secures the future of LRFS delivering Safer People Safer Places in the work place; ensuring that there are the right people in the right place doing the right thing in the right way.

### **Background Papers**

Report to the CFA 12 December 2018 - Estates Plan Update

<https://leics-fire.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/estates-planning-final.pdf>

Report to the CFA 6 February 2019 - Estates Review Update

<https://leics-fire.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/estates-review-update-final.pdf>

Report to the CFA 19 June 2019 - Review of Non-Operational Estates including Support Service Accommodation

<https://leics-fire.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/estates-review-report.pdf>

Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service Leadership and Development Facility – Strategic Business Case – September 2019 included as an Annex to

<https://leics-fire.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/service-training-facility-strategic-business-case-final.pdf>

Report to the CFA 22 January 2020 - Project Update: Training Facility – Service Leadership and Development Centre

<https://leics-fire.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/training-facility-update.pdf>

**Report to the CFA 23 September 2020 – Training Facility – Service Leadership and Development Centre: Project Update**

<https://leics-fire.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/item-8-training-facility-service-leadership-and-development-centre-final.pdf>

**Report to the CFA 16 December 2020 – Training Facility – Service Leadership and Development Centre: Project Update**

<https://leics-fire.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/12-training-facility-final.pdf>

**Royal Institute of Building Architects (RIBA) Plan of Work (2020)**

<https://www.architecture.com/-/media/GatherContent/Test-resources-page/Additional-Documents/2020RIBAPlanofWorkoverviewpdf.pdf?la=en>

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