DORSET & WILTSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

Item 17/46

MEETING	Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority
DATE OF MEETING	8 September 2017
SUBJECT OF THE REPORT	Assets Department Resourcing Update
STATUS OF REPORT	For open publication
PURPOSE OF REPORT	For information
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	Following combination, the Asset department has suffered from a large number of vacancies, significantly in excess of what would normally be expected or could be predicted. The reasons for the high level of vacancies included retirements, promotion to other roles or movement to other organisations of key members of staff. However, during this period the teams have continued to ensure that they have undertaken all of the key elements of their work that ensures all premises, fleet and equipment are maintained and fit for purpose. As a result of recent recruitment campaigns there is now stability in the department and the capacity of the teams has been restored. As a result we are now in a strong position to work towards full implementation of recognised asset management systems that were always planned to be delivered.
RISK ASSESSMENT	Failure to ensure that there are sufficient competent staff for the management of key assets will not support efficient working arrangements and the cultural aim of achieving a one-team approach to the new Service.
COMMUNITY IMPACT	None for the purpose of this report
BUDGET IMPLICATIONS	None for this report
RECOMMENDATIONS	It is recommended that Members note the contents of this report
BACKGROUND PAPERS	PAS 55-1:2008

APPENDICES	None
REPORT ORIGINATOR AND CONTACT	ACFO John Aldridge Email: john.aldridge@dwfire.org.uk Telephone: 01722691069

1.   Introduction

1.1   During combination a vast amount of work was undertaken to ensure that the Assets department would be able to function and undertake what we perceived would be normal business whilst, at the same time, delivering reductions in spend of up to 25% on the operating costs of the two previous services.

1.2   This was mainly achieved by reducing managerial roles at the most senior level in the department e.g. one Asset Manager, one Estates Manager, one Equipment Manager and one Fleet Manager. However, it was also recognised that the maintenance of the combined estate, fleet and equipment would require the numbers of technicians to largely remain the same if they were to operate efficiently, economically, competently and safely.

1.3   What could not be foreseen was the amount of movement within the department. Numbers of personnel have fluctuated significantly from 1 April 2016 with a total of 31 vacancies (not all running consecutively) out of a department of 50 members of staff.

1.4   Many of these vacancies have also occurred in key areas, such as the remaining Assets Manager, Fleet Manager, Estates Manager and Equipment Manager roles.

1.5   It should be noted however, that individuals and teams have continued to ensure that all of the key elements of their work that ensures all of our premises, fleet and equipment are maintained and fit for purpose has continued through some very challenging times. This is to everyone's credit.

1.6   We have also recently been able to secure the services of an experienced Asset Manager. This will now allow departments and teams to progress with planned work to harmonise systems, and to introduce new systems as required, that will enable single ways of working to be in place by the end of the 2018/19 financial year.

1.7   Members will be aware from previous updates that there are a number of separate management information systems in existence within the Assets department. The legacy management information systems are not compatible in all cases. This has added to the problems in managing the range of information being held and operating processes across the new Service at the same time as carrying the significant vacancies previously outlined.

1.8   The approach to harmonising the Service's property, fleet, water, foam, stores and equipment is being tracked and managed through our performance management system known as Sycle. This work is also being aligned to the requirements and principles associated with PAS 55-1:2008. This is an internationally recognised standard setting out the specification for an effective asset management system.

1.9   In terms of long term capital planning, the estates team will follow the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) guidance for Public Sector Property Asset Management. Fleet have a fifteen year strategy in place, and Equipment a ten year strategy.

1.10   The remaining aspects of the Assets department are to be harmonised and strategically framed against the priorities within Community Safety Plan which members recently signed off. They will also form a significant part of the Medium Term Finance Plan (MTFP). This work is also aligned to the Communities Programme which is being overseen by the Policy and Resources Committee.

2.   Estates

2.1   To support the combination, a condition survey of the property assets of both the former authorities was undertaken in December 2015 and January 2016 to establish a common baseline.

2.2   Following combination it has been agreed that a further tranche of 20% will be reviewed each year in order to refine costs within the capital programme. Maintenance plans and asset registers are already in place and are actively monitored to make sure our estate remains fit for purpose.

2.3   Following an external audit by the British Standards Institute (BSI), the structure of the estates department was strengthened to ensure legal compliance. At present there are two vacancies, one for a property surveyor and one for a Mechanical and Electrical engineer. These positions are currently being job evaluated, but in the meantime, the work is being outsourced to ensure that essential compliance work is being dealt with.

2.4   The recent audit by the BSI has also indicated that they are satisfied with the current situation and the controls measures that have been put in place. We comply with BS OHSAS 18001 in the south and are working on developing this in the north with a corporately agreed target of achieving full accreditation by the end of 2018.

2.5   Opportunities to share property assets have also been discussed with key partners in Wiltshire (for example as part of the Wiltshire One Public Estate) and more work is underway to strengthen this approach across the whole Service.

2.6   Work to develop the Integrated Property Asset Management Strategy (IPAMS) has commenced and is being carried out by specialist consultants. This strategy will be completed by September and it will inform the MTFP and further strengthen the approach to sharing assets with our key partners. It will also be a vital element in helping us to make judgements and potentially produce business cases associated with our communities' programme.

2.7   In terms of management information systems, significant progress has been made to align the systems across the Service and there is now a single estates management system in place.

3.   Fleet

3.1   Since 1 April 2016, a substantial amount of work has been carried out to better align vehicle life cycles, replacement programmes and to support a harmonised   approach across the new Service. This was to alleviate significant differences in the type of vehicles - how vehicles are utilised and how they were distributed - that had been recognised in the planning leading up to combination.

3.2   The department currently has two software systems to manage the fleet. Following a business case to the Strategic Leadership Team (SLT), work is being undertaken to merge the two legacy systems into one. As part of this exercise, we are also taking the opportunity to modernise both the software and our working practices. The work to harmonise systems will be completed by the end of this financial year.

3.3   A recent review has also identified additional support is required to harmonise the practices within the two workshops whilst also ensuring that we have in place the capacity to engage with emerging National work required to deliver the new Emergency Services Network (ESN) which will replace Airwave.

4.   Equipment

4.1   A considerable amount of work has been undertaken to ensure that the team, which initially experienced significant staff turnover, has been sufficiently supported and that they have received additional training so that they are clear on how to follow revised, agreed procedures. During this transition the Service engaged a contractor to carry out some inspections to minimise any outstanding backlog issues and to ensure legal compliance.

4.2   The department is now fully staffed and able to maintain our safety inspection regime, however, the Equipment Manager has retired, therefore we have advertised for a replacement.

4.3   In order for the Service to meet its legal obligations, there is a necessity to use an electronic asset management system. The existing systems currently track and record around 50,000 items of equipment.

4.4   An asset management system review has taken place to determine which systems are best able to meet the needs and requirements of the team. This includes the safety critical management of equipment defects.

4.5   The system also needs to be fully compatible with our current ICT infrastructure and have the ability to work with Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology to help maintain an efficient approach to inventory checking and monitoring.

4.6   A technical specification has been developed and officers will soon to seeking costs through a procurement exercise to inform the capital programme for 2018/19. It is anticipated that a full roll out of this system will be undertaken by March 2019.

5.   Water and foam

5.1   This team has been subject to significant staff turnover during the first year of the new Service with two of the three and a half full-time positions becoming vacant. These have now been filled and after completing their required training courses everyone in the team is now fully operational.

5.2   The team have been working on aligning the two legacy management information systems and this work is now complete and we have one system in operation.

6.   Supplies and Distribution

6.1   Currently stores items are ordered in two separate ways using two different management software systems. Both have a stores catalogue and staff put their requests into their respective systems. There is then a requirement, on both systems, for the request to be manually added to Agresso, our financial management system. The request is then processed and delivered.

6.2   Our plan is to use the Agresso finance system for the alignment of both stores systems, and this should be in place across the Service by the end of this calendar year.

7.   Summary and key points

7.1   The assets department has been subject to much change since combination, mainly due to new opportunities for staff and retirements, with only two of the original seven senior managers remaining in post following combination. It is to the department's credit that they have maintained safety critical systems whilst dealing with establishing new teams and having to use legacy management systems.

7.2   The department uses five software systems and two have been successfully aligned in the past year. Two more will be aligned during this financial year, with the last one being fully functional by the end of March 2019. The software migration system is a key control measure in the strategic risk register and as such will continue to be reviewed on a regular basis.

7.3   There are still a small number of outstanding vacancies in the department but only one is at a managerial level and all of the others are awaiting job evaluation. The department should therefore be up to full strength in the next couple of months.

September 2017