

Estates Strategy and Front Office Update

PURPOSE

1. The purpose of this report is to offer the Board the opportunity to consider a plan for the disposal of a first tranche of non-core buildings identified in support of the Estates Strategy and to provide an update on the In-flight Estates and Front Office projects.

BACKGROUND

2. The current estate comprises 124 properties, covering over 214,000m² and costing £16.4m per year to maintain. Many of our buildings have high running costs, are poorly located and are not fit for future operational purposes. This plan comes in the context of an anticipated overall West Midlands Police budget reduction over the next four years of at least 25%, with consequent significant reductions in numbers of police officers and staff (and therefore linked reductions in estate requirements). Similarly, revised working practices, notably mobile working for police officers and staff, also reduces the estate need, as officers and staff will no longer be as dependent on police buildings to fulfil their duties.
3. The industry standard taken from the 'The state of the estate' HM Government Property Unit 13/14 suggests that the optimum Gross Internal Area (GIA) per person is 16m². Based on our average building size this equates to desired end state of approximately 68 buildings at a running cost of around £9m per annum, a saving of 45% that would otherwise have to be met from other budgets, such as officer and staff posts. Therefore based on these assumptions our current estate is excessive for our requirement and is not sustainable financially.
4. In line with the established Estates Strategy agreed by West Midlands Police Authority in early 2012 and the supporting portfolio plan, the estate reviews were conducted on a geographical basis commencing with Walsall and Coventry. This review programme was paused in May 2014 for the selection of an Innovation and Integration Partner.
5. In July 2014, in support of the new partnership, a comprehensive baseline exercise of the WMP Estate was conducted providing the following;

- a. A consolidator tool - comprehensive understanding of each building by:
 - i. Size (m² GIA and Net Internal Area - NIA)
 - ii. Location (Department and LPU)
 - iii. Cost - Revenue (lease and running costs) and Capital (asset value)
 - iv. Building condition
 - v. Utilisation.
- b. Scoring methodology using a weighted criteria producing an individual building score;

Table 1

Criterion	Detail	Weighting (%)
1	Rationalisation impact on service delivery	25
2	Ease of service re-provision	15
3	Building location positively contributes to the local/strategic policing strategy	20
4	Potential rationalisation cost	10
5	Building utilisation	7
6	Building condition category	8
7	Building efficiency category	10
8	Resource required to rationalise building	5

- c. Using the scores from above a profiled plan of the estate (Estate Portfolio Plan) was compiled. This was overlaid by a categorisation to support other estate dependent programmes of work.
 - i. Low Operational Impact
 - ii. Non-core buildings
 - iii. Operationally important core sites

NON-CORE BUILDING ESTATE REVIEW

6. The Estate Portfolio Plan was reviewed following the publication of the WMP 2020 Blueprint. In consultation with local commanders a schedule of proposed non-core building closures was identified.
7. Non-core buildings are defined as not essential to support service delivery; they are either used for archive storage or office space. These buildings are poorly utilised and are close to other police facilities.
8. The schedule of 28 sites proposed for disposal will provide an annual saving of £1.3m in revenue costs (a 7.9% saving against current estate revenue costs), an estimated £7.3m in capital receipts and reduce our overall estate footprint by 22,254 m² (a 10.4% reduction). We will also remove our exposure to £3.1m of backlog maintenance remedial works. None of these sites are open to the public or has a front desk.

Table 2

Balsall Common NPT Base	Jewellery Quarter	Tanhouse Centre
Bartley Green	Kings Heath	Shirley
Dudley (inc 3 x car parks)	Kings Norton (inc Masshouse Lane Annexe)	Sparkhill
Billesley	Kingswinford	Staveley House
Canterbury Road	Longbridge	Stourbridge
Castle Vale	Netherton	Tettenhall
Graisley	Oxley	Warstock
Halesowen	Pennwood Court	Windmill House
Handsworth West	Perry Barr	
Heath Town	Sheldon	

9. Current occupants will be relocated to existing WMP estate, either in close proximity to the current building or for improved service delivery (as defined by the local commander) elsewhere on the estate. Therefore these closures will not impact on the service currently provided.
10. The sites are not identified as designated Public Contact Offices; they do not have custodial facilities and are not used for response policing. The closures would not impact on calls for service. These police buildings are not fundamental to service delivery; they are used as bases for officers to carry out administrative functions, which will diminish in importance as more mobile technology is introduced.
11. The implementation programme will take into consideration lease-end dates and other WMP programme interdependencies. Detailed implementation plans will be developed with local commanders in line with the disposal plan.
12. In conjunction with the local commanders this tranche of disposals would be delivered over a period of 24 months, commencing following a decision by the Police and Crime Commissioner. As part of the wider WMP 2020 programme the remaining estate will continue to be reviewed and further disposals are anticipated over the next 5 years as the new operating model develops.

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

13. West Midlands Police will keep the public, our partners and staff informed of the process via a communications plan. This plan will ensure that the public are sighted on future changes to the police estate and are engaged prior to disposals.
14. Partners across the West Midlands will be briefed on the plans and opportunities to work collaboratively, so as to maximise efficient use of joint estate. Staff and internal users of the estate will be kept informed of project delivery.
15. After consideration by the Board there will follow a period of public engagement (approximately 4 weeks), which will be co-ordinated through Local Policing Units. This will encompass a detailed overview of the plans provided to Members of Parliament, Local Councillors, Community & Ward Forums, Neighbourhood Watch, Key Individual Networks, Community Safety Partnerships and other key stakeholders.

16. During the engagement period stakeholders will be asked their views on the plan. There will be an opportunity to comment on perceived service impact and offer ideas around service provision.

ESTATE REVIEW PROJECT UPDATE

17. The table below gives an update on the estate changes that have previously been agreed and are being implemented.

Central Birmingham	The Central Birmingham estate review is the consolidation of 6 buildings (Civic House, Aqueous 2, Aqua House, Aston, Steelhouse Lane and Edgbaston Police Stations) into Lloyd House. The project is in implementation phase and is expected to be completed to agreed time schedule with the repopulation of Lloyd House commencing in September 2016.
Walsall	Two phased approach. Phase 1 – Refurbishment of Bloxwich PS and the creation of a Neighbourhood Policing Team (NPT) base in Walsall Civic Centre and the disposal of Walsall PS. Civic Centre in-going works completed subject to snagging, opening planned for early in the new year. Contract awarded for refurbishment of Bloxwich PS, works programmed to commence November 2015. Phase 2 - The rationalisation of 8 sites across the Walsall area; Willenhall & Brownhills PS & 6 NPT beat offices (Bentley Lane, Blakenhall, Delves, University Of Wolverhampton, Hope St and Rycroft); 4 beat offices have been returned to Landlord. Overall programme on schedule for completion in line with agreed timescales of Autumn 2016.
Coventry	Two phased approach agreed in January 2015. Phase 1 – Closure of 3 sites; George Pool Hse, Tile Hill and Radford PS. Project on schedule with 2 sites returned to the landlord. Radford planned for closure in before end of 2015. Phase 2 – this has been included in the wider WMP2020 estate review programme.

FRONT OFFICE PROJECT UPDATE

18. The Front Office Project was commissioned in early 2014 to redesign the Force’s Front Office service. The project had a number of broad principles, they were:

- a. Review the current model to understand operation and activity.
- b. Design a cost effective public access model, seeking:
 - i. Increased efficiency through streamlined processes
 - ii. Reducing the number of locations where the service is inefficient and under utilised
- c. Deliver a consistent service at all locations and provide an improved visitor experience
- d. Alignment with WMP Estates Strategy

19. The project delivered a Front Office model that meets the public demand based upon extensive external market research, public consultation, internal research and assessment of internal and external demand for service. The findings highlighted a number of front offices which were significantly under used and costly to maintain with the highest cost per transaction front office at over £60 per visit. The data was used to identify preferred locations for the new model based on demand, cost and need (including vulnerability and high risk crime factors).

20. The new Public Contact Office model is based on 10 Public Contact Offices with consistent opening hours of 0800x2200hrs for nine sites and one 24 hour provision located in Birmingham (Birmingham Central PS until the completion of the new police station in Lloyd House).
21. The reductions from 41 Front Offices to 10 "Public Contact Offices" saw a reduction in staffing from 174 full time equivalent (FTE) posts, to 88 FTE which includes a specific supervisor structure. The reductions in staff were achieved through redeployment, voluntary (35) and a small number of compulsory redundancies (7). The front Office project is expected to provide over £3 million in savings (year on year) from 2016.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

22. The closure of 28 buildings identified in this paper would yield a reduction in annual revenue costs of £1.3m, a saving in backlog maintenance costs of £3.1m and potential capital receipts of £7.3m. Any costs associated with the disposal of these buildings will be met through existing devolved budgets.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

23. Schedule 1, paragraph 14, sub-section 1 of the PRSRA 2011 provides for the PCC to do anything which includes by virtue of sub-section 2(b) acquiring and disposing of property including land.
24. In accordance with the Policing Protocol, while decisions relating to the operational use of police premises rest with the Chief Constable and those under his or her direction and control, decisions relating to the disposal of assets held by the Police and Crime Commissioner rest with the Police and Crime Commissioner.

RECOMMENDATION

25. The Board is recommended to support the proposed disposals subject to a period of public engagement. Information on the outcome of the engagement period will be presented to the December 2015 Strategic Police and Crime Board.
26. The Board is recommended to note the updates provided on In-flight and Front Office projects.