

TYNE AND WEAR FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

MEETING: 21ST SEPTEMBER 2009

SUBJECT: ESSENTIAL BUILDING WORKS AT THE BARMSTON TRAINING CENTRE

REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER, FINANCE OFFICER AND CLERK TO THE AUTHORITY

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides Members with information relating to the structural problems that have occurred within the Hot Fire buildings at the Training Centre and seeks approval to procure emergency building works to rectify the problems.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Service's Training Centre currently has two Hot Fire buildings the purpose of which is to provide firefighters with the opportunity to be trained in 'live fire' conditions as statutorily required and as set out in the Breathing Apparatus delivery programme. This realistic training ensures that firefighting staff can be developed and trained in a relatively safe environment in preparation for dealing with the challenging conditions they will face at incidents.
- 2.2 In February 2009, the larger of the two buildings was subject to a partial roof collapse which, fortunately, did not injure anyone. However, the incident did necessitate structural inspections of both buildings to be undertaken in order to identify the overall extent of the damage within the two structures. These inspections were carried out by Sunderland City Council who identified areas of damage to protective tiles, the walls and the floors caused over time by the extremes of heat which are generated inside the buildings in order to simulate real fire conditions. It was also identified that the works to floors and walls could be undertaken by a general building contractor but that specialist contractors would be required to carry out the remedial work on the heat resistant tiles.
- 2.3 In the interim, as a result of the structural damage, the Hot Fire building that suffered the partial roof collapse has not been in use since February 2009 and, following completion of the structural surveys, the second building is now being used in a very restricted manner with regular safety checks being carried out to ensure the continued safety of staff using the structure.
- 2.4 This has resulted in a backlog of firefighters who need, but have been unable to access, hot fire training. This position is becoming increasingly unsustainable and presents a risk to the service which concerns the Chief Fire Officer.
- 2.5 The original solution to rectify both buildings involved two back-to-back contracts due to the nature of the works, as follows:

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(i) To repair the structural damage and building fatigue:

For this aspect of the work the service envisaged the use of Sunderland City Council's, Cultural and Community Services Department (CCS). However after initial review of the task and their available resources for the project timescale, CCS were unable to immediately confirm that they would be able to undertake the work and after a short period of more detailed consideration, including better understanding of the procurement issues relating to the scale of the work, towards the end of June advised that they would, exceptionally on this occasion, be unable to give a quotation.

(ii) To replace the specialist heat resistant tiles:

For this aspect of the work the service would conduct a tender exercise with specialist tile manufactures /installers. This contractor would follow on with the installation of the tiles once the structural damage to the buildings was repaired.

- 2.6 The tender exercise for the tile replacement (ii) was duly undertaken and a contract was let on 2nd July 2009 in accordance with the Authority's Standing Orders.
- 2.7 With the Council being unable to quote for the works in element (i) there has been a setback in the programme to restore these buildings to operational use.

3 PROPOSAL

- 3.1 The Chief Fire Officer considers that the importance of these buildings to the health and safety of staff is such that the need to get the work completed has become urgent and, as such, an alternative procurement solution should be sought, in line with Standing Orders, given that:
- a full tendering exercise would create significant further delay which is felt to be unacceptable due to the business risk
 - the tiling contract has been put on hold pending the resolution of the situation regarding the structural works, and further delay could lead to an increase in the cost of this, as there is a specific timeframe for the contract value to remain fixed.
- 3.2 Subsequently, in view of the fact that, at the 15th June 2009 Authority meeting, Members approved the tender for the development of the USAR training facilities on the same site as the Hot fire buildings (Min No 23/2009 refers), the successful contractor (Lumsden and Carroll Construction) was approached to submit a quotation to undertake the general structural works to the Hot Fire buildings during the time they are on the site undertaking the USAR works. This is deemed to be the quickest solution, subject to the contractor's agreement and the demonstration of value for money. It would also have the additional advantage that for the majority of the work which would obviate the increased health and safety risks that multi-contractor arrangements are liable to.
- 3.3 Accordingly, a quotation was sought from Lumsden & Carroll Construction for provision of the required structural repairs to the Hot Fire Training Units and the figure received is to the sum of £65,204. In addition to this a cost of £9,330 will be payable to Sunderland City Council CSS department for Professional Fees.

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- 3.4 This quotation has been assessed by Sunderland City Council CCS department and they are satisfied that the quotation is reasonable and provides value for money.
- 3.5 Should this proposal be approved it would allow the service to complete the works in a timescale close to that originally envisaged in order to restore the Training Centre's ability to deliver and meet the essential training needs of the staff and our external partners.
- 3.6 It is considered that the works are now required as a matter of urgency and justify a departure from the usual competitive tendering arrangements in accordance with Standing Order E5(g).

4 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

- 4.1 Paragraph 3.3 above reports total costs of £74,534 for the required structural work. The Capital Programme for 2009/2010 includes provision of £28,984 for works to the BTC Fireground and Offices, resulting in a shortfall of £45,550.
- 4.2 This balance will be met either by reprioritising existing schemes within the Capital Programme, or from any underspends in the revenue budget, the details of which will be reported to Members as part of the 2009/2010 Revenue Budget Second Review in November 2009.

5 RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Due to the risk critical nature of the training carried out within the Hot Fire structures, failure to deliver this project would impact on the safety of operational staff.

6 HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The longer the buildings remain out of commission the more significant the backlog of training becomes and the associated health and safety risk increases.
- 6.2 In addition, due to the nature of the works taking place within the Training Centre site, a Construction Design Management (CDM) co-ordinator from Sunderland City Council will be supervising the construction operations to ensure that risks to health and safety on site are minimised during the works.
- 6.3 This will ensure that the contractor's staff, TWFRS staff and visitors are catered for during the time of the construction operations. TWFRS Health and Safety Department will be involved throughout the project to ensure that any issues are promptly identified and addressed by the relevant parties.

7 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

There are no Equality and Diversity implications associated with this report.

8 RECOMMENDATION

8.1 Members are recommended to:

- a) Note the urgency of the emergency works to the Hot Fire training structures and;
- b) Approve the use of Lumsden and Carroll to carry out the works in accordance with Standing Order E5(g).

BACKGROUND PAPERS

The undermentioned Background Papers refer to the subject matter of the above report:

- The BTC USAR Training Facilities Tender Evaluation Document.
- Capital Report to Authority 23 February 2009