

For Publication

Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority  
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**REPORT AUTHOR: DEPUTY CHIEF FIRE OFFICER**

**SUBJECT: TRI-SERVICE ESTATE STRATEGY – PROPOSED CORE PRINCIPLES**

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Background Papers:         None

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Implications (tick ✓):

LEGAL		FINANCIAL	
HUMAN RESOURCES		EQUALITY IMPACT	
ENVIRONMENTAL		POLICY	
CORPORATE RISK	Known	OTHER (please specify)	
	New		

*Any implications affecting this report are noted at the end of the report.*

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## PURPOSE:

To provide Members with an update on progress to establish a Tri-Service Estates Strategy between Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS), Bedfordshire Police (BP) and East of England Ambulance Service Trust (EEAST).

## RECOMMENDATIONS:

That Members:

1. **Note** the progress of this important collaboration initiative, and;
2. **Comment** and **agree** to incorporate the proposed five core principles into the draft Tri-Service Estate Strategy for Bedfordshire;
3. **Agree** to receive a further report presenting the final draft Tri-Service Estates Strategy once released by the Blue Light Collaboration Strategic Board.

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### 1. Background

- 1.1 The Estate is one of the key enablers for any organisation, especially our vital emergency services.
- 1.2 At a macro level, the 'blue light' estate portfolio within Bedfordshire has seen varying levels of under investment, meaning that existing buildings require additional investment and maintenance and many are considered not fit for purpose to enable the emergency services to operate in the most effective way, particularly in a post-Covid world.
- 1.3 Whilst BFRS, BP and EEAST have a successful track record of co-locating at several sites in recent years, these initiatives could arguably have benefited from a more strategic approach that considered the longer term needs of all 3 blue light partners.
- 1.4 Members will recall the efforts to progress a joint headquarters project with Bedfordshire Police but despite considerable labours by both parties, this project has effectively stalled, arguably because of a lack of alignment of operational priorities.
- 1.5 In an effort to reinvigorate this important collaboration workstream, in December 2019 the DCFO was able to secure an agreement in principle between BFRS, BP and EEAST to establish a tri-services estates strategy for Bedfordshire that seeks

to adopt a long term approach to invest in existing sites where they require it, or provide new accommodation which will deliver better opportunities to enable collaboration, improve service delivery and/or realise efficiencies.

## 2 Tri-Service Estates Strategy – progress update

- 2.1 Although delayed by the impact of the Covid pandemic, research to establish the current blue-light estate portfolio within Bedfordshire and future requirements and priorities has progressed considerably and the BLCSB have now reached agreement on a set of core principles that will govern the approach to estates collaboration within Bedfordshire.
- 2.2 This Strategy will enable a focus to be placed on sharing buildings between police, fire and ambulance wherever mutually beneficial with a set of core principles to guide how we develop and maintain our estate into the long term of 2040 and beyond. An annual review will take place to ensure it remains fit for purpose and make any necessary adjustments to principles and the implementation plan as required. Each organisation will retain the right to determine how it wishes to invest and develop its estate portfolio.
- 2.3 The outcomes from the BFRS Emergency Cover Review will provide a clear evidence base to enable the FRA to make informed decisions when considering investment in our estate portfolio to ensure our resources are in the right location to maximise effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery in pursuit of our mission to provide outstanding fire and rescue services that help make Bedfordshire safer.

## 3 5 Core Principles

- 3.1 The vision for the blue light estate within Bedfordshire has to be to provide modern, flexible, fit for purpose and value for money accommodation for our vital emergency services, providing an improved working environment for staff that promotes and supports their health and wellbeing, is readily accessible and reassuring to our diverse communities and adaptable to both current and future demands placed on each organisation.
- 3.2 The proposed 5 core principles which will guide future decision making are set out below:
  - i. We aim to have buildings located in the right place to support an efficient and effective service whilst providing a highly visible presence to enhance public confidence and operational viability for all partner agencies to co-locate whenever possible

- ii. We aim to have an estate which is the right size, with sufficient flexibility to efficiently and effectively work alongside partner agencies to reduce running costs.
- iii. We aim to provide good quality buildings, with sufficient functionality and flexibility, to support the effective operation and delivery of the business, wellbeing of staff and to meet the diverse needs of our community.
- iv. We aim to provide and maintain an environmentally sustainable estate in the right condition to support the effective operation and delivery of business and to minimise the potential for any disruption to that business.
- v. We aim to deliver services and investments which are value for money, at the right time and right quality that promote energy and carbon emission reduction.

#### 4 Shared Vehicle Workshops

4.1 The project to establish a joint headquarters with Bedfordshire Police identified five common functions of the respective police and fire headquarters broadly as follows:

- i. 999 Control Room;
- ii. Training Facilities
- iii. Workshops & Stores
- iv. Emergency Response Base
- v. HQ Administrative Functions

4.2 To maintain momentum in our collaboration on estates, alongside the efforts to develop the tri-services estates strategy, the BLCSB has been exploring one of the five common functions, namely assessing the feasibility of establishing a shared vehicle workshop and stores facility between BP, BFRS and EEAST. This has progressed to the stage where a strategic outline case was presented to the BLCSB in early 2021 and the BLCSB gave approval for a small project team to develop the proposals into a more detailed outline business case which will be presented back to the BLCSB later in 2021, pending endorsement by the relevant governing bodies of each service. Members will be aware that Cllr McVicar is an active standing member of the BLCSB. For BFRS, the outline business case will be presented to the full FRA for comment and approval before progressing to project implementation.

4. Next Steps

- 4.1 Subject to all three governing bodies agreeing to the proposed 5 core principles, a final draft strategy will be presented to the BLCSB prior to release to the 3 governing bodies for final approval later in 2021.

5 Recommendation

5.1 That Members:

4. **Note** the progress of this important collaboration initiative, and;
5. **Comment** and **agree** to incorporate the proposed five core principles into the draft Tri-Service Estate Strategy for Bedfordshire;
6. **Agree** to receive a further report presenting the final draft Tri-Service Estates Strategy once released by the Blue Light Collaboration Strategic Board.

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