



Report title

Proposed Third Training Centre

Meeting

Resources Committee

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Report by

Director of Safety and Assurance

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Summary

Babcock Training Limited (hereafter Babcock) was awarded a 25-year contract from 1 April 2012 to provide the Authority's training requirements. As part of the contract, Babcock constructed two purpose built modern training facilities one based in the east of London at Beckton and the other in the west of London at Park Royal. Whilst these facilities have been well received by delegates, it is evident that a third facility in the south is now required. The affordability envelope at the time of contract award was unable to facilitate a third venue. This report explains that the existing training estate needs to be extended to:

- Provide a high rise carbonaceous training facility;
- Provide a training facility in south London; and
- Enhance the incident command training capability.

Officers began a search of possible venues where all of these requirements could be met in one place. A number of fire station sites were considered as well as the Biggin Hill airport site, culminating in the recommendation that Croydon fire station is the preferred option.

Recommendations

1. That the report be noted; and
2. That the recommendations set out in the associated exempt report (Item 16 on the agenda for this meeting [FEP 2646X]) be approved.

Background

1. At the Resources Committee meeting on 12 November 2015, Members considered the Budget Update report FEP 2520 which identified a number of potential capital proposals to supplement the existing capital programme and to allow further service improvements to be delivered from the surplus capital receipts generated through the sale of former fire stations. One of these proposals included the construction of a third dedicated training facility in south London.
2. The initial capital proposal submitted in November 2015 was estimated to cost £8.5m. This cost was based on the provision of a four storey carbonaceous fire house and classroom/training block with facilities similar to that already provided at Park Royal. However, subsequent more detailed consideration has identified that a four storey building is insufficient to practise the full range of high rise firefighting skills and procedures and the new design specification has therefore been increased to a six storey building.
3. This report sets out the revised property requirements for a new Training Centre (the 'Third Training Centre') on the Croydon fire station site. Officers have also appraised a number of other location options, including other fire station sites and Biggin Hill airport, for the new training centre. The result of this has concluded that the only fire station site which is big enough to accommodate the training needs is Croydon. Biggin Hill has been discounted as an option for this project as it requires the purchase of a long lease or commercial rent arrangements.

The case for a high rise facility

4. Over the recent years, the number of incidents attended has fallen. At the same time the management of emergencies has become more demanding and complex. There is considerable public and legal scrutiny into the way in which incidents are dealt with. Formal scrutiny may come from a number of quarters, including the Health and Safety Executive, fire investigators acting for loss adjusters, as well as judicial enquiries. Scrutiny of competence have been paramount following several high profile incidents. This includes recent incidents involving Firefighter fatalities¹ and other serious incidents involving deaths of members of the public². It is important therefore that the Brigade can demonstrate that individuals have been adequately prepared and are competent.
5. In the risk critical environment in which the fire service operates training is integral to everything we do. In all its aspects training is a key part of the operational service and is the principal means by which the Authority seeks to protect its firefighters from harm and maintaining competence to protect the public and minimise the organisational risk of legal liability.
6. A high quality and modern training provision enables the Authority to discharge its employer responsibilities with regard to duty of care. Since the contract was awarded in 2012, there has been an increasing need to provide high rise carbonaceous training. The provision of the facility at Croydon will enable operational staff to practice the skills they need in a modern purpose built safe environment.
7. Fires in high rise buildings present firefighters with a wide variety of hazards. High rise buildings are not necessarily 'high risk', but a combination of their height, potentially complex layout and fire-engineered design can present a wide range, and unique set, of operational challenges when

¹ Harrow Court, Hertfordshire (2005); Marlie Farm, East Sussex (2006); Atherstone-on-Stour, Warwickshire (2007); Balmoral Bar, Strathclyde (2009)

² London Bombings, London (2005); Galston Mine Incident, Strathclyde (2008); Lakanal House, London (2009)

a fire does occur. In addition, there are a large number of tall buildings in London and a significant amount of new high rise buildings are either in the planning and/or construction phase.

8. The Brigade has responded to these challenges in a number of ways by leading on the recent fundamental national review of risk for high rise firefighting; by updating operational procedure; and introducing new equipment. Recent developments include the provision of equipment better suited to the water pressures that can be delivered in tall buildings, cable cutters and breathing apparatus cylinder covers. These have all been provided in response to recently identified hazards associated with fallen cabling (which has often been found in tall buildings). Taken together, these and other innovations such as the FIRE equipment carrying system have delivered major improvements to our 'safe system of work' (SSoW) for high rise fires.
9. Training will always be a fundamentally important component of any SSoW and the provision of a dedicated practical high rise training facility will undoubtedly further enhance firefighter safety and effectiveness. Such a facility will enable all aspects of high rise procedures to be practised (including occasions where key systems such as fire lifts and rising mains are not available for use). To practice these skills a structure of six floors is considered sufficient.
10. Current training facilities at London fire stations do not allow for practice of full implementation of the high rise procedure with smoke in realistic conditions. The complexity of high rise buildings is constantly evolving, creating new challenges to firefighters. There are currently over 100 high rise buildings under construction in London and this is expected to continue. Firefighter fatalities at Shirley Towers and Harrow Court have highlighted the risks to Firefighters from incidents of this type. Currently Firefighters undertake high rise training by means of a drill tower in a yard or a high rise building that is either empty or is loaned prior to occupation. Neither of these provide an adequate training environment to enable firefighters to undertake realistic high rise training. The risks associated with these types of fire are compounded by the reduction of incidents being attended by crews. There is, therefore, a need for a more realistic training environment to enable firefighters to maintain requisite competencies.
11. West Midlands FRS recently constructed a six storey, purpose-built training facility for high rise firefighting. They use the facility to assess operational competence in high rise facilities associated with operational preparedness, fire behaviour training, floor below branch training and rescue from height. The proposed facility in Croydon will deliver at least all these outcomes as well as further ones specific to the London environment.
12. The new build facilities will be subject to the usual town planning risks, particularly given the proposal to introduce a six storey carbonaceous fire house in a residential area. In response to the risk, Officers commissioned a Planning Appraisal from external consultants Nexus Planning and plan to carry out early consultation between an appointed design team and the town planners at the next stage.

13. Generally, the Planning Appraisal by Nexus is optimistic about the likelihood of a successful planning application at Croydon for a new training centre and fire house. A more detailed assessment and careful master planning is required, but the principle of such a development in planning terms should be possible to establish, given the local planning policy has a presumption in favour of community facilities and encourages co-location of services. Officers are exploring opportunities with other bluelight services about their utilisation of the facility. The Mayor's London Plan also encourages London Boroughs to work with LFEPA to identify sites required to support the provision of necessary infrastructure, a category in which this development could fall into.
14. In addition, while the potential for noise and issues relating to clean air, as well as the location of the fire house, are likely to be concerns and key issues for local residents and town planners, these should be addressed from the outset and the development does have some noted opportunities and advantages. There are no noted heritage issues to consider for example and – as the local townscape is considered poor – it should be possible for the development to make a positive contribution to the appearance of the local area.

The case for an incident command facility

15. The revalidation of incident command competency for station and group managers will require further capacity for incident command training and assessment. Training for crew and watch managers through the Level 1 Incident Command course is now being delivered, with levels 2-4 being developed. All courses will be delivered through the virtual reality platform which affords incident commanders the opportunity to train in a variety of realistic scenarios. The third training facility will support these developments and provide suitable capacity and resilience for the organisation to deliver a modern incident command training provision in a modern training setting.

Delegate feedback

16. Since the start of the contract in 2012, delegates who are located at fire stations in the south of London have been expressing their concern about the long distances they have to travel to the Beckton and Park Royal training venues. Delegates have cited that these distances have had a detrimental impact on their welfare and have impacted on childcare and caring responsibilities. The introduction of the third venue will serve to address these issues and reaffirms our commitment to the wellbeing of our staff and will support our application to achieve the Excellence level of the London Healthy Workplace Charter.

Proposed Scope of Work

17. Since November 2015, detailed work and an options appraisal have been undertaken to establish the accommodation requirements for the new Training Centre. These are shown in the diagrams attached as Appendices 1 and 2 and are summarised as follows:
 - Demolition of the Protective Equipment Group (PEG) and Babcock building at the north of the site, as well as demolition of the existing drill tower, breathing apparatus chamber and outhouses.
 - New six storey carbonaceous fire house, which will provide training simulation in a high rise environment. A 'carbonaceous' fire house involves filling the building with real fire and smoke in a controlled environment to provide a realistic training facility. It is also proposed that the fire house will be used with cold smoke and be used by station staff to practice station drills.

- New build training block to provide classrooms and group rooms; breathing apparatus classrooms/demonstration areas; showers and locker space; and office and administration areas, as well as other ancillary accommodation and a dining room with associated kitchen. In addition, the training block will include an Incident Command Unit, providing an immersive and audio visual training experience to develop incident command skills.
 - Associated yard works, including space for 40 cars.
 - Retain the existing fire station building, including maintaining operations during construction of the Third Training Centre.
18. The initial capital proposal was estimated at £ 8.5m. These costs have risen to £11.1m and this is explained further below. This includes construction, FFFE (Furniture, Fixtures, Fittings and Equipment) and design/management fees. High level project cost estimates and estimated cash flow are provided in the non public report.
19. The increase in project costs which are detailed in Appendix A of the non public report are primarily due to:
- The fire house at Croydon has been briefed to be six storeys, which compares to a 4 storey fire house at Park Royal.
 - The original accommodation schedule was based on Park Royal which does not have the capacity to deliver incident command training.
 - Increases in building costs since Park Royal redevelopment and forecast increases to the anticipated Croydon timetable. External cost consultants have advised that this could account for an approximate 21% uplift. This is based on forecast tender indices from late 2013 (when Park Royal was constructed) to early 2018, which is the estimated mid point of the Croydon construction. Subsequent advice after the EU Referendum, is that there has been significant downgrading in the forecast tender indices produced by the BCIS (Building Cost Information Service) for early 2018. However, it is recommended to maintain the budget at current levels given the volatility of the construction market.
 - Croydon has different site challenges, including demolition of existing accommodation, change in levels, dealing with existing tenants on site and planning issues associated with being in a residential area (compared to the industrial park at Park Royal).
20. The ongoing running and maintenance costs are estimated to be in the region of £600k per annum. Table 1 below provides a breakdown of these costs.

Table 1: Estimate of annual running/maintenance costs

Description	Cost (£)
Fire technicians, engineers and facilities personnel	325
Catering based on 50 delegates per day	103
Cleaning	33
Utilities	47
Repairs and maintenance	113
TOTAL	621

21. All estimated costs have been prepared by external cost consultants (Quantity Surveyors) using their professional experience and the BCIS, which is a leading provider of cost and price information in the UK construction industry and part of the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS). The costs have also been based on a high level scope of works prepared by Officers with support from Babcock. It should be noted that the estimated costs are an early indication of the likely cost of the project, but are subject to change following a scheme design and receipt of tenders from contractors.

Programme

22. Officers have reviewed the programme and carried out preliminary market engagement with consultant project managers. It is currently anticipated that the Third Training Centre could be ready for occupation by February 2019 as set out in the draft proposed programme attached as Appendix 3 to this report.
23. The programme is likely to include a package of enabling works, where the existing PEG/Babcock buildings, the drill tower and breathing apparatus chamber are demolished ahead of the construction of the new buildings. There is an identified risk that the demolition of the drill tower may be delayed due to the existence of a lease with a telecoms provider for equipment on or adjacent to the drill tower, which includes an 18 month period to remove the equipment after a written notice is served. Officers has approached the telecoms provider to forewarn them of the issues and the potential to explore relocation opportunities. The Authority has subsequently served a notice in August 2016 to remove the equipment and will seek to negotiate an earlier date for removal in line with the construction programme.
24. The programme has been based on LFB providing timely approvals to the designers to progress to the next stage. It is currently proposed that the construction works will not require the fire station to be vacated, but will require the existing PEG and Babcock functions to be decanted prior to the demolition of the premises they currently occupy and construction of the new facility.

Procurement

25. The next stage of the project includes the preparation of a detailed feasibility study which requires the appointment of a project manager, design team, associated consultancy services, surveys and investigations. Under standing order 62 (a)(viii), delegated authority of £200k has been given for this work and is included in the total estimated cost.
26. The Authority is in the process of appointing a consultant project manager and Quantity Surveyors for the project from the OJEU compliant NHS Construction Consultancy framework.
27. A consultant design team, and associated professional consultants and surveyors, will also be appointed through an OJEU compliant procurement route on a staged call off basis.
28. The appointed project managers will develop an OJEU compliant procurement strategy with officers for the construction works, which may include separate enabling works packages. Assuming that the costs can be contained within the awarded funding envelope, officers will appoint a contractor for the main construction works, which may also include separate packages for enabling works.
29. Officers will update the Committee on the project's progress as part of the six monthly performance reporting on the training contract.

Benefits appraisal

30. The provision of the Third Training Centre has been subject to the Authority's benefits realisation/appraisal process. The identified benefits are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Benefits realisation/appraisal

Benefit category	Benefit description
Future cost avoidance	Reduce associated travel and subsistence costs. Delegates based in south London will have less distance to travel and catering will be provided at the facility.
Improved service effectiveness	Meeting the existing gap of providing real fire training in high rise buildings mitigating a significant risk experienced by firefighters.
Efficient resource utilisation	Increased real fire training and incident command training over three purpose built/modern sites within London.
Improved sustainability impact	New training site will be a modern facility built to aspire to meet the BREEAM Excellent standard.
A safer and better place to work	Third site will reduce delegate travelling time for staff based at southern stations/workplaces. Availability of a third training centre will increase the capacity for crews training together via strategic resource.
Revenue generation	Subsequent spare capacity at Beckton and Park Royal will enable other blue light services and other organisations to use the facilities thereby generating third party income for the Authority which will be shared 50/50 with Babcock in line with the terms of the existing training contract. The Metropolitan Police and London Underground Limited have expressed initial interest in using the existing and future facilities.

Integrated Equipment and Logistics Project (IELP)

31. FEP 2464 relating to improvements to PEG services was presented to the Resources Committee in July 2015. The report recommended that the project's remit was expanded to develop a broader based solution incorporating the key elements of PEG, the Brigade Distribution Centre and the inter relationship with Operational Support Unit services. One of the possible recommended options being considered was to re-develop the existing PEG site at Croydon to accommodate the revised and improved IELP hub and service delivery processes.

32. Subsequent to this report and decision, the project for the development of a Third Training Centre, at the Croydon site, was launched. As a direct consequence this now necessitates the relocation of the current PEG function. Whilst this was included as a likely outcome of the IELP solution anyway, the work to relocate the PEG function will need to be accelerated and an interim or permanent re-location will need to be found within the next 12 months.
33. Unfortunately, the development of a full suite of improved processes and systems within a new fully integrated logistics solution and how these will realise greatest efficiencies has introduced a far greater volume of intricacies than envisaged. This coupled with the need to assimilate the property requirements as described above with proposals under development for construction of the Third Training Centre on the existing PEG site, has seen the IELP progress report to Resources Committee delayed until January 2017.
34. Officers recognise the co-dependency of both the IELP and Third Training Centre projects and are working to ensure that the specific requirements of both projects are recognised in order that they can both be delivered in a complimentary manner.

Property Leases and Income Implications

35. It is proposed that Babcock will be offered a lease of the new facility in accordance with the terms of the existing training contract. Babcock will not be provided with sole use of the Third Training Centre, affording the Authority the opportunity to use the facilities for alternative use and potential income generation.
36. Babcock currently lease premises at Croydon from the Authority, at approximately £51k per annum. This income will cease from the point that Babcock vacates the premises. The Lease is determinable on the Tenant giving the Landlord not less than 6 months notice. Such notice will need to be given in order to provide vacant possession for the demolition contractor. Babcock will therefore need to consent to vacate the premises during the build programme.
37. A longer term implication of Babcock's use of the Third Training Centre at Croydon will result in them vacating the Authority's premises at Harrow and Barking. The Authority currently lease the facilities to Babcock for approximately £120k and £51k per annum respectively. This income would cease in line with the start of a new lease for Babcock to use Croydon. It is worth noting that Babcock intend to continue to lease the Authority's site at Plaistow for the foreseeable future at approximately £124k per annum to deliver firefighter initial training. When Harrow is vacated by Babcock, the areas in question will either be used for operational purposes and/or will be disposed of for redevelopment. When Barking is vacated by Babcock, the areas in question maybe used as temporary accommodation for PEG as part of the Integrated Equipment and Logistics Project.
38. A further lease on the Croydon site relates to a ten year agreement dated August 2014 with a telecoms provider to locate equipment on and in the vicinity of the Drill Tower, where rent is approximately £15.5k per annum. Should Members approve the case for the Third Training Centre at Croydon, the agreement may be terminated if a new suitable location cannot be found on site. The notice to the telecoms provider to end the lease and remove their equipment has already been served with the maximum amount of time to achieve this. A number of other wayleaves associated with the telecoms equipment will also need to be terminated which require notice 12 months in advance.
39. The combined reduction of £222k in lease income from the existing regional training facilities will be offset by a reduction in the fixed fee element of the contract of £5m over the period April 2018 to March 2021.

Conclusion

40. The provision of a Third Training Centre at Croydon will enable the Authority to respond to the gap in the current training provision, namely the ability to assess operational competence in high rise facilities associated with operational preparedness. The facility will also address the increased demand for incident command training as part of the revalidation of incident command process. In addition, delegate concerns will also be resolved regarding the excessive travel distances they have to make to the Beckton and Park Royal training venues and the detrimental impact this has on their welfare and childcare and caring responsibilities.

Recommendations

41. That the Committee:

- Gives approval to build a Third Training Centre on the Croydon fire station site on condition that the costs do not exceed those set out in Appendix A to the non public report.
- Delegates authority to the Director of Finance and Contractual Services to appoint a consultant Project Manager and Quantity Surveyors and other professional consultants on condition that the costs do not exceed those set out in Appendix A to the non public report.
- Delegates authority to the Director of Financial and Contractual Services to appoint the building contractor for the Third Training Centre on condition that the costs of the contract do not exceed those set out in Appendix A to the non public report.
- Authorises the Head of Legal and Democratic Services (or authorised representative) to enter into and execute the contracts referred to above, together with all ancillary or additional documentation and agreements as necessary.

Head of Legal and Democratic Services comments

42. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services comments have been incorporated into the body of the report.

Director of Finance and Contractual Services comments

43. This report recommends that approval is given to build a Third Training Centre on the Croydon fire station site at a cost of £11.1m. An initial capital proposal of £8.5m was included in the November 2015 Budget Update report (FEP2520), which was based on providing facilities similar to that at the Park Royal training centre. The reason for the increase in costs from that earlier figure is set out in paragraph 19.

44. It is planned that the capital cost of this project could be met from the proceeds realised from the sale of the Authority's sites closed as part of LSP5. The saving in applying capital receipts in terms of a debt charge for the project would be £0.9m. This consists of MRP (minimum revenue provision to fund the repayment of the principal of the loan) at £0.617m and interest of £0.25m (based on a rate of 2.25 per cent) per annum over an 18 year period.

45. Redevelopment of the Croydon site requires that the existing PEG function is relocated prior to the demolition of the premises they currently occupy. The capital programme includes funding of £7.5m for the PEG Development from 2017/18 and the relocation will be the subject of a later report.

46. This report also sets out that there would be additional running costs estimated at £0.6m for the new Croydon training facility and lost income of £0.2m from sites currently primarily leased by Babcock. These financial pressures are included in the Budget Update report which is also on today's agenda.

47. This report also notes that there is a permanent reduction in the fixed fee element of the training contract of £5m over the period April 2018 to March 2021. This reduction is included in the Budget Update report which is also on today's Resources Committee agenda.

Sustainable Development implications

48. The Third Training Centre will aspire to meet the BREEAM Excellent standard. Although forty car parking spaces will be provided at the facility it is anticipated that this will have minimal impact to the environment.

Staff Side Consultations undertaken

49. The Fire Brigade's Union have confirmed that they support a Third Training Centre in the south of London as this will benefit their members by reducing the excessive distances they currently have to travel.

Equalities implications

50. The facility will address delegates concerns about the excessive travel distances they have to make to the Beckton and Park Royal training venues and the detrimental impact this has on their welfare and childcare and caring responsibilities.

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Existing Croydon site plan

Appendix 2 – Proposed Croydon site plan

Appendix 3 – Proposed Programme

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985	
List of background documents FEP 2464 – Vehicles and equipment contract update FEP 2520 – Budget Update report	
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