

BEDFORDSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

ASSET MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

1 Introduction

Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service (the Authority) own and / or use a significant range of assets which include:

- Property (land and buildings)
- Fleet/Transport
- Equipment (fire and rescue emergency response equipment)
- ICT Hardware and Software Systems

The value of the Authority's tangible fixed assets can be found in the latest published Statement of Accounts and summarised in the Balance Sheet section.

This strategy sets out the Fire and Rescue Authority's objectives for, and approach to, the management of these corporate assets. Asset management forms a key component of the Fire Authority's corporate and financial governance arrangements. The strategy aims to achieve good practice by following the recommendations of 'Building On Strong Foundations – A Framework For Local Authority Asset Management', published by the Department for Communities and Local Government in February 2008 and more recent publications too.

This strategy details the Authority's overall approach to the management of these assets and includes:

- A definition of the term asset management.
- The principles and benefits of asset management
- The Authority's asset management objectives.
- The Authority's approach to asset management planning, including production of Asset Management Plans and their relationship with other corporate plans.
- Asset management arrangements and responsibilities.

2 Definition of Asset Management

Asset management can be defined as an “activity that seeks to align the asset base with the organisation’s corporate goals and objectives ... [and which] ...ensures that the ... asset base of an organisation is optimally structured in the best corporate interest of the organisation concerned.”¹

3 Principles and Benefits of Asset Management

The core principles of the Authority’s approach to asset management are as follows:

- To contribute to the long-term aims and objectives of the Authority.
- To tactically support the needs of individual asset users.
- To ensure assets are managed in an efficient and effective manner to deliver Best Value.
- To assist the Authority in meeting its statutory obligations under the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 and Civil Contingencies Act 2004.
- To integrate asset management with the Authority’s other management processes (including compliance, financial, risk management, human resource management).

This Asset Management Strategy therefore reflects the strategic context supporting the procurement, provision, development, maintenance and disposal of the Fire and Rescue Authority’s assets.

There are many benefits for the Authority, both financial and non-financial, of good asset management. The following list sets out some of the benefits, although it is worth recognising that at times these benefits may conflict with each other. Good asset management can:

- Deliver exceptional services for citizens, aligned with locally agreed priorities, whilst focusing investment on need.
- Ensure appropriate, effective IT and Communications equipment and solutions are provided.

¹ Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) Public Sector Asset Management Guidelines 2008

- Secure high quality and cost effective accommodation, which will be sufficiently flexible to adapt to the Authority's long-term requirements and ensure that assets are correctly maintained.
- Secure high quality and cost effective vehicles and other equipment which will allow the Authority to effectively meet its statutory obligations under the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004.
- Generate efficiency gains, capital receipts, or an income stream which will assist in the delivery of a cost effective and responsive service, which supports operational needs.
- Help to strategically plan accommodation for the future.
- Contribute to the Authority's community safety initiatives through the design of fire stations.
- Contribute to the Authority's community safety initiatives through the provision of appropriate vehicles and equipment which meet operational need.
- Support the Authority's corporate risk management in relation to legislative and compliance obligations including improving the accessibility of services and ensure compliance with Equality and Dignity requirements.
- Reduce carbon emissions and improve environmental sustainability.
- Increase co-location, partnership working and sharing of knowledge.

4 Asset Management Objectives

Based upon the above principles and benefits, together with the Authority's own context, the Authority has identified the following corporate asset management objectives and key areas of focus:

- a. To ensure that the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) is fully supported by the Authority's asset base.

Key areas of focus:

- Reviewing assets through the CRMP process to identify opportunities to improve community safety.
- Effective management of the asset base.
- Effective management of the procurement of assets.
Ensuring assets are suitable, accessible and maintained to required Standards.
- Ensuring that new assets are sustainable and affordable for the whole life of the asset.

- b. To procure, manage and dispose of assets in an efficient manner.

Key areas of focus:

- Challenging the need for ownership/retention of under achieving assets.
- Ensuring asset related efficiency savings are maximised.
- Minimising the costs via efficient processes, partnership approaches and economies of scale.
- Reducing annual running costs.
- Ensuring robust project planning processes are in place.

- c. To realise maximum value from assets in contributing to the Authority's objectives.

Key areas of focus:

- Reviewing assets through the CRMP process to identify opportunities to improve community safety.
- Seeking opportunities to engage with partners in shared facilities.

d. To raise awareness of assets and provide a clear decision making process.

Key areas of focus:

- Setting standards for design, care and use of assets.
- Monitoring compliance with statutory, legal and other obligations.
- Periodically review corporate management arrangements for capital asset planning to ensure they are fit for purpose.
- Conduct post implementation review of all capital projects that are undertaken.
- Engage with other organisations and share learning to drive a process of continuous improvement.

e. To ensure the Authority effectively manages its asset base.

Key areas of focus:

- Up-to-date Capital Strategy linked to CRMP and Medium-Term Financial Strategy.
- Up-to-date Asset Management Plans with existing asset management arrangements and outcomes, assessment of backlog maintenance; plans to improve corporate asset use.
- Up-to-date asset register.
- Designated corporate property officer.
- Reporting arrangements allow Members to fulfill strategic responsibilities.

- Annual planned maintenance programme based on rolling surveys.
- Priority given to capital projects based on formal, objective approval process.

5 Asset Management Planning

The Authority's approach to asset management planning in respect of its main asset groups will be through the development and maintenance of three detailed Asset Management Plans, as follows:

- Land and Buildings
- Fleet and Transport
- Information and Communications Technology

The Asset Management Plans will set out the Authority's plans for managing and developing its asset base over the medium-term and will cover a three to four year period (aligned with the Authority's Community Risk Management and Medium Term Financial Planning processes). The relevant functional head is responsible for production of draft plans by the end of March each year in respect of the following financial year (or later where data is required, such as utility information). The development of these draft plans will take place in parallel with the CRMP and budget setting processes. Following finalisation of the service budgets, CRMP and previous years' performance, the final plans will then be presented to the Corporate Services Strategy and Challenge Group for review and approval by June each year.

The individual Asset Management Plans will clearly identify the way in which the management of the Authority's assets supports the core provision of a fire and rescue service to the public and will reference key information, policies, procedures and performance information for the asset groups.

The overall shared aims of the Asset Management Plans will be to:

- Support the effective provision of service delivery, in particular emergency response cover, based on the current and future requirements which are driven by travel distances and response times.

- Define in broad terms, the user requirements.
- Define the standard of provision with appropriate Key Performance Indicators for performance management purposes.
- Provide a framework for improving and maintaining assets.
- Inform the strategic and financial planning of the Fire and Rescue Authority over the medium-term.
- Take account of whole life costs, sustainability issues and affordability.

It is a fundamental principle of effective asset management that it must be undertaken on a 'whole life' basis and the Asset Management Plans will therefore reflect the following stages:

- **Identification** of need.
- **Procurement**, including ongoing maintenance and development to suit continuing needs.
- **Operation** by the asset user.
- Regular **review** of fitness for purpose and performance.
- **Disposal** when the need no longer exists or it is no longer appropriate or financially advantageous for the asset to be retained.

Performance measurement and target setting drives service improvement. For that reason, each Asset Management Plan will incorporate Key Performance Indicators related to its asset group which will:

- Reflect appropriate national Performance Indicators and facilitate benchmarking
- Lead to establishment of challenging targets.
- Be used for robust reporting of performance at Authority and Service level.

The Asset Management Plans will inform and be informed by the Authority's other corporate planning processes, including:

- Community Risk Management Plan, which sets out how the Authority's vision and strategy priorities and how the Authority will deploy resources in the most efficient/effective way to improve public safety.
- Medium-Term Financial Plan, which sets out forecast expenditure and available resources over a four year period.
- Partnership Plans

Major investment in the asset base is funded by the Capital Programme. The Capital Programme is built up from bids for capital resources submitted to the officer led Capital Strategy Team who will:

- Assess the availability of financial resources.
- Explore and assess alternative ways of delivering strategic objectives.
- Assess affordability and determine priorities.
- Formulate, manage, monitor and evaluate capital schemes.

The Capital Programme is then submitted to Members of the Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA) for their consideration and approval.

The Capital Programme:

- Links capital investment in the Authority's asset base to the Community Risk Management Plan and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.
- Covers all aspects of capital expenditure within the Authority.
- Informs the Revenue budget.
- Ensures assets are fully considered in the Authority's plans.
- The Capital Programme includes all known requirements over a four year period and is reviewed and reported to each FRA meeting.

6 Asset Management Roles and Responsibilities

In summary, the following officers have the responsibility of protecting, safeguarding and maintaining assets within their control. This includes ensuring that there are proper asset registers/records held for the assets they manage, the assets are secure and security marked as necessary and that where maintenance is required a robust system is in place to ensure this is actioned, monitored and recorded appropriately. The lead officers are:

The Head of ICT – Information Technology and Communications Assets
The Head of Finance/Treasurer – Property Assets

The Head of Service Delivery Support – Fleet and Equipment

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The following undertake key roles in the asset management process:

Individual/Group Role	
Corporate Services Policy & Challenge Group	Review and approve the Asset Management Strategy every three years. Annually review and approve the three Asset Management Plans.
Corporate Services Policy & Challenge Group	Regularly monitor asset management performance against the Key Performance Indicators within each Asset Management Plan and scrutinise the effectiveness of the asset management process.
Capital Strategy Team	The Chief Fire Officer is the chair of the Capital Strategy Team Develop and monitor the Capital Programme. Prioritise capital investment bids. Assign and consider post-implementation reviews of capital projects.
Chief Fire Officer	Lead Principal Officer support to Corporate Services Policy and Challenge Group Develop corporate asset management strategy
Head of Finance/Treasurer	Undertake the role of 'Corporate Asset Officer.' Oversee ongoing development and implementation of the Asset Management Plans.
Head of ICT Head of Service Delivery Support Property Manager	Undertake role of 'asset officers' for their respective asset group. Produce and manage the ongoing development and implementation of the Asset Management Plan for their respective asset group. Liaise closely with the Head of Finance/Treasurer on all asset related issues.

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