



**DORSET & WILTSHIRE
FIRE AND RESCUE**

Item 26/40 Appendix A
Finance & Audit Committee
9 September 2026

TRAINING CENTRES STRATEGIC HIGHLIGHT REPORT

Strategic sponsor	ACO Jill McCrae, Director for Service Support
Period covered	March 26 – September 26

OVERALL PROJECT STATUS	Slight Slippage
SUMMARY	Progress has been made in moving both training centre projects into delivery. Procurement Contracts for Devizes and Weymouth were awarded following consultation with relevant key stakeholders, enabling JCT contract preparation, stakeholder engagement and mobilisation activity to commence with support from legal, procurement and estates colleagues. Delivery is progressing, but with slippage against the original programme. Devizes has entered the construction phase following the training team's exit from site, although the first phase has been delayed by nesting seagulls and is now estimated for completion in March 2027. Weymouth is also progressing more slowly than initially envisaged, however contractor relationships are developing well, and pre-construction surveys are underway. Additional technical design work has been required to reflect updated National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) and National Operational Guidance (NOG) requirements for live fire training, resulting in a non-material planning amendment for Weymouth needing to be submitted once prepared in September/October. This has caused a delay for the Weymouth site. Whilst the project delays have resulted in additional costs, the costs associated with the technical design remain estimates at this stage and are subject to further development. Taking both into account, the project is currently expected to remain within the Authority's approved budget, although a significant proportion of the approved contingency provision is forecast to be utilised. Should the

	estimated design costs increase materially as the design progresses, or further unforeseen costs arise, additional budget approval from the Authority may be required. Appropriate governance, continuity arrangements and stakeholder communications remain in place, with project timelines being finalised and an extended lease at West Moors required to support continued training provision during the delivery period.
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PROGRESS	At the end of December 2025, following consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair and the Chair of the Finance & Audit Committee, the contract for Devizes was awarded. Subsequently the contract for Weymouth was awarded following the same approach at the end of January 2026. This enabled work to commence to prepare, deliver and agree the contracts with each contractor, involving appropriate stakeholders including the Service's independent legal team as well as key members of our internal procurement and estates teams. The training teams exited the Devizes site in March 2026 and through appropriate business continuity provisions, planned for as part of the project, training for staff continues to be delivered across the Service's estate and this is progressing well. The contract for Devizes is due to be signed by all relevant parties shortly and the re-development of the site commenced with contractors on site from April 2026. Work has been hindered by nesting seagulls on the roof of the training building, and across the Industrial estate. This is an issue for many of the businesses and the local homes. Whilst work is progressing an initial delay, to this first phase of build, is expected. This was initially expected to be complete in December 2026; with the current situation this is now estimated to be March 2027. The Service's Senior Building Surveyor, who had led the Devizes project from the initial design stages, has left the organisation. Given the strategic importance of the project, responsibility has been temporarily reallocated within the Estates Team to maintain continuity and ensure progress continues. A replacement has been appointed and is due to join the Service in October 2026. While appropriate arrangements are in place to support the continued delivery of the project, the loss of a key member of a small specialist team will inevitably result in a period of transition as knowledge is transferred and the new postholder becomes familiar with the project. The project will continue to be closely monitored, with any potential impacts managed to minimise disruption to delivery. The new development work at Weymouth is progressing, however slightly slower than envisaged, which can be the case with new developments. Contractor relations are developing well, with the contract currently being finalised across the appropriate teams and initial surveys are well underway. Progress on the live fire training facilities at both sites has been affected by additional technical design work. Since the original designs were developed, updated guidance from the NFCC and NOG has introduced
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		enhanced requirements for live fire behaviour training. As a result, the Service had to pause the project for Weymouth, to worked closely with the design team, the contractors and our training teams, to review the fire house design to ensure the facilities could meet these revised operational requirements as well as the planning restraints for the site. Between April and July, this work involved detailed engagement with key stakeholders and the identification of a number of design amendments. Consequently, non-material planning amendments are now required for Weymouth, and these are being progressed internally with the intention to submit to planning authorities in September/October. Although this has resulted in additional work and has affected programme timescales, it will ensure that both training facilities are designed to meet the latest national guidance and continue to provide safe, effective and future-proof training for firefighters. The Service has continued to maintain regular communications with key stakeholders throughout the project, including members of the public who have subscribed to project updates and the neighbouring school in Weymouth. As the project progresses into the construction phase, the appointed contractor will lead on community engagement relating to on-site activities, supported by the Service's Communications and Media Team. This approach will help ensure that stakeholders continue to receive timely information on project progress and any activities that may affect the local community. The current timeframes for these two projects to be complete is currently estimated as August 2027 Devizes and July 2028 Weymouth. Due to this work to secure an extended lease at West Moors is required.
BUDGET		The Independent Quantity Surveyors, appointed to support the delivery phase of this project, continue to provide appropriate oversight of the costs, with any concerns are quickly identified and reported for resolution. The budget forecasting continues to be monitored and overseen by the Authority's Treasurer and updates are provided in the quarterly financial update reports provided to the Finance & Audit Committee. Due to the timeframe from contract award, for the Weymouth site and ability to progress work on site, revisions to the budget were undertaken, as would be expected. Furthermore, estimations have been added aligned to the design changes required to meet the new training guidelines. Whilst the project delays have resulted in additional costs, the costs associated with the technical design remain estimates at this stage and are subject to further development. Taking both into account, the project is currently expected to remain within the Authority's approved budget, although a significant proportion of the approved contingency provision is forecast to be utilised. Should the estimated design costs increase materially as the design progresses, or further unforeseen costs arise, additional budget approval from the Authority may be required.
RISKS		This project covers all the mitigations identified for reducing strategic risk 'Sustainability of Operational Training' (risk number 529). As part of the project management governance the project has a detailed risk register that is reviewed monthly by the Project Manager and Project Sponsor.

		A summary of the overall project risk is provided in the table within the report. There are no strategic issues or risks to be brought to the attention of Members at this stage. Whilst the project has been impacted by slippage there are no significant barriers to raise at this time. Although, these delays will have a financial impact on the project, as detailed within this report. This also includes protracted lease costs, as the use of the currently leased sites are extended.
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NEXT STEPS	The next phase of the project will focus on progressing the non-material planning amendment Weymouth, with the necessary designs and supporting documentation to be submitted to the relevant planning authorities. Lease negotiations will continue in relation to the West Moors site, while arrangements will be made to ensure a structured handover of the Devizes project to the newly appointed Senior Building Surveyor, who is due to join the Service in October 2026. In parallel, work will continue towards the finalisation and execution of the Weymouth construction contract, enabling on-site activities to progress in accordance with the agreed programme.
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RISK STATEMENT

Strategic Risk. This Strategic Risk will be reduced following positive approval of planning permission applications.

Strategic Risk No.	Risk Name	Risk Description	Residual (Current) Risk Score	Risk Mitigations	Mitigation progress	Direction of Risk
529	Sustainability of operational training provision.	The Service must have tenable and appropriate operational training, with sufficient resources and provision to ensure a safe and suitable response to emergencies. Furthermore, this must be flexible to meet future challenges and need, whilst also meeting environmental responsibilities.	16	Continued positive relations and contract management of leased sites Delivery of a training provision review to identify opportunities to meet future needs Ongoing awareness and development of environmental opportunities to meet organisational expectations. Planning permission granted for both sites and planning conditions met Robust project governance in place Building control provisions confirmed and accepted Clear provisions for project timeline Business continuity provisions for Service training Service Senior Building Surveyors leading each site project and overall Strategic Estate Lead in place. Contractors appointed for each site Budgetary provisions being overseen by Authority Treasurer and Project Sponsor		

Overall Project Risk Position

Overall risk rating		Direction	
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Failure to deliver	Residual (Current) Risk Position	Issues	Mitigations
On-time		• Supply issues • Project delivery issues • Weather issues	• Project governance and oversight • Contract Management • Procurement & contractual arrangements • Site management and oversight • Positive engagements and relations • Engaged legal team and construction specialists • Engaged construction specialists and internal post Timeline being finalised with Contractors
To budget		• Inflationary rises for material and labour • Supply chain issues • Project delays • Design changes	• Project governance and oversight • Contract Management • Budget reviews with Quantity Surveyor and Director of Finance & Treasurer • Engaged construction specialists and internal post
With quality		• Time pressures • Budgetary pressures • Expertise of external contractors	• Project governance and oversight • Contract Management • Procurement & contractual arrangements • Site management and oversight • Engaged construction specialists and internal post