

STRATEGIC POLICING AND CRIME BOARD

Tuesday, 28th September 2021

Report: Estates Strategy Review 2021

Police and Crime Plan Priority: Building a Modern Police Service and Delivering a Greener Force Estate
Presented by: Andy Kelly

Purpose of paper

1. The purpose of this report is to provide the board with an update on the strategic operational estates principles of WMP, progress made to date and steps to make the WMP estate greener.
2. At SPCB, July 2021, The PCC asked the Chief Constable:
 - To make recommendations on the estate required to meet the force's policing needs, any changes to previous plans following the pandemic and operational developments.
 - Summarise further steps the force can make to deliver a 'greener' estate and reduce carbon emissions
3. The drivers for this review are the impact of the CoVid-19 pandemic on the current programme of work, an assessment of demands of the operating model and additional requirements identified by the national Officer Uplift programme. Concurrently, there is a requirement to review the environmental and sustainability actions and initiatives planned to deliver a greener police force, by reducing CO₂ emissions and waste production.

Background

4. Previous estates strategies of 2012, 2016 and the comprehensive strategy published in 2018 set out to rationalise and modernise the force estate. The strategy is iterative and will necessarily flex to meet the demands of the force operating model. However, adopting a more flexible estate will make it easier to adapt to future operational changes.
5. The early strategies focussed on reduction of the number of expensive, long term leasehold and non-core buildings, deemed not essential to support service delivery. A significant reduction in the number of small properties in the WMP portfolio was achieved, with outstanding activities subsumed into the 2018 programme of works.
6. The current estate is comprised of over 60 properties consisting of both freehold and leasehold properties, where WMP are sole tenants, covering over 160,000m², and costing over £11.7m per year to run.
7. A significant proportion of the estate still remains in very poor condition with only Health and Safety remedial works being carried out over recent years. Backlog maintenance liability has built up over that time and is now around £24m.

8. With a significant funding reduction over the last decade the force needs to reduce revenue spend to protect officer numbers. Notwithstanding the Uplift Programme, the force has 1000 officers fewer than in 2010; consequently, many of the force's buildings sit partially occupied and grossly underutilised.
9. Modernising the estate with flexible and agile accommodation has allowed greater occupational density, enabling increased operational resilience, by allowing the flexing of operational needs, without resorting to continual building layout/redesign.
10. The estates strategy aligns to the IT&D strategy; provision of new IT agility tools is integral to successful implementation of New Ways of Working (NWoW) as evidenced in the new estates solutions at Lloyd House, Perry Barr and Oldbury Custody and Bloxwich. The combination of flexible estate and agile working allowed the force to react to the Covid-19 pandemic, in terms of agile working and social distancing, much more confidently than would have previously been possible.
11. Estates programme asset disposal has seen a reduction in revenue spend in excess of £5.6m and in the same period realise capital receipts in excess of £8m. As part of the re-provision solution for some of these closures we have successfully co-located with West Midlands Fire Service (WMFS) at a number of their sites as well as local council offices.
12. The programme of work will continue to be led by the force's operating model, following the overarching strategic principles and providing a fit-for-purpose estate to meet operational demand, integrating more effectively with partners and providing an estate that WMP's workforce feel pride in.
13. The end state solution continues to meet these ambitions in a way that will secure a more sustainable and efficient future, and supports the maintenance of strong links with the local community. In delivering a future-proofed estate, WMP will also seek to incorporate green technologies, wherever feasible and affordable, moving the force towards being one of the greenest in the country.

Key points

14. The estates strategy of 2018 laid solid foundations for the WMP estate; the operational principles of the future estate design are listed later in the report and remain valid and increase the ability to flex the estate. Together with NWoW and the provision of mobility devices, these have helped the force overcome challenges encountered during the recent pandemic.
15. For the past 18 months, progress on modernisation of the estate has been significantly impacted by CoVid-19 pandemic, largely because estate planned for refurbishment had to be retained as operational workspace and the ability to progress shared estate with WMFS and other partners stalled.
16. Given the above impacts, the original disposal dates for surplus estate could not be met; a revised projection is being prepared in line with the strategic principles; ongoing changes to the force operating model will affect capital spend and programme timelines.
17. With an increased focus on green issues and the need to make the estate operate more energy-efficiently; some of the approaches to the delivering a greener force estate are also outlined.

The Refreshed Estates Programme 2021 – progress and recommendations

18. The rationale underpinning the 2018 strategy is fundamentally sound; it addresses modernisation of the estate, whilst supporting a continually evolving operational policing model, by introducing the necessary flexible estate.
19. As well as reducing the on-going cost of maintaining the estate, it considers options for maximising receipts/savings to enable investment in local policing, ensuring there is wider value to the West Midlands.

Progress to date

20. Whilst the pandemic severely constrained progress of the programme, some notable achievements have been made:
 - Delivery of C3 during the summer of 2021, the force's new Command Control and Coordination centre from which planned and unplanned operations will be conducted; it takes learning from recent incidents to offer a class-leading operational facility. C3 was built under great pressure during the pandemic and is a key deliverable to allow the force to manage security for the Commonwealth Games as well as providing a modern, fit for purpose base for Firearms, Force Contact and a number of other operational functions. A contribution to funding and costs relating to the Commonwealth Games in 2022 has been received.
 - A new logistics site was delivered in 2020. This is primarily a 'non-operational' support site bringing together a number support functions into one modern, efficient fit-for-purpose premises. Amongst the functions located here are: Corporate Asset Management, Fleet Services, IT logistics, Uniform Services, Records Management, Detained Property, Print Room and CCTV. This site too was delivered during the pandemic.
 - Construction/refurbishment of office and locker accommodation at Park Lane to site a number of key force functions such as a Force Response base and Force Support Unit. Together with C3, this site is now totally operationally focussed, meeting the requirement for flexible agile accommodation
 - Refurbishment of the Neighbourhood Policing base at Winchcombe Road, Solihull, just prior to the pandemic
 - Commencement of a refurbishment programme involving the Low Hill, Bilston and Summerfield sites and re-initiation of a programme of works to refurbish the Edgbaston and Moseley sites. These refurbishments were all delayed due to the impact of Covid-19 as available space was utilised for social distancing.
 - Co-location with partners including NHT teams at Old Hill, Sedgley, Northfield, Billesley, and Kings Norton Fire Stations, and with Dudley council.
 - Designs have been prepared for Eastern Custody and Dudley NPUHQ (both awaiting completion of land purchase)
 - Disposal of Sedgley, Tettenhall, Kings Norton, Old Hill, Billesley, Dudley, Princip St and Handsworth West sites.
 - WMP was successful in gaining a National Lottery Heritage Fund award to support conversion of the Steelhouse Lane lock-up into a museum. Due to open in 2022, the museum will not only offer an insight into WMP's history, but will be the focus of public engagement and educational activities.
 - Significant progress has been made in rationalising the vast quantities of Evidential Detained Property, Tape libraries and casefiles held across the force and storing them in the logistics centre – this will improve the quality of storage processes and adherence to retention and disposal policies.

Principles, Recommendations and Challenges for the Refreshed Strategy

Principle 1.

We will continue to provide locally accessible Public Contact Offices.

21. Continued provision of 10 Public Contact Offices (PCOs) is recommended; these are open to the public to drop in. No police building with an operational PCO, will close without first being replaced by a more efficient one nearby. Footfall within PCOs is generally declining due to the advent of digital channels, however, the services offered by PCOs is valued by the public and so will remain.
22. All NPUs will retain at least one PCO (with two at Birmingham East and Birmingham West respectively). Locations for PCOs in Solihull and Sutton will continue to be explored, however they will remain within the same locality, possibly within partner buildings.

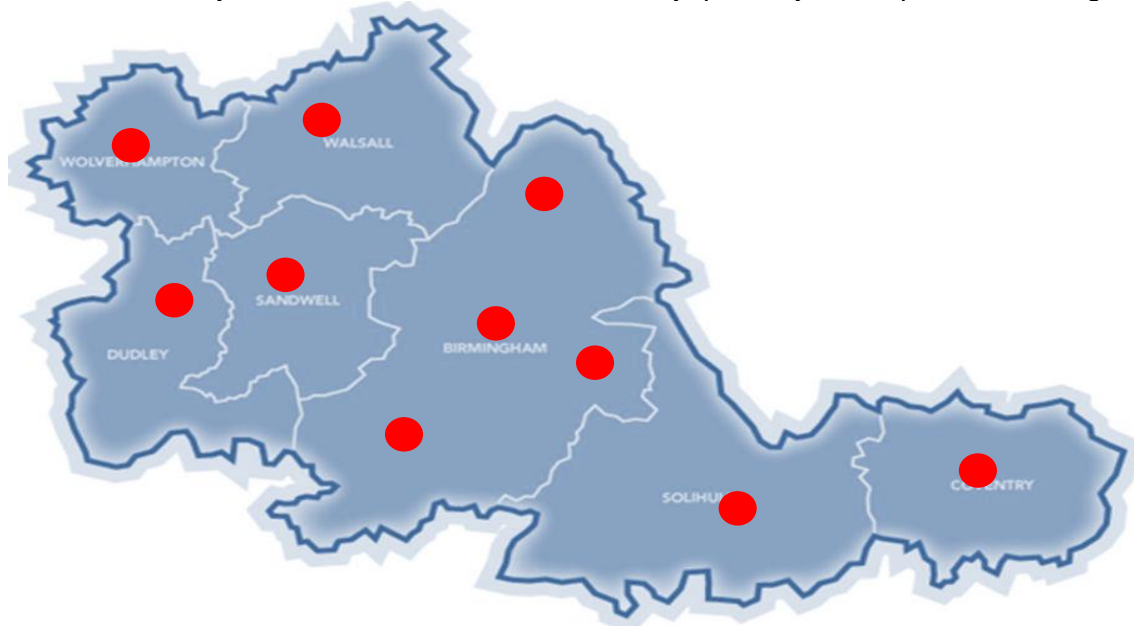


Fig.1 Public Contact Office locations

Principle 2.

Neighbourhood teams should be located in or very close to their communities. Where we can share a site with partners this should be our preferred option.

23. In addition to corporate functions, the neighbourhood estate has historically housed the Neighbourhood Policing Teams (NPTs). These smaller neighbourhood sites are often the poorest quality buildings in the estate. Co-locating Neighbourhood resources within Partner locations will support greater integration, deliver operational benefits and enable the disposal of surplus or unsuitable properties.
24. Positive operational feedback has been received in respect of co-location, and examples of constructive collaboration with WMFS are available, for example enabling joint incident attendance, road safety initiatives and joint working with representatives from other agencies such as schools liaison officers.

25. WMFS and local authorities have indicated positive support for such arrangements, subject to mutually acceptable co-location terms. A number of successful examples of this have been delivered including Walsall Civic Centre, Old Hill and Sedgley Fire Stations.
26. WMP will continue to look to identify co-location opportunities with potential partners through discussions with other agencies. WMP are represented at the National Police Estate Group (NPEG) as well as both the One Public Estate Partnership Board and also the One Public estate Strategic Delivery Group. WMP's Planning Consultants scan all Local Authority Planning Policy and make appropriate representations.

Principle 3.

Our emergency response services need to be located so that they can meet our urgent requests for help.

27. The 2018 strategy proposed a 6-hub response model, however, further evaluation of the response operating model, anticipated deployment times from base and the additional estate requirement necessitated by Uplift means that an 8-hub model is recommended.
28. It is recommended that response is located at Wolverhampton, Dudley (currently Brierley Hill), Bournville Lane, Coventry Central, Chelmsley Wood, Park Lane, Stechford and Bloxwich.

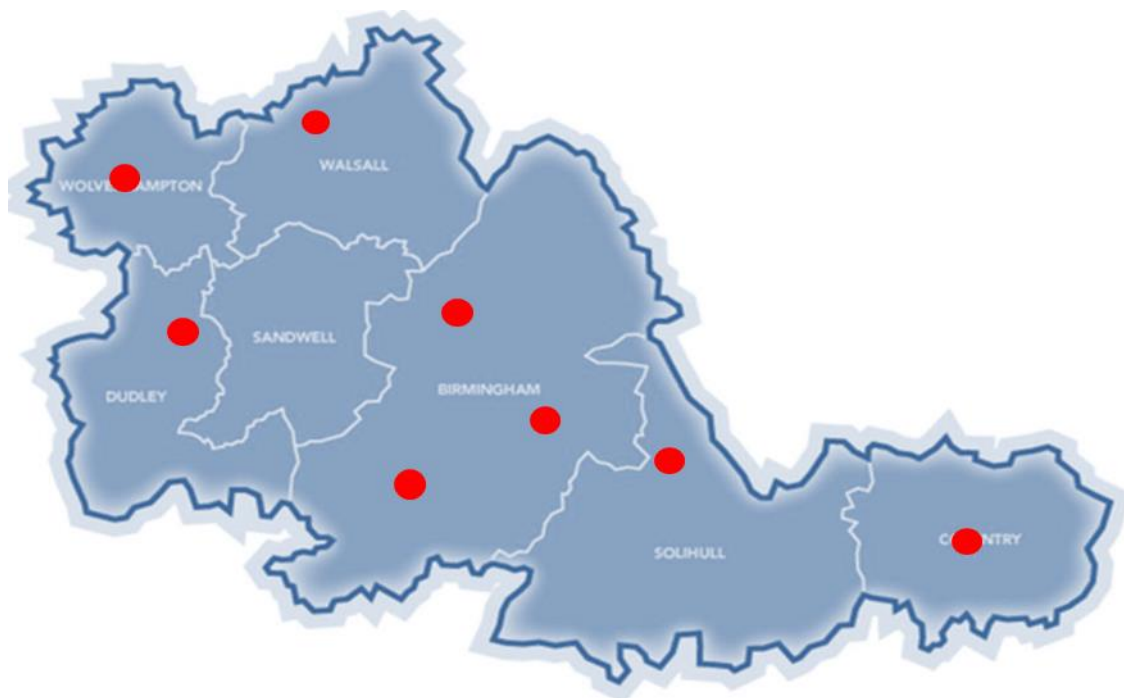


Fig.2 Proposed Location of Response Hubs

Principle 4.

We seek to create a specialist high density custody estate to improve detainee safety, efficiency and support modern services to investigate crime.

29. The force currently has modern, fit-for-purpose Custody suites in Oldbury and Perry Barr; a complementary third block of similar size and capability remains to be built on the Eastern side of the force to the latest design specifications. This builds on the success of the existing hubs, supporting increased professionalism of the service and providing safer custody environments. Additionally, it will see co-location of investigative and custody teams, and provide a central, safe location for victims to visit.
30. The new custody block is anticipated to hold 60 cells, offering a total 160 cells across the three hubs in addition to 18 at Wolverhampton. Its delivery will unlock estate activities in the east and enable the closure of older inefficient custody blocks and re-provision of services. The block at Wolverhampton will be retained as well as Bloxwich and Stechford which will be used as resilience sites for emergency use.

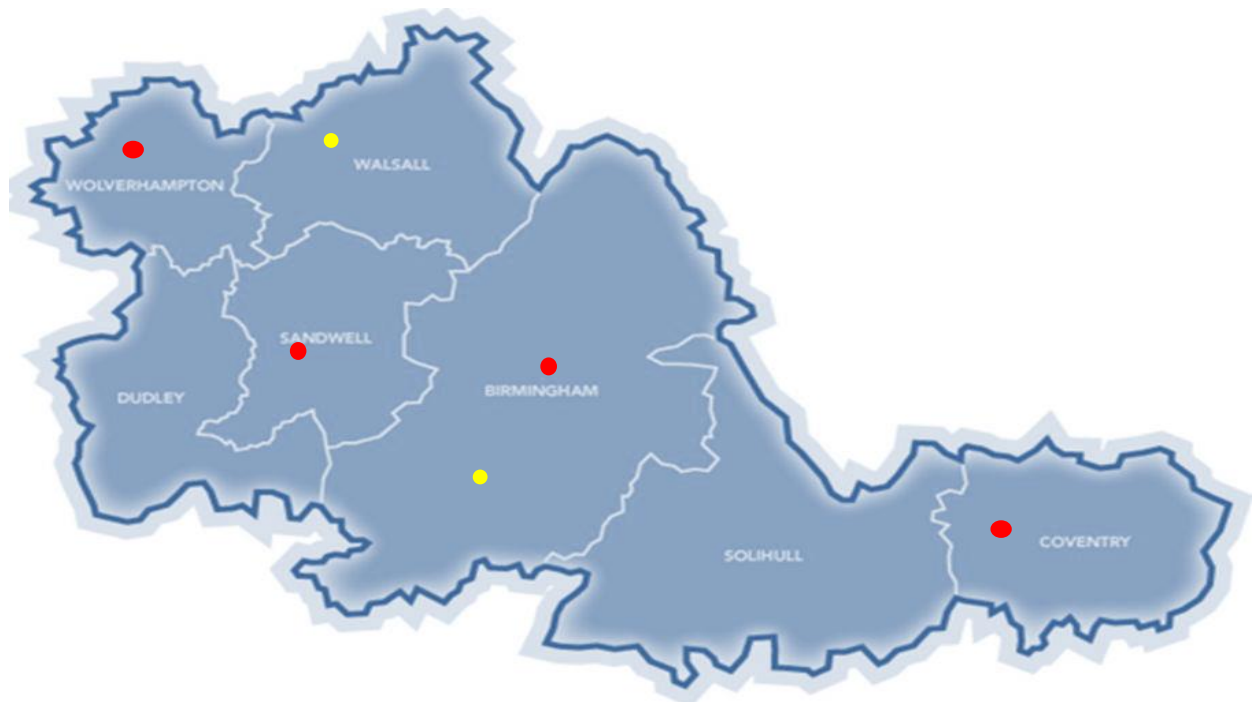


Fig.3 Planned Custody locations

Principle 5.

We have resilient command and control locations (Force Contact Centres).

31. Force Contact currently has a total of five call centre locations (which includes resilience sites). There may be relocations of these sites over the medium term, as opportunities across the estate arise. This will remain, however is under continual review. The pandemic has reaffirmed the value of dispersing call handling and dispatch sites, which also assist with recruitment.

32. Business continuity resilience for the new major event control functions of the C3 building are still housed at the Events Control Suite (ECS) at Tally Ho.

Principle 6.

We aim to support a safe and healthy workforce.

33. A significant feature of the estate strategy has to have a universal standard of accommodation that ensures a safe and productive environment.
34. Although, not originally part of the 2018 strategy, WMP is committed to the wellbeing of staff and the provision of wellbeing spaces such as Gyms is currently under review; the requirement to incorporate such spaces into the force estate will be impact assessed against the current programme of works and addressed accordingly.

Principle 7.

We aim for a modern learning approach and estate to support this.

35. Given the changing operational demands, the uplift in officer and staff numbers and the opportunities for the organisation to move away from more traditional methods of learning, a review is underway, which will set out those revised learning requirements and the potential impact on the Estate. The outcome of this review could change the current strategy for our Tally Ho! site and how it is used going forward, costs for which are not included in the current strategy.
36. Public order training is currently undertaken at Cosford, Staffordshire, an ex-MOD airfield, at which old WWII aircraft hangers and training space are leased by WMP to support the regional policing requirement. A regional agreement to commit to a joint approach to public order training provision is in the process of being signed, this will then lead to a review of the current site and the scale of works required.
37. In anticipation of the revised methods of learning, other sites have been developed (through refurbishment or re-build) to provide greater flexible, multi-purpose space, acknowledging the move towards more remotely accessible learning opportunities.

Principle 8.

We will co locate strategic policing services with national partners where possible.

38. West Midlands Police has a Counter Terrorism Unit and hosts the Regional Organised Crime Unit. The co-location of partners to ensure effective strategic policing responses is a feature of our estate.
39. Early discussions have taken place to explore the relocation of nationally provided policing services within the West Midlands region. This may provide opportunities to co-locate both local, regional and national functions, to improve operational delivery and also leverage national funding/investment into the West Midlands and our current estate. We have identified a number of sites, which may be suitable to host such functions, with the appropriate investment. At this stage, these sites will remain under review whilst discussions continue.

Principle 9.

We require high quality estate to meet forensic regulation requirements.

40. Significant expansion of digital forensics provision, along with Warwickshire collaboration and Uplift across Forensics has put Ridgepoint House under extreme pressure; it is unlikely to continue to provide sufficient capacity for the increased demand, even with extensive refurbishment. An options appraisal has just been initiated to determine a long-term solution for provision of Forensic Services.

Principle 10.

We will seek best value when disposing of surplus estate, having tested alternative uses for unwanted sites

41. At the point of any proposed property disposal, engagement will take place to identify any opportunities relating to social value. The disposal of any WMP property will be undertaken only after specific sign-off by the Police and Crime Commissioner, once satisfied that opportunities for social value have been explored and police presence has been protected.

42. All of our buildings remain under constant review for their effectiveness, condition and above all ability to meet operational policing requirements. We need to ensure that our sites are in the right operational locations and that any disposal decisions reflect uneconomic high cost sites. Any capital receipt from disposal is ringfenced to support further investment in WMP estate.

43. The annual running cost savings (revenue) due to the closure of buildings coupled with improved running efficiency of the refurbished retained estate is still expected to show a reduction in annual revenue costs in excess of £5m pa, which includes an estimated outlay of lease charges for partner estate.

Principle 11.

We will deliver modern, efficient, flexible, agile accommodation

44. Within the modernised estate, we will allocate space by role rather than seniority and look to align ourselves with modern organisations to provide 8-10 m² per workstation, rather than the existing c17m². Where possible (role dependent) work-stations will be shared rather than 'owned' by individuals.

45. We acknowledge the non-specialist nature of many of our business activities, hence modern generic shared office space provision will protect operational resilience.

46. We are aiming to increase the proportion of usable space within a building footprint from c65% to modern standards of c80%. This is underpinned by delivery of agile principles:

- All buildings will have a similar look and feel, covering provision of IT/AV; meeting rooms; furniture etc.
- Enhanced use of technology incorporating mobile devices, Wi-fi and AV connectivity with partners and suppliers.
- NWoW mobility supporting agreed space based on known workstyles; agility ratios for desks; different agility workstyles; touch-down and hot-desking areas.

47. This principle specifically effects our larger police buildings within Neighbourhood Policing Units. With the construction of specialist estate for forensics, command and control, call handling, custody and property and exhibit storage being centralised the traditional police station requires little more than generic office space.
48. Across these larger sites there will generally be a requirement for one larger police station in each Neighbourhood Policing Unit to base Neighbourhood Policing Unit functions and locally based but centrally operated teams. There will also be a requirement for some specialist headquarters accommodation for Force CID, Public Protection and Roads Policing.
49. As the force is adjusting to the uplift, the implications of the pandemic and the financial context these larger sites will be reviewed and opportunities will be explored with local partners.

Factor of note:

National 'Uplift' Programme

50. The initiation of the National Officer Uplift was not known about for the previous strategies. Although an allowance has been made for increased occupational density at most sites, either through additional space or implementation of NWoW; the programme has catered for the initial 270 Neighbourhood officers, but at the time of publication, the deployment location of the remaining 180 Neighbourhood officers is still awaited.
51. A further 750 officers across various roles and departments are in the process of being accommodated across the force estate. The original designs can cater for this uplift, however storage of operational kit is now a principal challenge to ensure the estate can accommodate such volumes of kit in the right locations.

Delivering a Greener Estate

52. The approach to delivering a greener estate focusses on reducing WMP's carbon footprint and improved waste management/generation. It builds on work already undertaken, and planned, improving both the building stock and the engineering installations within them. Influencing and Behavioural change are key under the three guiding principles of *reduce*, *re-use* and *recycle*.
53. An Environmental & Sustainability Manager has been recently recruited; this role will drive activities to improve environmental performance and will identify opportunities to influence colleague behaviours; this will build on the approach already taken by the Corporate Asset Management team; for example, Estates & Fleet Services now report CO₂ emissions to track and monitor performance.
54. Generally police buildings have been constructed according to good practice, but most were not built at a time when there were concerns about low carbon and sustainability. There is therefore a major opportunity (and need) to green WMP's estate.
55. New builds and major refurbishments will aim to exceed Building regulations requirements for energy efficiency by at least 10% and attain a level of 'Very Good' under BREEAM (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Model); this is an established certification scheme designed to encourage better building sustainability.

56. WMP now has a networked building management system - a digital system for monitoring and controlling buildings, including modern controls for most boilers. This means our boilers may not be the most modern, but they are firing as efficiently as they can. Furthermore, a policy of adopting low energy LED lighting as standard for all new and replacement lights has been in place for over 10 years.
57. Voltage optimisation (VO) equipment has been installed in older, larger buildings, typically reducing on-site electricity demand by 10%. Its suitability is not universal and the best sites have already been equipped.
58. Photo-voltaic arrays (PV or solar cells) have been installed at Western and Central Custody and the new Block B at Park Lane. With the right weather conditions, the Custody Block installations allow them to be electrically self-sufficient and make a modest export to the grid.
59. This financial year we have funds to install three more PV arrays; two at Park Lane and one on the roof of Bloxwich police station. To install arrays on the remainder of suitable buildings with the WMP estate is estimated to cost in the region of an additional £2m.
60. Combined heat and power units are installed at Western & Central Custody. These burn gas in an engine to generate electricity and the hot exhaust is used to heat water like a boiler. They are good at extracting the maximum energy possible from gas, but do still release CO₂. They are better thought of as greener, rather than green technology, but do help to lower emissions.
61. Air source heat-pumps have been installed within the air handling units at the recently completed new builds at Logistics Centre and Park Lane; these provide a low carbon heating/cooling solution which is powered by electricity, is complementary to the use of solar pv arrays and will enable further carbon reductions as the grid decarbonises. A related technology to air-sourced heat pumps is variable refrigerant flow and these have been installed at the Logistics Centre and Park Lane. Like heat pumps they are a refrigerant based technology and directly heat and cool spaces in these buildings.
62. Shifting the police vehicle fleet from hydrocarbon fuel to electricity is a major step in improving sustainability and the estate has a key part to play in this by providing the electrical infrastructure to charge vehicles. Most large sites now have EV chargers (over 40 in total) and all new and refurbished sites have provision to meet current and medium term needs. Wherever possible we are future-proofing sites by installing cable trenches and sub-station bases to allow future expansion. We now specify 22kW chargers to allow faster charging (a typical plug in domestic charger is 3kW). We are also assessing new charging technologies and are participating in a Government funded trial of V2G (vehicle to grid) technology at Lloyd House, in which the charge from unused cars can be extracted to deal with high demands elsewhere.

Financial Implications

63. The sale of buildings indicated and improved efficiencies of the future retained estate identified in this paper, coupled with an estimated outlay of lease charges for partner estate still project a reduction in annual revenue costs of £5m, a reduction in backlog maintenance costs of in excess of £24m and potential capital receipts in excess of the 2018 quoted figure of £40m. Any costs associated with the disposal of these buildings will be met through existing devolved budgets.

64. The programme will be funded from a combination of capital receipts (site disposals), earmarked reserves and additional long term borrowing. Decisions on borrowing will be made in line with the Treasury management strategy, which is annually approved by the Joint Audit Committee and timed to achieve the lowest rate available.
65. The release of buildings and extensive refurbishment/re-build of the remaining estate, together with the effective elimination of the current backlog maintenance was to have a net cost of approximately £56m in the 2018 strategy financial model.
66. However, the delay of over 18 months caused by the pandemic means that costs will be inflated more than originally planned. More detailed analysis of individual site costs against the affordability envelope will be undertaken as each project is approved.

Legal Implications

67. Schedule 1, paragraph 14, sub-section 1 of Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 provides for the PCC to do anything, which includes by virtue of sub-section 2(b) acquiring and disposing of property including land.
68. In accordance with the Policing Protocol, while decisions relating to the operational use of a 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.

Equality Implications

69. A full EQIA assessment has been prepared and approved at programme level. Additionally, equality assessments are built into the planning cycles of the individual projects.

Next Steps

70. The Board is asked to note and endorse the refreshed estates strategy principles as set out in this paper.
71. The paper does not address the specific details of individual police stations. The Force is conscious that proposals for individual locations are always matters of public and political concern. The previous strategy created concerns over the fate of individual sites by identifying proposed disposals some years ahead. As we are well aware many of these sites remain in our estate. This reflects the changing context we operate within, the complexity of re provision and the timescales estate changes take place over.
72. Having reset the design principles the force will re-apply these principles to the estate to identify an optimal strategy that reflects the new context of a larger force. There is no question some of the sites the force has previously identify for disposal will remain in this position.
73. It is proposed that the Force should engage in specific consultation with partners and the public when a more realistic horizon exists for disposal and re-provision for individual locations. The force will be more able to articulate “what next” as opposed to simply “what is being lost”. This approach has worked well to date with individual sites that have been replaced.

Recommendations.

74. The Commissioner is asked to endorse the principles and support the force to reapply these principles to the existing estate.

Sir David Thompson QPM DL

Chief Constable.