



Report title

TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT - FUTURE OPTIONS

Agenda item

13

Meeting

Authority

Date

24 July 2008

Report by

Commissioner for Fire and Emergency Planning

Document Number

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Summary

This report highlights the current and future challenges faced by the Authority when seeking to maintain the quality and quantity of training for Authority staff using existing facilities. It also outlines the potential opportunities that could be realised if the Authority chose a different approach to securing the provision of training facilities and recommends that a project be commenced to identify the most appropriate and cost effective option for providing training facilities in the future.

Recommendations(s)

That:

1. The Authority agrees to initiate a project to undertake the research required to comprehensively assess benefits and risks associated with the various options detailed in this report.
2. The project be delivered using in-house resources with the Sponsorship role undertaken by the Director of Operational Policy & Training and the Project Manager responsibility given to the Head of Training & Development. The project team will include the Head of Property, Head of Procurement and a representative from Legal & Democratic Services.
3. Given the strategic importance of the training function Members be invited to form an ad-hoc panel to review the work of the project team. It is proposed that the Director of Operational Policy & Training be responsible for briefing this panel on a 6-weekly basis.
4. Once this feasibility project has been completed a further report is submitted to LFEPA detailing the results of the project with recommendations on the most advantageous option to progress. Officers will aim to present this report to Members at the January 2009 Authority meeting.

Introduction

1. The purpose of this report is to highlight the current and future challenges for the Training and Development (T&D) department when seeking to maintain its' commitment to continually improve the quality and range of training services required in a modern Fire & Rescue service.
2. The report explains the growing difficulties faced by the Training and Development department in delivering cost effective and efficient training services within the constraints of a property portfolio much of which was designed and built over a century ago.
3. The report also details some of the opportunities and benefits that could be exploited by the Authority if an alternative approach to training delivery was adopted.
4. Whilst the report does not go as far as giving a recommendation on which of the various options should be adopted, it does propose a way forward that will culminate in a more detailed report being developed for Authority consideration in January 2009.

The Fire Service Context

5. In the risk critical environment in which the Fire Rescue Service (FRS) operates training is absolutely integral to everything we do. Where the FRS differs from many other sectors is that, frequently, the environment within which firefighters operate is unknown, unpredictable, hostile and deteriorating; with significant pressure to make early decisions and take immediate action in response to the risk to the public and themselves. In this environment it is the actions of firefighters, using their skills and knowledge, that enables effective and safe resolution of the situation.
6. Members will also be aware that the services the Authority provides have expanded considerably in response to the new risks that the capital faces. These risks and the range of expanded services the Authority supplies in response to them have been explained in detail in the London Safety Plan (FEP 1181). Thankfully many of the situations that firefighters may face occur infrequently but there is a clear need to be prepared when they do. This means that much more time must be spent training for the different incidents that may be faced than will be spent in actually dealing with them. This issue becomes ever more important as the Authority's policies on prevention and protection continue to be successful. Firefighters will continue to get less "on the ground" experience, which means the importance of training is likely to increase.
7. In this context training cannot be regarded as a support service. In all its aspects training is an integral part of the operational service and is the principal means by which we seek to protect our firefighters from harm and the Authority risk of legal liability. It is also the principal means through which we discharge our employer responsibilities with regard to our duty of care.
8. It is also a fact that the Authority has to provide all the training for its operational staff from within its own resources. There is no external educational or vocational training that can be undertaken before entry to the service. While other sectors can attract qualified staff (such as teachers) and reduce the cost of training overall the Authority has to bear the full cost of the initial and ongoing training of its operational staff. Much of this training is practical in nature and requires quite extensive facilities if it is to be carried out to a high standard. Issues about this provision are explored in this report and will be covered in more detail in the subsequent report in January.

Current Service Provision

9. The Authority most recently set out its commitment to staff training and development in the Training and Development Strategy 2006-2009 (FEP893) and again in September 2006 (FEP 911) when the Authority agreed to make a major investment in the provision of enhanced operational training.
10. The type of training provided by the Training and Development Department can generally be split into the following categories:
 - Skills - Predominately this is the acquisition of skills required to work in an operational context such as Rescue Skills, Breathing Apparatus, Incident Command, Real Fire Training, etc.
 - Personal Skills Training - This includes equality and diversity, leadership and management training, coaching and mentoring, etc.
11. The site at Southwark is still the main focus for training delivery and the pressure on these facilities has grown considerably in the last decade. The site contains a variety of buildings and facilities constructed over a number of years since the early 19th century. The site is Grade II listed and was originally designed to service the needs of the recruit training programme. The site is now used for a wide range of training delivery including some very specialised rescue skills. This has placed considerable pressure on the site in terms of space, training capacity, and facilities.
12. In September 2006 the Authority also approved additional investment for training (FEP911). This investment introduced additional training courses for risk critical areas of activity such as breathing apparatus, real fire training and tactical/strategic command. All of this has significantly increased the range and volume of training.

Current Training Facilities

13. The T&D department currently operates from one large site in Southwark, one smaller site nearby (Skyline House), three local training venues (LTVs) and a number of other locations that are used to deliver specialist training, e.g., the Royal Albert Docks for High Volume Pump training.
14. The Southwark Training Centre site is Grade II listed and was originally designed to service the needs of the recruit training programme. The site is now used for a wide range of training delivery including some very specialised rescue skills. This has placed considerable pressure on the site in terms of space, training capacity, and facilities
15. Southwark site has been developed many times since it was first opened and this investment has served the Authority well in keeping pace with ever increasing training demands. However, in December 2001 a Space Audit of Southwark Training Centre was undertaken by Dron & Wright Property Consultants, which found that the site was overcrowded and access for people with disabilities to both the office accommodation and the class room facilities are inadequate. Dron & Wright's conclusion advised T & D that they "should not continue to use Southwark as a Training Centre as it is."
16. To cope with the increasing training demands it has been necessary for the Authority to secure additional accommodation and facilities. Examples of this are Skyline House in Union Street where a number of the central training teams are currently located due to insufficient space available at Southwark Training Centre. The Authority has also adapted a number of its existing fire station sites to create capacity and facilities needed to support the additional training requirements, e.g., Shadwell,

Erith, Croydon, etc.. This has placed additional financial burden on the Authority. Even when the Authority has utilised an existing asset, normally a fire station, additional costs have often been incurred due to the need to develop the site to make it suitable for training purposes.

17. In addition to the above the Authority has leased other sites where the more specialist training is undertaken. The driver training facilities at South Ockendon and High Volume Pump facility at the Royal Albert Docks are examples of this. In some cases favourable lease arrangements have been found, which reduces rental costs, but this has been reflected in the security of the arrangements. In particular certain risk critical elements of training such as driver and High Volume Pump training are often at risk due to the temporary unavailability of the site.

Winchester House and the London Fire Brigade Museum

18. Members will be aware that Winchester House and the London Fire Brigade museum are co-located on the Southwark Training Centre site.
19. Winchester House, an 18th century mansion, comprises a basement, ground and two upper floors and was used from 1878 until 1937 as the official residence of London's chief fire officer. The building is Grade II listed and accommodates most of the museum's artefacts. The larger museum artefacts are located in the ground floor appliance bay off the main reception of the training centre.
20. Although this report focuses on the provision of the Authority's training functions it is clear that the future of Winchester House and the museum will also need to be considered. Officers, as part of a separate review, are currently looking at options for the future of LFB museum including relocation.

Current and Future Challenges

21. As stated above the main training centre at Southwark can no longer support the range and volume of training now required. In particular the site cannot accommodate the annual volume of trainee courses that are now needed to maintain the operational establishment. This means that part of the trainee syllabus (approx. a quarter) is facilitated at alternative locations.
22. The Southwark site has no facilities to support water rescue, motor driver, line rescue or high volume pump training. It also struggles to accommodate some of the larger vehicles such as the Incident Response Unit (Mass Decontamination) and Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) modules. This is a particular problem when programming rescue skills training as these large assets have to be sited at Southwark to support the delivery of the course.
23. The site is also in need of major refurbishment and redecoration with the estimated cost of the work being in excess of £1 million. This work, which includes significant external and internal repairs, is required to protect and preserve the listed properties of the site. A separate report on the repairs and redecoration of STC is due to be submitted to the Finance, Property and Procurement Committee (FPPC) in September 2009.
24. The location of STC in relation to the residential population of the borough also restricts the volume and type of training that can be undertaken at certain times of the day/week. Due to the problems associated with noise pollution it has been necessary to curtail evening and certain weekend training activities.
25. The diverse and disparate range of Authority property currently utilised by the T&D department makes it difficult to deliver high quality training in a cost effective way. Many of the existing training venues have been developed and/or adapted incrementally to meet the ever growing training demands. Consequently, many have practical and physical constraints that limit the volume and type of training that can be accommodated. This problem extends to the environmental protection at some

of our current training venues, which lack the appropriate pollution control measures. For example the Brigade currently has only four training sites that meet the environmental control requirements to support operational foam training.

Opportunities

26. The provision of modern purpose built training facilities would enable the Authority to support the full range and volume of training now required to maintain staff competences and support individual and team development. The facilities could also be future proofed to maximise the Authority's ability to respond to the inevitable changes to training requirements that will occur over time.
27. Relocating the training facilities should enable many of the current restrictions on night time and weekend training to be lifted. This will maximise the potential use of the training facilities and enable training to be delivered more flexibly. This will increase both training efficiency and capacity, which will be particularly important if the Authority is to maximise productivity following a change in the shift patterns for station based staff.
28. A modern state of the art training facility could include design features to minimise the impact on the environment and the local community. These could include sustainable energy features (e.g. solar panels/wind turbines), water harvesting and energy conservation. This would support the Authority's policy on sustainability and assist in reducing the Brigade's carbon footprint.
29. New training facilities would be designed to be fully accessible to all staff groups and visitors. The cost of achieving this required level of accessibility is greatly reduced when these facilities are incorporated in to the initial building design.
30. Consolidating all of the Authority's training requirements within the new training facilities would reduce the risk exposure currently being experienced due to the potential loss of an existing training venue, e.g. Royal Albert Docks. The scope and design of the new training facilities could also take account of the business continuity requirements of the Authority.
31. The scope of the new training facility could be designed to include residential accommodation and other features that would provide an opportunity for the Authority to generate income. There are currently a number of initiatives that require Fire & Rescue Services to secure training on a national basis and if the Authority were to secure a modern purpose built training facility it would be able to compete for this type of business. There is also the scope to provide training to our other emergency service partners.
32. Any spare capacity at the new training facilities could be marketed for use by external organisations. This would provide a further opportunity for the Authority to generate income.
33. When the new training facility/provision is operational the Authority could be in a position to generate income through the sale of the STC site. The Authority would also achieve efficiency savings as the existing portfolio of training facilities would no longer be required.

Examples of Options to Secure New Training Facilities

34. There are number of options that could be considered to maximise the opportunities detailed above. Examples of some of these are:

- **Capital Investment** - this would require the Authority to meet the full cost of the design, development and delivery of the new training provision. Assuming that the Authority's existing assets are not utilised, additional costs would also be incurred in identifying and securing the land/property needed for the development. Strathclyde Fire & Rescue Service

has recently announced plans to build a new state of the art training centre using Capital funding. Officers understand that the estimated cost of the Strathclyde project is approximately £30 million.

- **Private Finance Initiative (PFI)** - recent contact with the department of Communities and Local Government (CLG) indicates that there will be additional PFI credits available later in the year. This option has already been utilised by other Fire & Rescue Services (South Wales FRS) as a means of securing modern training facilities.
- **Outsourcing the Service** - this would involve the Authority developing a detailed 'output-based specification', which could be used to invite tenders to deliver the full range of training services. This option could be scoped to provide part or all of the Authority's training requirements. Other Fire & Rescue Services have adopted similar schemes whereby the training facilities have been out-sourced but the responsibility for training delivery has been kept in-house.

Conclusions

35. It is clear that the Authority's current training facilities are no longer suitable to support the full range and volume associated with the Authority's training requirements. It is also becoming increasingly challenging for the Authority to respond to the ever increasing complexity and sophistication of the skills requirements for the new generation of appliances and equipment being introduced in to operational service.
36. The growth in training requirement has resulted in a diverse and disparate training property portfolio, which is inefficient and expensive to maintain. Any future growth in the Authority's training requirements is also likely to involve additional costs either in terms of securing new training venues or developing existing facilities.
37. Securing new training facilities will enable the Authority to optimise its training services and will increase flexibility and deliver efficiency savings. It will also assist the Authority to maximise the productivity benefits associated with the planned change in shift patterns.
38. Having access to modern training facilities may also provide the Authority with an opportunity to generate income.

Recommendations

39. The Authority agree to initiate a feasibility project to undertake the research required to comprehensively assess benefits and risks associated with the various options detailed in this report.
40. That the project be delivered using in-house resources with the Sponsorship role undertaken by the Director of Operational Policy & Training and the Project Manager responsibility given to the Head of Training & Development. The project team will include the Head of Property, Head of Procurement and a representative from Legal & Democratic Services.
41. Given the critical nature of the training function Members be invited to form an ad-hoc panel to review the work of the project team. It is proposed that the Director of Operational Policy & Training be responsible for briefing this panel on a 6-weekly basis.
42. That once this feasibility project has been completed an Authority report is prepared detailing the findings of this work and containing a clear recommendation on the most appropriate option to progress. Officers will aim to present this report to Members at the January 2009 Authority meeting.

Head of Legal and Democratic Services Comments

43. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services has no specific legal comments arising from the report. He does however draw attention to the points made above that the effective training of staff is a vital method of reducing the risk of legal liability, both civil liability and criminal liability under the health and safety at Work etc Act and the Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act. Like all employers the Authority owes a duty of care to its staff; the provision of effective training is one method of addressing that duty. Where an employee's duties can be hazardous in nature the more onerous is the duty of the employer. It is therefore important that everything reasonably practicable should be provided so as to protect staff in relation to known risks and thereby reduce the potential for injuries and claims against the Authority. Similarly effective training in relation to fire and rescue good practice will minimise the scope for claims against the Authority based on allegations of negligent action

Head of Finance Comments

44. The report recommends that a feasibility study is undertaken into the various options for future training provision for the Authority in order to recommend a preferred way forward to Members. This will set out the associated costs and benefits and the funding implications. The study will be done using existing resources and within existing budgets.

Environmental Implications

45. The options developed by the project will be subject to a comprehensive Environmental Impact Assessment. This will include reviewing the options against the Authority's sustainability policy and carbon emission targets.

Equalities Implications

46. The proposals developed by the project will be subject to a comprehensive Equality Impact Assessment.

List of Appendices to this report: N/A

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