

By: Director, Service Delivery
To: Planning and Performance Committee - 5 July 2012
Subject: STATION DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME
Classification: Unrestricted

FOR DECISION

SUMMARY

Following the update paper to the last meeting of the Committee, this report seeks Members' approval to the location of the second new fire station site in the Medway area. The report also provides an update on the progress of the Road Safety Centre planned for the Rochester site.

RECOMMENDATION

Members are requested to:

1. Agree to the proposal for the second new fire station in the Medway area to be located on the site of the existing fire station at Watling Street, Gillingham (paras 5 and 6 refer).
2. Note the details of the proposed Road Safety Centre being planned for Rochester (paras 7-10 refer).

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BACKGROUND PAPERS: None

COMMENTS

Background

1. As part of the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) published in October 2010, proposals to redesign fire cover arrangements across the urban area of the Medway Towns were agreed. Having completed an extensive review of the risk and demand data for the Medway area, the search for suitable sites for the new fire stations commenced. After much searching, the location for a new fire station and Road Safety Centre in Rochester has been confirmed and the site is likely to be formally secured shortly. The certainty over the location of the Rochester site has enabled the optimum location for the second fire station in the area to now be finalised. Members will also want to be aware that plans are in place to dispose of the closed fire stations at New Cut in Chatham and Green Street in Gillingham.

Second Fire Station in Medway

2. There are three main factors that have determined the optimum location for the second Medway fire station: site availability; activity levels; and risk. Over the past three months, and following recent discussions with Authority Members from Medway, detailed research on the availability of suitable sites has been undertaken. This has revealed that there are a number of sites in the Chatham Docks/Maritime and Gillingham areas that may be suitable. Using this information, an analysis of five sites was undertaken to establish how they compared against each other when combined with the new location at Rochester Airport. The sites were to the north of Watling Street, and included sites approximately halfway between the current Watling Street site and the potential sites identified at Chatham Maritime.
3. The review of emergency response provision identified that the Rochester location is of strategic importance for the whole of Kent and Medway. It will also improve attendance times in the higher risk areas of Lordswood and Walderslade, both of which are currently difficult to reach within the timeframe to which we aspire.
4. Using the existing analysis (recently updated with a further two years data), it has become clear that the Rochester and Watling Street combination is the best overall location in terms of wider performance over Kent and Medway. In terms of the Medway area only, the model based on one whole-time and one part-time fire engine at the Watling Street location produces the best performance too. This is because the fire engines will attend, and would be first in attendance at, the greatest number of incidents. It also provides the best performance for incident attendance times of all the options considered.
5. From the modelling and analysis of incident data it has been concluded that the combination of the Rochester and Watling Street sites provides the optimum

locations to meet service delivery standards in the local area and contributes the highest value in terms of strategic fire and rescue cover for Kent and Medway. The current Watling Street location outperforms the other options selected for this research.

6. However, the existing fire station at Watling Street is on a large site and is over 60 years old. Having considered the site value, and the cost of repairs/refurbishment and subsequently maintaining the existing station, it has been concluded that the provision of a new smaller fire station, built to modern environmental standards, would provide the most cost-effective approach. It is therefore proposed that a new medium-sized fire station be built on part of the Watling Street site.

Proposed Road Safety Centre at Rochester

7. At the last meeting of the Committee, Members approved the principle of establishing a Road Safety Centre at the new Rochester fire station site. Since that meeting the principle and concept for the centre has been further developed. The Authority works with partners to meet national and county-wide road safety reduction targets. This unique dedicated central facility will enable work with partner agencies such as Kent Police, South East Coast Ambulance Service and County Road Safety Officers to be enhanced and support the achievement of shared objectives. The venue will be seen as an 'all age' education facility, engaging with different target audiences, although it is recognised that the core target groups will continue to be those aged between 17 and 25 years. Existing programmes for secondary school and further education establishments will continue to be delivered, and new programmes will be developed for primary schoolchildren, those who drive for work and elderly drivers.
8. The Centre will be made up of a number of interactive themed zones based on speed awareness; anti-social behaviour including alcohol/ drug awareness and failure to wear seat belts; hazard perception; and driver distractions including the use of mobile phones, peer pressure and music in a vehicle. This will enable a range of 'age specific' road safety education programmes to be conducted. There will also be the facility to undertake practical road traffic collision demonstrations and road safety theatre productions such as 'License 2 Kill'.
9. There is also the potential for the Centre to be used for driving-offender education (reparation courses). There is clearly an opportunity to expand the provision of driver reparation courses within Kent, and the potential to generate an income stream to reinvest back into road safety initiatives. Although speeding reparation courses are offered to drivers, there is currently no provision for reparation courses for the use of mobile phones whilst driving, speeding through variable speed limits and failure to wear seat belts. Road safety partners are supportive of this approach and there is a strong argument to support the reinvestment of any income generated by the future provision of reparation courses to fund the ongoing cost of the Centre.

10. The Centre will be constructed in tandem with the new Rochester fire station, located on the same site near to Rochester Airport. To reduced costs it is proposed that some of the facilities needed for the Centre would be shared by operational staff working at the site.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT

11. Each of the change elements in this year's IRMP have been subject to an individual impact assessment. There are a number of resourcing impacts that have been planned as a result of these changes and these are included within the Authority's medium-term financial plan. By improving the Authority's building stock there will be a reduction and improvement in its environmental performance.

RECOMMENDATION

12. Members are requested to:
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 - 12.2 Note the details of the proposed Road Safety Centre being planned for Rochester (paras 7-10 refer).