

# Cabinet

28 January 2021

## Warwickshire Fire & Rescue Service - Strategic Direction for Property

### Recommendations

That Cabinet:

- 1) Supports the proposed future direction for the development of the property estate for Warwickshire Fire & Rescue Service (WFRS) in alignment with the Warwickshire County Council Property Strategy as set out in this report
- 2) Agrees the strategic principles set out in Section 3.0 of this report and supports these principles informing the IRMP that is presented to Cabinet in March 2021

### 1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 This report sets out the strategic direction for the future use of property within Warwickshire Fire & Rescue Service (WFRS).
- 1.2 It seeks to ensure that the direction is driven by the Service's ambition to deliver quality services and public safety of behalf of the communities we serve.
- 1.3 It links the principles and approach as set out in the WCC Property Strategy (agreed in March 2020) to the learning from the Covid response and recovery (update to this meeting)
- 1.4 It then links this to the emerging Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP), that will come back to Cabinet and Council for approval in March 2021 and will set out the specific commitments and drivers for WFRS in relation to the use of property.
- 1.5 Making these connections now will ensure that the approach to Property in WMFRS is both relevant and connected in meeting the needs of the public, the service and the Council.
- 1.6 The opportunity is also taken in this report to the highlight the enabling activity that will support this approach as well as some of the key projects that are live and planned for the future.

## 2.0 Background

- 2.1 The future strategic direction and shape of WFRS estate is
- The requirements and standards of the fire services
  - The current and future needs of our communities
  - The benefits of being part of the wider County Council
  - Collaborative opportunities with our partners
- 2.2 This direction is underpinned and articulated within the following three key documents:

**WCC Property Strategy** – The WCC Property Strategy was approved in March 2020. It sets out a holistic and joined up approach to our use of the Council's property estate and comprises four themes (communities & customers, business & economy, partners and staff) underpinned by the following six commitments:

- Takes a holistic and joined up approach
- Is ambitious, forward looking and sustainable
- Makes best use of Council resources
- Aims to provide high quality buildings
- Supports our climate change commitments
- Takes a balanced view of risk and opportunity

**WCC Covid Recovery Plan** – In September 2020 Cabinet approved a Covid recovery programme aligned to the Council Plan 2025. The programme addresses learning from the response period as well as emerging national policy, translating these into 10 recovery priorities aligned to the following principles:

- Target recovery activity and support to where most needed
- Stabilise and accelerate the recovery for Warwickshire's people, places and businesses,
- Tackle inequalities
- Join up and work in Partnership
- Focus on environmental challenges
- Apply our learning from COVID-19

Additionally the Covid response of Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service (WFRS) was inspected by HMICFRS in the Autumn 2020. The feedback received to date indicates that the service has continued to deliver its statutory functions throughout the Covid19 pandemic effectively alongside delivering a range of other activities to support the communities of Warwickshire. The outcome report is due to be publicly released in January 2021 and will inform further change work.

**Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP)** –. A key element of the IRMP is to ensure WFRS physical assets are in the right place at the right time to deliver its statutory duties and keep our communities safe by delivering prevention, protection and response services as quickly and efficiently as possible. This involves assessing future locations for community fire stations in relation to incident activity (current and forecast) and assessing our community risk profile, ensuring that the premises the service operates from are multi-functional, support collaboration with key partners and provide a resource for the use of community partners

### 3.0 Strategic principles

- 3.1 Together the above three elements create the strategic framework for the use of Council property assets in support of the WFRS.
- 3.2 In this context, a focused set of principles for the use of Property in the support of the WFRS are set out below:

1. We will ensure that the **safety of Warwickshire communities** will be paramount when exploring future options for estates
2. We will take a **One Council approach** to our use of WFRS and wider Council estate
3. Our use of WFRS properties will **optimise operational capability, service performance** and **agile working**
4. We will use our estate to maximise the role of the Fire & Rescue Service in **shaping the places** and delivering our priority outcomes for the communities we serve
5. We will **work in partnership** with all public services to create opportunities for shared space
6. We will strive to ensure **best and sustainable use of our resources** in line with our Council commitments on climate change.

- 3.3 These principles complement the themes and commitments set out in the Council's Property Strategy and Recovery Plan.
- 3.4 Subject to their approval by Cabinet they will also inform the IRMP which is due to be presented to Cabinet and Council in March 2021

- 3.5 Together these principles will set the reference point for future projects and activity related to the WFRS estate. The current projects and activity currently being considered are set out below in Section 4. Individual reports will be brought back to Cabinet as necessary as these initiatives develop. .

## 4.0 Supporting activity and projects

- 4.1 In support of the strategic principles are a number of key enablers and projects as set out below:

Key enablers include:

- **Blue Light collaboration in Warwickshire** – WFRS continues to identify opportunities to work more efficiently and effectively with key partners in order to provide the best possible services to the communities of Warwickshire, with a duty to collaborate with Police.
- **One Public Estate Programme** – Our commitment to effective and collaborative working across the One Public Estate Programme with the aim of making the most effective use of our collective public estate, saving money and delivering maximum benefits for services, communities and our workforce.
- **Warwickshire Property and Development Company (WPDC)** - WCC is establishing a wholly-owned property and development company which will support future investment and asset decisions as part of the Council's place shaping ambitions. A report on WPDC is on the same Cabinet agenda.
- **Distributed Operating Model** – WFRS provides a specific response to all life risk incidents based on an overarching performance standard. This is coupled with our Prevention and Protection services to mitigate and address community risk. Supporting the targeting and utilisation of resources effectively (which includes considering the future location of our fire stations) is based on detailed analysis and modelling supported by ORH, a specialist organisation in modelling for emergency services.

Key projects include:

- **Training facilities** - Corporate Board and Cabinet have already demonstrated their commitment to enabling the Fire and Rescue Service to deliver its statutory responsibilities of having competent and safe

firefighters to respond to the needs of the community through prevention, protection and response activities. This is reflected in the decision to develop a range of training facilities including venues at Kingsbury, Lea Marston and Stratford.

- **Nuneaton and Bedworth** – Changes to the Nuneaton Newtown Road site that will conform to the community fire station model to allow improved partner access to WFRS premises. Potential additions to the Bedworth Park Road site to allow redistribution of wholetime crews, in line with the distributed response model.
- **Fire Control** – The potential move for Fire Control from Leamington Fire HQ into Stuart Ross House (Warwickshire Police owned premises), would enable the Control Team to work in bespoke, modern Control Room facilities with greater security and resilience. This shared use of Public Property would also stimulate improved interoperability, whilst driving improvements in Fire mobilising systems that could also work closer with Police mobilising systems, all of which will offer improved customer service. This opportunity is at an early stage of exploration with Police colleagues and a fully costed business case would be developed for further consideration by Cabinet at the appropriate stage. Subject to approval of this report, this project would be progressed to business case stage.
- **Leamington Fire Station** – FRS HQ staff will move to Warwick to work alongside Warwickshire County Council colleagues in the Council's offices. Opportunities exist to review the location of the control centre and work collaboratively with the Police (Stuart Ross House) as referred to above. Options also exist to review Leamington HQ Station site and whether there is scope, in line with the IRMP and improving service performance, to relocate within the Leamington area subject to business case and the identification of funding. Future options for Leamington Fire station site are within consideration for the Warwickshire Property and Development Company.
- **Rugby fire station**– provision of FRS facility to serve the new development at Holton partially funded by S.106 monies. Opportunities to review wider FRS site presence in Rugby and consider a potential northern site subject to the identification of appropriate funding which could release the existing site.

## 5.0 Next steps

- 5.1 Subject to Cabinet's consideration and approval of the strategic direction, the principles outlined in Section 3.0 will be incorporated into the IRMP and the WFRS Asset Management Plan for the financial year 2021/22 onwards.
- 5.2 The business cases for the projects referred to above will be aligned to the above principles and will be developed and brought to Cabinet for approval as necessary.

## 6.0 Financial Implications

- 6.1 There are significant financial considerations to all aspects of the Property Strategy and WFRS specific projects. These will be considered within the detail of each business case and the overall Property Strategy, Capital Programme and Capital Investment Fund.

## 7.0 Environmental Implications

- 7.1 Environmental implications will be a critical part of each project and the overall strategy. This could include, but not be limited to, making better use of space, reducing travel times, producing a more carbon-efficient fire estate, and contributing to a much more carbon efficient approach across the whole WCC estate in line with our Climate Change Commitments.

## 8.0 Background papers

- 8.1. None.

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The report was circulated to the following members prior to publication:

Chair and Vice Chair and Party Spokes of the Resources and FRS OSC – Cllr Warwick, Cllr Singh Birdi, Cllr Board, Cllr O'Rourke, Cllr Falp

Local Member(s):

Cllr Caborn, Cllr Chilvers, Cllr Cockburn, Cllr Davies, Cllr Gifford, Cllr Redford, Cllr Shilton, Cllr Williams, Cllr Dahmash, Cllr Kaur, Cllr O'Rourke, Cllr Roberts, Cllr Jerry Roodhouse, Cllr Simpson-Vince, Cllr Webb, Cllr Timms