

Decision Note – Armed Police Training Facility



REQUEST FOR DECISION BY THE STAFFORDSHIRE COMMISSIONER

	Policing:	Crime:	Fire & Rescue:
This decision relates to:	✓		

APPROVAL (for completion by Staffordshire Commissioner only)

Rationale for approval

Police firearms deployments in Staffordshire are relatively low, but when our communities need an armed response to keep them safe, it is essential that the force has the right training and facilities in place to deliver the highest quality service.

Using public money efficiently is a priority for me, and this investment is part of a wider estates plan for Staffordshire Police to ensure buildings are sustainable and future proof. The initial budget for the facility was set at £18 million, and these revised proposals represent a significant saving on that figure while fully meeting the force's operational requirements.

STAFFORDSHIRE COMMISSIONER

Signature

Date 1st September 2022

Date decision required by:

If an urgent approval is required, please state reasons:

For completion by Staffordshire Commissioner's Office only:-

Decision Number:

Date Received:

	Yes	No
Has the required decision been considered under the guidance of the Staffordshire Commissioner's Decision Making Policy?		
Has the required decision been deemed to be a Key Decision as defined within the Staffordshire Commissioner's Decision Making Policy?		
Who is empowered to make the required decision?		

Title	Armed Police Training Facility
<p>Summary:</p> <p>Staffordshire Police have leased an outdoor firearms range for some years, however, due to issues with the suitability and long-term availability of the site, a detailed review has been conducted to understand future requirements and evaluate options to meet them. Armed police training is delivered to national standards and designed to meet local strategic threat and risk assessments. As both have evolved in recent years it is clear that training in additional capabilities is required beyond what is possible at the existing site.</p> <p>A decision is required to support the Force's recommendation to proceed to the procurement stage for the construction of a new armed police training facility. Although indicative total project costs are included here, they are subject to the procurement exercise and a further decision to go ahead will be required on its completion. The procurement exercise will incur professional fees and project management costs, which for a project of this scale and complexity are expected to be substantial, but below £0.5m.</p>	
<p>Recommendation:</p> <p>1. That the recommended option to build a 50m, 10 lane firearms training facility on the Weston Road site is supported. This will replace Blocks 2,3 and 4, which are in poor condition, no longer fit for purpose and are around 35 years old.</p> <p>This business case sets out the rationale for this recommendation.</p>	

The benefits of this option are:

- It enables Staffordshire Police to maintain continuity of its licensed firearms provision.
 - It provides a fit for purpose facility which fully complies with all Health and Safety legislation and guidance.
 - It provides the training capacity required to fully meet the requirements of Staffordshire Police.
 - It secures the future provision of training in a facility which will be in the ownership of the Commissioner and under the control of Staffordshire Police.
 - It strikes the right balance between operational need and impact on capital and revenue budgets.
2. That approval is given for a maximum of £0.5m to be reflected in the capital programme for professional fees and project management costs to develop the proposal through the procurement stage. This will remain under review over the next 12 months.

Chief Executive

I hereby approve the recommendation for consideration.

Signature

Date

1st September 2022



REPORT AND ADVICE TO THE STAFFORDSHIRE COMMISSIONER

1. Introduction and background

Police forces have a legal responsibility to take positive steps to protect those whose lives are in danger and where there is a risk to life from firearms this responsibility requires the force to provide an armed policing capability.

The continued threat posed by Organised Crime Groups (OCG) and County Lines creates the requirement for the capabilities to provide a 24/7 uniformed armed response. The response must be fit to address both spontaneous calls for service and reports of firearms and bladed weapons in the community and also the capability to deal with organised criminality and its use of firearms through pre-planned tactics.

In addition to criminal activity, there is an ever-present threat of terrorist activities, with many potential terrorist targets located within Staffordshire and in neighbouring areas. As well as the threat to life, terror attacks have a large economic impact. The National Armed Policing Strategic Threat & Risk Assessment

(APSTRA) references the economic impact of two recent London attacks. Though the economic impact would clearly be higher in the Capital than other areas, the value of a swift response remains valid.

Staffordshire Police has the capability to deploy armed response officers to any incident where a person is known or suspected to be armed or otherwise dangerous. Over the last three years the force has seen increases in the number of both spontaneous and planned deployments and has therefore increased its armed policing capacity to meet this demand. Authorised Firearms Officers (AFOs) work across the force area on a shift pattern which mirrors response policing to enable them to also support their colleagues in day-to-day policing duties. In addition, the Central Firearms Unit (CFU) also provides specialist armed policing capabilities.

To maintain this armed capability Staffordshire Police must have:

- Trained and licenced Authorised Firearms Officers
- An approved 12-month training plan
- Access to a firing range approved by the College of Policing
- Training provision that meets national requirements and standards

National requirements set by the College of Policing for mandatory training have increased. This, together with the further training required to acquire and maintain additional specialisms held by armed officers has also increased the demand for training.

Up to this point, these requirements have primarily been met through the use of an outdoor 50m firing range on a leased site. The expiration of the current lease, the limited longevity of the current arrangements and an operational view that the range does not fully meet all of the force's requirements has prompted work to explore all options for future provision.

2. Issues for consideration

A full Business Case has been developed which follows Treasury Green Book principles. It has been examined in detail by the Commissioner and proposals challenged throughout its development through the Strategic Estates Board and the Strategic Governance Board (Police).

The Business Case identifies a number of issues and risks with the existing site:

- a) Due to changes in Planning Regulations and specific proposals for the local area, there is an increased likelihood of opportunities for the land owner to sell the site for redevelopment.
- b) The local authority has received numerous complaints regarding the noise associated with shooting on the site. The force has engaged an acoustic consultant to conduct surveys, and sound levels are reported over and above expected levels. Efforts are being made to mitigate the noise nuisance in a cost-effective way but this will not completely eliminate the issue.

- c) Due to the layout of the surrounding land, additional staffing is required to ensure site security and safety whilst training is carried out.
- d) The ability to safely train on the outdoor range is affected by available light and weather which can limit or disrupt the training schedule – mitigating this has required ad-hoc use of other Force's indoor ranges. When this occurs, it is time consuming in terms of travel and costly in terms of overtime, travel costs and the hire of facilities. Specialist firearms officers are away from the force area and cannot be deployed to bolster the force's response to an incident.
- e) Considerable investment in improvements such as a firearms canopy, improved lighting and drainage would be required to address some of the limitations of the existing site, however there is considerable difficulty in making a case for this due to the uncertainty regarding its future.
- f) The nature of the threats which necessitate an armed response is changing. Even with improvements to the site, the training required to enable AFOs to meet these threats is not possible using the existing facilities.

Additionally, the force armoury, which is based at police headquarters but would ideally be co-located with the firearms range, is in poor condition and has insufficient capacity. Consultation with similar sized forces has identified that many are facing similar challenges with legacy facilities not meeting new operational requirements and are conducting similar work to identify alternative solutions.

These risks and issues have necessitated a strategic review of the future firearms training requirements of Staffordshire Police with a view to finding a solution that will last well into the latter half of this century. The list of 34 requirements covers current and future business needs including capacity, specific operational capabilities, general facilities and location.

The recommended option is the construction of an armed police training facility including a 50m range, armoury, training rooms and ancillary accommodation at Staffordshire Police HQ. This requires an estimated capital investment of £14.792m, subject to a full procurement process.

The proposed investment is based on detailed designs provided by specialist consultants and quantity surveyors' assessment of construction and materials costs based on a construction period of May 2024 to September 2025. This assessment builds in design and construction contingencies and is adjusted for inflation at 9% up to commencement of the contract. The capital investment also includes professional fees and project management costs prior to contract award and throughout project delivery.

This proposal compares with £18m included in the MTFs and Capital Programme revised in January 2022, however this was based on estimates for a 100m range which if similarly adjusted for inflation up to commencement of the contract would require an investment in the region of £21.5m. The strategic review has clarified that there is a minimal requirement for training at 100m distance and on that basis, a larger facility cannot be justified.

In comparison to the 'do nothing' option, i.e. remaining in situ, the additional revenue cost is estimated at £0.537m in 2024/25 and £1.056m annually from 2025/26.

3. What other options have been considered?

Options discounted on the basis that they did not meet the basic current and future operational requirements were:

- Use of Ministry of Defence ranges.
- Use of other privately-owned ranges.
- Replacing the existing range with an alternative outdoor range.

Options considered and evaluated against the list of requirements were:

OPTION 1: Remain in situ.

Discounted due to issues and risks with the current site outlined above.

OPTION 2: Enter into formal arrangements to use excess capacity at one or more Force's ranges.

Discounted due to inability to secure guaranteed access to facilities when required and at the level needed to meet Staffordshire's training demand. There would also be a substantial increase in officer overtime and travel costs.

OPTION 3a: Enter into a joint venture with West Mercia Police to design, construct and operate a new armed police training facility at Staffordshire Police HQ.

This option is based on West Mercia being the most obvious partner force based on geography, opportunity and alignment of interest, however it has been discounted as it cannot meet the capacity requirements of both forces and travelling distance for West Mercia officers would be impracticable. This has also been discounted by West Mercia Police and PCC.

OPTION 3b: Enter into a joint venture with West Mercia Police to design, construct and operate a new armed police training facility equidistant from both Headquarters sites.

This option is based on West Mercia being the most obvious partner force based on geography, opportunity and alignment of interest, however it has been discounted as it cannot meet the capacity requirements of both forces. It would also require the acquisition of land and both forces would incur costs of officer travel and overtime. This has also been discounted by West Mercia Police and PCC.

OPTION 4: Construction of a new indoor armed police training facility including a 10 lane, 50m range at Staffordshire Police HQ.

This is the recommended option. It meets almost all operational requirements in an existing, secure site into the long term. It provides the required capacity and the force will review opportunities for using any surplus capacity for other training purposes.

OPTION 5: Construction of a new indoor armed police training facility including a 10 lane, 100m range at Staffordshire Police HQ.

This option meets all operational requirements in an existing, secure site into the long term and would future-proof potential future firearms training requirements where a longer range may be required for some training activity. However, it has been discounted as there is a trade-off between the additional cost of constructing and running a facility of this size given the limited need for a 100m range and other capital projects that could deliver greater benefits.

OPTION 6: Potential Regional Armed Police Training Facility.

This option has been discounted as it would require land acquisition, and all forces would incur costs of officer travel and overtime. Given the varying operational characteristics and needs of the four regional forces, alignment on requirements, functionality, location and design is unlikely.

4. Consultation and Engagement undertaken

Staffordshire Police has undertaken consultation with Firearms training specialists within the force and other forces, both within and outside the region. Advice has been sought from the College of Policing on training standards and facilities requirements. As part of the development of suitable options, the force commissioned Bluesky Capra to produce designs and room schedules for a 50m range and a 100m range. Consideration has also been given to interdependencies with other aspects of the Joint Police/Fire Estates Strategy and Programme.

Report Implications

5. Monitoring Officer comments:

Signature


Date

6. Section 151 Officer comments:

This project has been incorporated into the current MFTS, and the revised project costs will be fully reflected within the MFTS refresh which will be presented to the Police Fire and Crime Panel in October 2022 and

updated in February 2023 as part of the budget and precept process for 2023/24. Moving to the next phase of this project will incur costs and fees estimated at £0.5m, as approved by the Police Strategic Governance Board on 18 August 2022. An updated business case will be presented to the Strategic Governance Board for final sign-off prior to the contract award.


Signature



Date 1st September 2022

	Yes	No
Has legal advice (outside of that provided by the Monitoring Officer) been sought on the content of this report?		✓
7. Legal Comments:		
8. Equality Comments – please attach the completed EIA		
9. Background/supporting paper Final Business Case, Armed Police Training Solution.		
Please answer the following questions	Yes	No
10. Public access to information?	✓	
11. Does this decision involve the processing of personal data? (If yes please attach a completed Data Impact Assessment)		✓
12. Is the publication of this form to be deferred? (If yes approx. how long?)		✓
13. Does this form contain commercial or operationally sensitive information which is to be redacted? (If yes, please provide details with the submission of this note)		✓

14. ORIGINATING OFFICER DECLARATION:

Author	Ralph Butler, Head of Strategy & Change
Signed	
Date	1 st September 2022