

## Report to Police & Crime Panel

### Report of Durham Police and Crime Commissioner

#### Report on Investigative Hub

4th November 2022



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### 1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide a chronology of the formal decision making in relation to progression of the Investigative Hub and to provide information in relation to several queries presented to the PCC by the panel.

### 2. Background

- 2.1 Custody remains a key operational function of the Constabulary with particularly complex and onerous responsibilities in relation to detainees. Several legal liabilities apply beyond normal areas of the estate alongside Home Office (HO) guidance and scrutiny via His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS).
- 2.2 Detailed review of Custody provision within the force estate commenced in 2008 when a Treasury Green Book exercise identified that best value would be obtained through provision of a new facility in terms of whole life costs and wider estate and operational risks. HM Government's subsequent Comprehensive Spending Review in the wake of the global financial recession however made this a largely unaffordable option to the force.
- 2.3 As a result, refurbishments occurred within the existing estate at Peterlee (2009), Darlington (2010), and Bishop Auckland (in 2011 and 2018). Desktop feasibility and option appraisal for a long-term solution continued alongside the efforts to keep the custody estate operational through regular refurbishment.
- 2.4 In 2019 HMICFRS and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) highlighted an urgent need for a major upgrade of the Force's custody suites to bring them up to modern-day standards. In addition, the HO issued new design guidance in September 2019 with prescriptive design recommendations to improve standards relating to equality, security, privacy, and dignity.
- 2.5 A complete refurbishment of the existing custody facilities would be a significant undertaking which would be much more expensive than a new custody build. In addition, due to site limitations any refurbishment would still not mitigate the risks that exist or provide value for money for the taxpayer. It would not be possible to achieve HO guidance through refurbishment. This is explained in more detail within **Appendix 1**.

- 2.6 Approval to award a contract to build a new centralised custody facility was granted by the PCC in November 2021 which followed several reports, presentations and site visits amounting to a detailed business case for the proposal. This followed a substantial consultation programme with local politicians conducted by the PCC's office.
- 2.7 The new facility will provide a safer environment for our staff and officers to work in and will enable them to book multiple detainees in at once, reducing waiting times for our officers and allowing them to get back out on the streets quickly.
- 2.8 The improved welfare of and reduced risk to staff and officers working in custody is a big factor in the PCC's decision to support the new centralised custody facility.
- 2.9 Reducing the risks of detainees harming themselves and the risks of a death in custody are significant factors in the decision to approve the new custody facility.
- 2.10 The facility will also be specifically designed to be more accessible for detainees, many of whom are vulnerable, and will significantly improve their welfare while in police care.
- 2.11 The facility will reduce the time police officers spend waiting with and watching detainees with severe mental needs because of the creation of appropriate secure provision enabling observation of the detainees, allowing the officers to return to their duties.
- 2.12 The facility will also enable centralisation of other functions that must meet International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) accreditation standards and this facility creates an opportunity to be compliant, securing evidence as well as streamlining processes.
- 2.13 The local contractor Tilbury Douglas is delivering on its social value commitments, including the recruitment of apprentices, facilitation of student work placements and training opportunities, working with a local charity Changing Lives to support vulnerable people find work, spending an estimated £7.7m with small to medium enterprises (£1.9m locally). Working with Tilbury, Durham is the first public sector organisations to use the new Construction Value Toolkit which is a government led scheme to drive better social, environmental and economic outcomes from major projects. This project is leading to significant investment in the local economy.

### 3. Chronology of Decision Making

- 3.1 As explained above, various feasibility exercises and option appraisals in relation to the custody estate were undertaken between 2008 and 2018. After the HMICFRS inspection, the option to develop a new facility was proposed to the PCC and then formally reported as below:

Date	Content
Exec Board November 2019	Presented risks and issues within existing estate and sought approval to undertake feasibility exercise for a centralised facility with external specialised consultancy working with estate, IT and Custody staff.
Exec Board January 2020	Update provided to confirm that Turner & Townsend appointed to lead consultancy in line with the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) standardised Plan of Work. Report confirmed that a site search for potential locations was in progress.
Exec Board June 2020	Approval sought for sign off RIBA stage 2 (concept design) and progression to stage 3 (developed design to include planning

Date	Content
	application). This report confirmed a 48-cell radial design had been developed and detailed cost reports were provided. At this stage development of a facility to include wider uses such as investigative functions, CSI and Property Storage was recommended.
Exec Board July 2020	At the June 2020 Exec Board, the Acting PCC requested time to give further consideration of the stage 2 report and to seek independent advice before progression to RIBA stage 3. Queries received from the PCC to the CC were responded to. Following this, the Temporary Chief of Staff provided a report to the July 2020 Exec Board recommending progression to RIBA stage 3.
Exec Board October 2020	A status update was provided to the Exec Board advising that Stage 3 remained in progress. At the same time a report was presented setting out details of the site search and proposing terms for acquisition of a preferred site at a rate per acre subject to planning permission.
Exec Board January 2021	A status update was provided to the Exec Board advising that Stage 3 remained in progress with a planning application submitted in December 2020.
Exec Board February 2021	Approval sought for sign off RIBA stage 3 (concept design) and progression to stage 4 (technical design to include tendering). Detailed cost reports provided and confirmation of HO design review by National Police Estates Group custody leads.
New PCC Briefing Session July 2021	Following the elected PCC taking Office in May 2021, a briefing session was provided setting out the case history and rationale in relation to project. The PCC visited several custody facilities outside of the force area to become familiar with best practice and learn from the experiences of other police forces. The PCC visited all force custody suites, met with staff and shadowed shifts to directly experience the current custody environment and challenges faced by the teams on a daily basis, all to assist in decision making.
Public Accountability Session 26 <sup>th</sup> August 2021	Public questions in relation to the Custody Project answered and recorded on YouTube <a href="#">Public Accountability Meeting 26-08-21 - YouTube</a>
Decision Record 27 <sup>th</sup> August 2021	The Police & Crime Commissioner made the formal decision to approve the Centralised Custody & Investigations Suite as the most appropriate custody option for Durham Constabulary, following visits to all existing custody suites across the region, meetings with MPs, councillors, local partners and the public accountability meeting on 26th August 2021.
Exec Board November 2021	Report recommending contract award following tendering process. Details of submissions and analysis provided.
Exec Board March 2022	Report providing status update and confirmation that construction started on site 17 <sup>th</sup> January 2022.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Content</b>
Exec Board June 2022	Update provided in relation to works on site confirming excavation and piling complete and foundations in progress. Potential delay highlighted advising completion Summer 2023 as opposed to Spring 2023.
Exec Board Sept 2022	Update provided in relation to works on site confirming precast concrete sections being installed forming the custody wings.

3.2 It should also be noted that between July and December 2020 the PCC's office undertook several political and stakeholder engagement and consultation sessions in relation to the project. The planning process between December 2020 and June 2021 also provided a statutory consultation period open to all members of the public.

#### **4. Public Accountability Questions**

4.1 The questions posed by the public and answered by Constabulary representatives at the Public Accountability meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> August 2021 are set out below.

- **Why can't the existing custody estate be remodelled/refurbished instead of building a new facility?**

The HO guidance sets out a wide range of supporting investigative facilities alongside cells. The charge desk also needs sight lines down cell wings, discreet booking in facilities, and high natural daylight levels. The guidance also recommends a van dock. These recommendations require a substantial space footprint, and our existing sites simply cannot accommodate a layout to meet the standard of facilities expected. We have examined this option before undertaking a feasibility to adapt Spennymoor police station in 2018. This is one of our newest stations with an adjacent plot of land within PCC ownership available for extension. The feasibility demonstrated that there was insufficient space to provide a HO compliant facility. Cost comparison also showed that it was cheaper to build new than try to renovate existing. Other forces have also confirmed similar findings.

- **Prior to DurhamGate, were any other potential sites explored?**

A site of around 4 acres is required. Opportunities to use the existing estate were initially considered but site limitations prevented this. One option was to build the facility at Aykley Heads on existing PCC owned land however this did not meet location criteria. The County Council were also contacted to understand the local plan and identify where the facility may be located in planning terms. Other sites reviewed included Meadowfield and Bowburn. Land at Meadowfield was not available for the proposed use and land at Bowburn was much higher than the value of DurhamGate with poorer public transport facilities. Hence, DurhamGate was selected as the preferred location.

- **If the project proceeds, will any contractor be asked to commit to social value benefits as part of their bid?**

Yes. We intend to request the bidding contractors to commit to working with the PCC in relation to the national Social Value Measurement Framework which includes initiatives such as use of local suppliers and employment of apprentices. In addition, we are the first public sector organisation to have trialled the new Construction Value Toolkit which is a government led scheme to drive better social, environmental, and economic outcomes from major projects. We will also be asking contractors to commit to working with us in that too.

- **I am concerned about lost time of Police Officers transporting people from where they've been arrested to the custody suite, the lost time of investigating officers going from their base to the custody suite. What will be done to minimise officers' time travelling to & from Spennymoor?**

The investigative hub will allow for a much more effective and efficient custody process than the current facilities allow us to do. The custody process can be quite lengthy and frequently involves multiple legal consultations (both in person and by phone). Additionally, because many detainees experience problematic drug issues or have mental health issues, we need to ensure that these are addressed before interviews, should we not do this any evidenced gained in an interview may become invalid, letting the victim down. Between these consultations and assessments detainees are returned to their cell.

The provision of all cells with cctv (and critically also a dedicated location to watch them), having medical professionals on site 24/7, alongside dedicated facilities for mental health assessment will dramatically lessen the need for officers to remain outside cells...waiting for a medical professional to arrive or watching detainees whom we have elevated concerns about, but have no other means to observe them. As part of the investigative hub project work has indeed taken place to identify these blockages and numerous examples have been identified.

One such example took place at Durham Custody on Saturday 6th June where a detainee had been arrested and in the process of this had also been Tasered. The taser barbs need to be removed by a medical professional and in order to prevent the detainee from ripping them out and causing harm officers needed to watch him until a medical professional arrived; this took 1 hour and 29 minutes, time otherwise they could have been on patrol and responding to public calls.

- **Improved custody facilities are required in County Durham. However, I am concerned about lost time of Police Officers transporting people from where they've been arrested to the custody suite, the lost time of investigating officers going from their base to the custody suite. What will be done to minimise officers' time travelling to & from Spennymoor? I'm also concerned about people being released from custody & returning to their homes. Many years ago, I was arrested and following an investigation I was released without charge at 4am. Without public transport or means for a taxi I walked a couple of miles home. If there had been a central custody suite then, it would've been at least a four-hour walk. What provisions will be put in place to ensure that when people are released, they are able to travel safely home?**

The time involved in the transportation of detainees from their place of arrest to the investigative hub is clearly something that we have considered. There is absolutely an increase in mileage travelled in some instances, however due to its location the actual time spent travelling is often less. An example of this would be that Durham city centre is frequently congested and to get to the custody suite from the north involves crossing the river twice. The investigative hub is adjacent to main arterial road networks, with good access to the A1M and the wider location in general doesn't experience the congestion of a city centre.

The issue is wider than this however and in many cases, it will be less travelling time than currently. Detainees are not always taken to the closest suite due to capacity currently. The new facility will be more efficient than existing suites due to increased capacity and better facilities so officers will be released back to the frontline quicker. There will be less waiting to book detainees in, less officers required for constant observations of vulnerable detainees because there will be alternative ways to do this using technology, and less requirement for attending hospital for minor medical concerns, which currently accounts for a lot of wasted time for officers. The flow of processing prisoners will also be better due to the increased capacity of the new facility. We have a duty of care to those who are in our custody, and this extends into the manner in which we allow them to leave. Every detainee who leaves our care is subject to a thorough exit risk assessment and how those detainees reach home is part of that assessment.

The investigative hub is adjacent to one of the main north south routes in the county, enabling travel to Durham and Darlington by bus, connecting to wider services such as the Easington and Derwentside areas from those locations. The location also sees frequent bus services to Bishop Auckland from where wider services to the west of the county can be accessed. Service levels obviously differ over weekends however, it is still an effective one. Throughout the night, services are minimal, however whilst detainees are occasionally released during the night this is far from the norm. A range of options exist to get people home from the investigative hub and depending on the circumstances this may involve waiting until bus services resume.

- **With already stretched resources, is it practicable and most effective to have two officers in Seaham, or Middleton Teasdale leaving their beat area to transfer a prisoner to Spennymoor. Furthermore, if this is an absolute necessity, why choose a location that has no Magistrates Court nearby? This creates a need for further prisoner transfer at a cost to the taxpayer.**

With a centrally located custody facility there will be some areas from which officers will have further to travel with detainees, however officers from other areas will in turn find the new facility is closer than their previous custody options. The current reality is that detainees are not always taken to the closest existing custody facility.

The company that transfers detainees to Court is located next to the new custody facility so they will now be able to transfer them to Court directly rather than having to travel to all three custody facilities with the detainees from the first and second on

board while they go to the third. This will not only save taxpayers' money, but it will also make the transfer quicker and reduce the travelling time spent for the detainees.

The two Magistrates Courts currently used for remand and warrant detainees are located at Newton Aycliffe and Peterlee, with the majority of cases heard at Newton Aycliffe. The new custody facility is closer to Newton Aycliffe than any of the existing custody facilities, with travel time savings to Newton Aycliffe ranging from 4 minutes from Darlington to 19 minutes from Peterlee. Peterlee Magistrates Court is attached to Peterlee Police Station so this will be the greatest travel time increase from the new facility, however Peterlee only hears cases on Fridays and it is also considerably further from Darlington custody than the new facility, at 18 minutes further in travel time.

- **I object to the building of a centralised custody suite simply because I believe it will dilute police cover where it is required most. The existing custody suites are in locations where they are most needed. With regard to current capacity, I can understand that there are times when arrests peak and current resources struggle to cope but surely these peak times are limited to a few hours in a week. Does that really warrant officers from, for example, Darlington bringing a shoplifter many miles during daytime in a time-consuming process and at the same time reducing police cover in a town that needs it?**

Many offences or crimes are investigated without anyone having to be arrested, this is called Voluntary Attendance (VA), whereby a suspect is interviewed, fingerprinted etc and then required to attend court, all without ever being placed in a cell. A case involving a straightforward shoplifting offence with no aggravating factors would certainly fall into the remit for a VA.

All of the custody suites that will be closing will still be left with fully functional interview and biometric rooms along with administrative facilities which will allow officers to investigate potential offenders. This has been the case at many stations for several years. Consett, Stanley, Seaham, Chester le Street, and others all have interview rooms without the need for cell facilities.

- **How much police time would be spent transporting prisoners to the centre from areas such as Consett, Stanley or other towns or villages on the borders of other counties/cities? Is this task contracted out?**

Travel times have been examined. Based on 2019 arrest numbers calculated for current evening rush hour traffic using Google maps, travel times calculations for Consett, Stanley and Barnard Castle indicate the difference in time between the custody facility that detainees were taken to after arrest in comparison to taking them to the new facility. It is important to note that the specific locations of arrest are not available so these calculations are based on a central point of the police station within that community so might not accurately reflect the true travel times because the arrest location could be anywhere within that parish area.

Arrests within Consett area

In 2019 90.2% or 490 of all detainees arrested in the Consett area were taken to Durham City custody. If they were taken to the new facility this would take approximately 25 hours extra per year in travelling time. This is less than half an hour per week.

In a recent case a detainee arrested in Consett was taken to Durham City custody and officers had to wait half an hour before being able to book the detainee in. Officers have recently had to wait up to 46 minutes from arriving at Durham City custody before being able to book the detainee in.

#### Arrests within Stanley area

In 2019 60.2% or 317 of all detainees arrested in the Stanley area were taken to Durham City custody. If they were taken to the new facility this would take approximately 16 hours extra per year in travelling time. This is just over 18 minutes per week.

Officers taking detainees from Stanley to Durham custody have recently had to wait up to 46 minutes after arriving at Durham City custody before being able to book their detainee in. This is a regular occurrence.

In 2019 37.8% or 199 of all detainees arrested in the Stanley area were taken to Peterlee custody. If they were taken to the new facility this would take approximately 13 hours fewer per year in travelling time. This is 15 minutes per week.

#### Arrests within Barnard Castle area

In 2019 48.1% or 39 of all detainees arrested in the Barnard Castle area were taken to Bishop Auckland custody. If they were taken to the new facility this would take approximately 9 hours extra per year. This is just over ten minutes per week. Officers taking their detainees to Bishop Auckland custody have recently had to wait up to an hour before they can book their detainee in. In 2019 49.4 or 40 of all detainees arrested in the Barnard Castle area were taken to Darlington custody. If they were taken to the new facility this would take approximately 6 hours extra per year. This is just under 7 minutes per week.

The new facility will be far more efficient than the existing custody facilities and therefore travelling time is not the only relevant consideration, often officers will spend considerable lengths of time waiting outside custody facilities to book their detainees in. The efficiencies of the new facility will offset the small extra travelling times seen for these outlying areas. This task is not contracted out.

- **I think this will save officers and support staff time. Has a time and motion study been done into time wasted by officers queuing at the current custody suites? Or watching prisoners 1-1 as not all cells have cameras? Are there expected time and cost savings by civilians being centralized to interview etc saving officer time to be dealing with calls from the public back in their own area?**

The investigative hub will allow for a much more effective and efficient custody process than the current facilities allow. The custody process can be quite lengthy and frequently involves multiple legal consultations (both in person and by phone). Additionally, because many detainees experience problematic drug issues or have mental health issues, we need to ensure that these are addressed before interviews. Should we not do this any evidenced gained in an interview may become invalid, letting

the victim down. Between these consultations and assessments detainees are returned to their cell.

The provision of all cells with CCTV (and critically also a dedicated location to watch them), having medical professionals on site 24/7, alongside dedicated facilities for mental health assessment will dramatically lessen the need for officers to remain outside cells (such as when waiting for a medical professional to arrive or watching detainees whom we have elevated concerns about, but have no other means to observe them). As part of the investigative hub project work has indeed taken place to identify these blockages and numerous examples have been identified.

One such example took place at Durham Custody on Saturday 6th June where a detainee had been arrested and in the process of this had also been Tasered. The taser barbs need to be removed by a medical professional and in order to prevent the detainee from ripping them out and causing harm officers needed to watch him until a medical professional arrived. This took 1 hour and 29 minutes, time otherwise they could have been on patrol and responding to public calls.

- **Why is it necessary to close the custody suite at Peterlee police station when it is barely 20 years old and still very much fit for purpose? The move to Spennymoor would be disastrous for Peterlee taking officers away for far too long.**

The existing facility at Peterlee has not met the standards on HMICFRS inspection and cannot be adapted to meet the new HO guidance. It is therefore not fit for purpose for ongoing detention. The facility will however be retained for use to interview voluntary attenders and for staff training. The wider police station will remain fully operational.

At present officer's transport detainees around the county to the three operational custody suites and this may not always be the closest one. For example, persons arrested in Stanley may be routinely transported to either Durham or Peterlee custody, and in extreme circumstances to Darlington.

Travel distance and time is only one part of the equation, however. We regularly have officers queuing at our existing stations in the station yard. These queues are related to the inefficiencies of the existing facilities, bottlenecks, limited space, limited consultation rooms and the like.

Even once booked into detention the lack of constant medical care at any of our existing stations means that the arresting officers are required to stay with the detainee until either a medical professional arrives, or if deemed more serious they are transported to hospital. The proposed investigative hub will alleviate these issues, with medical staff being based at the hub on a 24/7 basis. With both dedicated medical surgeries and dedicated mental health rooms, the need for officers to remain 'watching the detainee' will be removed.

So, whilst there is in some circumstances an increased distance to travel for officers, the new building's layout and functionality will allow officers to be released from custody more efficiently than they are currently.

- **Are we getting extra officers to be on duty to cover for those who will be transporting people to Spennymoor or will we be even more stretched than now?**

As stated above, at present officers transport detainees around the county to the three operational custody suites and this may not always be the closest one. For example, persons arrested in Stanley may be routinely transported to either Durham or Peterlee custody, or in extreme circumstances to Darlington. Whilst there is in some circumstances an increased distance to travel for officers, the new facility will allow officers to be released from custody more efficiently than they are currently. There will be no additional officers directly as a result of this project, however there has been a recent national uplift in officer recruitment.

- **As a resident of Durham Gate, I would like to know what plans are in place for the release of prisoners. Having been a police officer for 30years I am unconvinced that all arrested persons will be transported home after their stay. I am concerned that if simply allowed out of the building to make their own way home, there would be a natural route through Durham Gate to the 24hr retail food outlets and therefore make residents vulnerable to crime/ASB?**

The Police have a duty of care to detainees that extends beyond their period in custody. Some detainees are not released from custody and are instead transported direct to prison or more frequently court.

For those that are released, be that on bail or under investigation all of them are subject to a thorough risk assessment process prior to their release. This takes into account numerous issues such as, but not limited to the offence involved, the victim, their vulnerability, their age, their clothing, the weather, the time and where they live.

There is no evidence that detainees released from custody involve themselves in crime or ASB following their release from existing custody suites. Indeed all current sites are relatively close to housing, more than the proposed investigative hub at Durhamgate.

- **When it is reported in the News about arrests of a gang, we often hear that those detained will be held at separate locations to prevent them colluding. Also, when two gangs have been fighting surely having them in one location opens up the possibility of two members of different gangs coming across each other (despite the police's best effort to avoid this kind of situation) and continuing the violence. In these two situations, will a centralised custody suite be a backward step?**

This is a good practical question and the circumstances where we may arrest multiple persons in relation to one incident are certainly something that we come across fairly frequently.

Upon arrival at the proposed investigative hub there are two entrances, both lead to two holding cells (4 in total) where detainees can be safely detained prior to booking in, preventing any awareness of each other's presence or the potential for discussion.

Booking in can then take place at any of seven charge desks, one of which is wholly discrete from the others, again preventing opportunities for discussion.

The facility has 48 cells spread across 4 wings, each of which is separate from the others. Once booked in detainees can again be safely detained wholly apart from each other.

These opportunities to keep detainees who are 'connected' apart from one another extends to the interview rooms, exercise yards and biometric and medical rooms. This

last point is really important as preventing the cross contamination of forensic evidence is critical.

- **How will the impact of increased response times be mitigated (officers having to travel further afield to transport clients to custody -leaves them unavailable for emergency responses for greater periods). Having grown up in a domestically abusive household in Lincolnshire, and having felt the impact of having to wait over 50 minutes for your nearest 999 -blue light emergency response to get to you whilst you're a child being attacked by an adult, I can tell you it is an absolutely horrific situation to be in. Is this move to a central custody suite likely to put more of the people you are here to protect at greater risk, not to mention add increased pressure to your staff?**

The time involved in the transportation of detainees from their place of arrest to the investigative hub is clearly something that we have considered. There is absolutely an increase in mileage travelled in some instances, however due to its location the actual time spent travelling is often less. An example of this would be that Durham city centre is frequently congested and to get to the custody suite from the north involves crossing the river twice. The investigative hub is adjacent to main arterial road networks, with good access to the A1M and the wider location in general doesn't experience the congestion of a city centre.

The issue is wider than this however as in many cases it will be less travelling time than currently experienced. Detainees are not always taken to the closest suite due to capacity. The new facility will be more efficient than existing suites due to increased capacity and better booking in arrangements so officers will be released back to the frontline quicker. There will be less waiting to book detainees in and less officers required for constant observations of vulnerable detainees. This building will be in place for years to come and has been future-proofed it as much as is practicable within Home Office guidelines. Technological solutions have been included taking advantage of new IT platforms that are and will be developed. Once detainees are booked in the officers will be released and able to travel back to their normal patrol area or their station. The documentation that officers complete following an arrest, such as statements and handover packages can be completed remotely. There will be less requirement for attending hospital for minor medical concerns, which currently accounts for a lot of wasted time for officers, because we will have dedicated medical provision permanently on site. As already discussed, the flow of processing prisoners will be significantly improved due to the increased capacity of the new facility.

- **What will happen to old sites - Peterlee , Bishop etc will they be mothballed - will there still be access to officers at these sites - Will there be any access to community engagement activities like bicycle marking .. Are we losing more valuable stat services?**

The opening of the investigative hub will not see any local withdrawal. Indeed, officers at Bishop, Durham, Darlington, and Peterlee stations will still require facilities where they can undertake voluntary interviews to aid their investigations. In order to allow for this the interview rooms, biometric and administrative facilities will remain functional within these localities It is only the facilities such as cells, showers, exercise yards and

detainees' kitchens that will be closed down. The removal of these facilities will not have any impact on the provision of wider policing or associated activities such as bicycle marking.

- **Do the staff working from present custody suites favour this proposal and think this is the correct thing to do?**

Staff currently working in our existing custody suites have been involved in the design process at various points. Generally this has taken the form of working groups and consultation sessions. Specifically, they have been consulted on the facilities that they would wish to see in the proposed facility considering what works in the current facilities and what doesn't. These discussions have included not only the Police officers and Police staff but also those other professionals who work alongside us, including our medical professionals. Overwhelmingly they have welcomed the proposals to replace their current working facilities with one that is clean and efficient, safe to work in and which in turn allows them to carry out their role more effectively in a pleasant environment.

- **What will be the contingency plan if there is ever a reason for temporary closure of the centralised custody?**

The investigative hub has been designed to be resilient. From a custody perspective it operates on four wings of 12 cells each. Each is operated and functions separately in terms of heating, ventilation, and associated features. It is entirely possible to close 1 or 2 wings of the facility whilst operating the others, though it would of course be busier in those areas. Back up generators exist and will provide an uninterruptable power supply if and when required. Should however a seriously catastrophic issue occur then it will be wholly practicable to utilise Peterlee custody suite which in effect will be mothballed from a custody cell perspective (although as already outlined it will still be in use for interview purposes).

- **There are frequent occasions when two officers are required to supervise vulnerable detainees or escort them to hospital. How will this be mitigated to get more officers on the street?**

The new custody facility will be equipped with CCTV cameras in all cells and a dedicated member of staff will monitor and react to any issues. This allows for a few persons to be monitored safely at once by one individual. This will reduce the number of Police Officers required to provide close supervision within custody, freeing them up to be back on the frontline. The new facility will also have 24/7 medical provision at a level that can administer medication, treat minor wounds and take samples. They will also be able to attend to injured officers. Having this provision in one central location will reduce the necessity for officers to take detainees requiring medical attention to hospital. This is the current requirement when there is no medical provision available at the custody facility they are at because currently the medical provision is shared between the existing sites. This will also cut down on time spent waiting to be seen at hospital, which we all know can be lengthy. Police officers do not have priority at hospital just because we are attending with a detained person.

## **5. Proposal**

- 5.1 It is demonstrated above that there has been consistent internal governance and accountability relating to the custody project with sound estate and operational reasons for progression. RIBA stages have not been commissioned without PCC approval and without provision of detailed cost, risk and programme reporting.
- 5.2 The public interest has been considered throughout with consideration given to the benefits of centralisation of certain functions (to include operational and economic efficiency), leaving key policing resources in existing communities regardless of the impact of the project. The project also presents the best solution in terms of building related legislation compliance and guidance in respect of custody.

## **6. Recommendation**

- 6.1 It is recommended that the contents of the report are considered.

**Joy Allen**

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### **Risks and Implications**

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#### **Finance**

As outlined in the report.

#### **Staffing**

n/a

#### **Equality and Diversity**

n/a

#### **Accommodation**

n/a

#### **Crime and Disorder**

n/a

#### **Children's Act 2004**

n/a

#### **Stakeholder/Community Engagement**

n/a

#### **Environment**

n/a

#### **Collaboration and Partnerships**

n/a

#### **Value for Money and Productivity**

n/a

#### **Potential Impact on Police and Crime Plan Priorities**

n/a

#### **Commissioning**

n/a

#### **Other risks**