



**Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority**

## **Decision Report**

**Please ensure all sections below are completed**

**Report reference number:** 033-22

**Government security classification** Not protectively marked

**Title of report:** Estate Strategy – Wholetime Station Modernisation

**Area of county / stakeholders affected:** Service wide

**Report by:** Karl Edwards

**Date of report:** 10<sup>th</sup> August 2022

**Enquiries to:** Karl Edwards, Director of Corporate Services 9karl.edwards@essex-fire.gov.uk)

### **1. Purpose of the report**

An integral element of the ECFRS Estates Strategy is commitment to the modernisation of our Wholetime Stations. There are four key elements to this that are outlined below and form the basis of the review.

- Remove the current fitment of bar areas and modernise with workspaces that facilitate new areas for better collaboration and connection with internal staff and partner organisations.
- Design and installation of training rooms with appropriate technology to facilitate modern delivery of essential training requirements within a professional environment.
- The development of private personal space areas that incorporate designs that are inclusive of all genders.
- Analysis and fitment of appropriate heating/cooling arrangements to maintain a comfortable workplace environment.

## **2. Recommendations**

1. To support the key elements of the changes that are proposed with the modernisation of the Wholetime Stations outlined in the Estates Strategy.
2. To support the continuation of this proposal through to a full design phase that will generate improved cost analysis and a more detailed design plan through to contract award as outlined in (Section 4).
3. To support the funding requirements currently proposed of accessing existing annual capital arrangements that would allow part funding of this programme, recognising that some additional capital investment will still be required.

## **3. Benefits of proposal**

Whilst the ECFRS estate is maintained to a good standard it is recognised that Wholetime Stations have had little modernisation for a prolonged period.

This is evident through:-

- ✓ Continuation of bar and recreation areas for the purposes of holding social events.
- ✓ Inadequate station training rooms to deliver high quality training through the use of modern technology.
- ✓ Traditionally fire stations currently feature open, shared dormitory areas that offer little to no privacy and are not in keeping with our cultural journey that wishes to support inclusivity and dignity in the workplace.

It is therefore essential that as a service we take the opportunity to invest in the modernisation of our fire stations to ensure:-

- ✓ That we can improve connection with our communities and partner organisations.
- ✓ Ensure that we can provide the best possible training environments that allow our teams to flourish within their areas of professionalism.
- ✓ Our Stations need to incorporate designs that are inclusive of all genders and inviting to all demographics.

These changes will also assist with the recruitment and retention of staff, where they feel that their workplace environment is fully supportive in allowing them to perform at their best. Equally these changes will help to improve the longevity and sustainability of our stations that will be equipped in supporting the future delivery of fire and rescue services to the communities of Essex.

## **4. Background and proposal**

A Building Design and Construction Services contractor were commissioned to complete a review across all twelve Wholetime Stations with the principles above, regarding the required changes. The review independently assessed each individual station and has provided outline costs to achieve delivery against each of the principles below.

- ✓ Remove the current fitment of bar areas and modernise with workspaces that facilitate new areas for better collaboration and connection with internal staff and partner organisations.

- ✓ Design and installation of training rooms with appropriate technology to facilitate modern delivery of essential training requirements within a professional environment.
- ✓ The development of private personal space areas that incorporate designs that are inclusive of all genders.
- ✓ Analysis and fitment of appropriate heating/cooling arrangements to maintain a comfortable workplace environment.

The report concluded that the estimated total funding required to deliver this programme of works across all Wholetime Stations is **£4.6M**. These costs are to be projected over a four year period with three stations being completed each year. Approval to progress would then enable the service to progress to formal designs, detailed specifications and pre-tender estimates prior to procuring works. It is however also achievable to progress through a recently approved 7-Forces compliant construction framework.

ECFRS Estate Strategy was formally approved in January 2022. The core principles of the strategy are:-

- Safe and secure working environment
- Healthy and inclusive workplace
- Smarter – sustainable and effective
- Supportive culture

The Estate Programme Brief was approved at the Portfolio Management Board (PMB) in July. Modernisation of wholetime stations is one of the projects that is being initiated. To enable agile and early planning of the project, a feasibility/cost review has been undertaken.

Cost estimates outlined below:-

<b>Station</b>	<b>Budget Estimate</b>	<b>Total Budget Estimate</b>
Basildon	£337k	£3,822M
Brentwood	£258k	
Chelmsford	£735k	
Colchester	£325k	
Clacton	£190k	
Grays	£269k	
Harlow	£389k	
Leigh	£207k	
Loughton	£222k	
Orsett	£284k	
Rayleigh	£296k	
Southend	£310k	
Planning/statutory initial application costs	£60k	
Professional fees @ 18%	£690k	
<b>Total</b>		<b>£4,572M</b>

## 5. Alternative options considered and rejected

Other options considered and rejected include:-

1. **Do nothing** – This would prevent ECFRS from being able to move forward with the implementation of this element of the Estates Strategy that is in place to transform our workplace environments that support our people to flourish and work within a modern and fit for purpose environment, inclusive for all.
2. **Review alternate locations** – The current data supports that our stations are positioned at the optimum locations to provide the best prevention, protection and response activities to the communities of Essex. The development of a Strategic Asset Management Plan (SAMP) will outline each of our assets with a declaration of ensuring they are being utilised to their maximum capability.

## 6. Strategic priorities

FIRE AND RESCUE PLAN PRIORITIES	
<b>Prevention, Protection and Response</b>	Modernised stations will ensure that we deliver the core principles in our Estate Strategy and enables our people to thrive and feel valued.
<b>Improve Safety on our Roads</b>	Our Stations are at the hub of our communities and engagement at station events can continually help in our communication and education practices to the communities of Essex. One of the key educational areas is that of improving safety on our roads. Modern, fit for purpose fire stations will assist with further promoting our community engagement.
<b>Help the Vulnerable to Stay Safe</b>	Through station improvements colleagues could be better placed to deliver local safety events and community activities that help those most vulnerable in our communities to stay safe.
<b>Promote a Positive Culture in our Workplace</b>	The design of the refurbishments will be inclusive and accessible for all colleagues across the service as well as our communities and partner organisations.
<b>Develop and Broaden the Roles and Range of Activities undertaken by the Service</b>	The modernised stations will enable the delivery of local training within our Protection, Prevention and Response responsibilities.
<b>Be Transparent, Open and Accessible</b>	Full consultation will be undertaken with all stakeholders and representative bodies. A pilot is being planned to ensure we meet all user requirements.
<b>Collaborate with our Partners</b>	Local station training facilities will be available for multi-agency use.
<b>Make Best Use of Our Resources</b>	Our existing estate will be improved to provide accommodation that responds to the demands of a changing fire and rescue service and embraces the digital and cultural enablers that allow us to better use our physical footprint.

## 7. Operational implications

It is recognised that if this programme of works is approved to progress to the next stage a full engagement and communications plan will need to be developed, in line with our Portfolio Management Board, governance processes. People Impact Assessments (PIA) will also be undertaken as we progress towards a full design and specification for each location.

It is acknowledged that this proposal is focused on Wholetime Station modernisation as a key area identified within the Estates Strategy and therefore does not include other estates changes to other assets. It should be noted that the Estates Strategy does however include a number of other key strategic deliverables that is inclusive of all estates areas, such as On-Call Stations, Fleet, Training etc.

## 8. Financial implications

It is recognised that there is currently no specific capital budget allocation provisioned to support this particular programme of works. However, it is anticipated that the costs would be phased over a four year period, with three stations being completed each year. It is also further anticipated that a proportion of the current annual estates capital budget of £1.3M could be utilised to facilitate this project. Further discussion is required to align this within the overall estates strategy financial investment as this is one of three major capital investments alongside, training centre relocation and joint fleet workshops collaboration.

## 9. Legal implications

There are currently no direct legal implications arising from this report.

## 10. Staffing implications

Resources will be allocated to the project in line with our portfolio management board governance arrangements. There is currently a project to identify the most appropriate property resourcing plan to support the Estates Strategy. If the recommendation of this report is agreed this will be factored into the requirement.

## 11. Equality and Diversity implications

We have considered whether individuals with protected characteristics will be disadvantaged as a consequence of the actions being taken. Due regard has also been given to whether there is impact on each of the following protected groups as defined within the Equality Act 2010:

Race	X	Religion or belief	X
Sex	X	Gender reassignment	X
Age	X	Pregnancy & maternity	X
Disability	X	Marriage and Civil Partnership	X
Sexual orientation	X		

The Core Code of Ethics Fire Standard has been fully considered and incorporated into the proposals outlined in this paper. There are inherent non cashable benefits to individuals should works to dormitories be agreed.

## **12. Risks**

A full risk assessment will be carried out as part of the project initiation process and control measures established. Planning applications may be required for some sites and whilst the initial costs provided have been achieved through local station survey and assessments, these could be subject to change upon a more detailed evaluation of works. For example, power capabilities have not been assessed as part of the study, further funding may be required to improve infrastructure at some locations.

Other assumptions made within the study include:-

- Plant solutions are based on prices and technology that is currently available, these costs and systems can vary over time
- Estimates will have a limited life expectancy of 3 months
- Requirements such as planning or building control will impact on delivery timetables and may impact on costs
- Budget construction has been in accordance with building regulation requirements
- Alternative use of underused space as a result of the changes has not been considered
- There are no legislative requirements identified for the proposed changes
- Works will inevitably have an impact on operations and will be planned in conjunction to minimise impact
- Grants may be available for plant and machinery improvements and will continue to be applied for
- Only existing asbestos register information has been used and no intrusive surveys have been undertaken
- The budget study does not include any changes in revenue funding for increased running costs or maintenance liabilities
- No allowances have been made for new furniture, IT etc

## **13. Governance Boards**

This proposal was initiated through the Estates Programme Board in line with the Estates Strategy and was approved for initiation portfolio management board subject to PFCC Strategic Board approval.

## **14. Background papers**

Estates Strategy – approved at Strategic Board 13<sup>th</sup> September 2021

**Decision Process (#)**

**Step 1A - Chief Fire Officer Comments**

(The Chief Fire Officer is asked in their capacity as the Head of Paid Service to comment on the proposal.)

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Sign: ..... Date:.....

**Step 1B – Consultation with representative bodies**

(The Chief Fire Officer is to set out the consultation that has been undertaken with the representative bodies)

.....Included within the Estates Strategy.....

**Step 2 - Statutory Officer Review**

The report will be reviewed by the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority’s (“the Commissioner’s”) Monitoring Officer and Chief Finance Officer prior to review and sign off by the Commissioner or their Deputy.

Monitoring Officer Sign: .....

Print: .....

Date: .....

Chief Finance Officer Sign: .....

Print: .....

Date: .....

**Step 3 - Publication**

**Is the report for publication? YES**

**If ‘NO’, please give reasons for non-publication** (Where relevant, cite the security classification of the document(s). State ‘none’ if applicable)

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If the report is not for publication, the Monitoring Officer will decide if and how the public can be informed of the decision.

**Step 4 - Redaction**

If the report is for publication, is redaction required:

- 1 Of Decision Sheet YES/NO
- 2 Of Appendix YES/NO

If 'YES', please provide details of required redaction:

.....  
.....

Date redaction carried out: .....

If redaction is required, the Chief Finance Officer or the Monitoring Officer are to sign off that redaction has been completed.

Sign: ..... Print: .....

Date signed: .....

**Step 5 - Decision by the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner or Deputy Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner**

I **agree /do not agree** the recommendations to this report:

Sign: ..... (PFCC / DPFCC)

Print: ..... Date signed: .....