



Report to Police and Crime Panel

Report of Police and Crime and Commissioner Chief Constable

Report on Estate Update

12th December 2024



1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. To provide a status update in relation to proposals for the wider estate portfolio following opening of the Investigative Hub.

2. Background

- 2.1. The Police and Crime Commissioner is the owner of the Force Assets, and the Chief Constable has the direct management of Police estates functions, with Estates staff members sitting in Durham Constabulary structure.
- 2.2. The construction of the new 48 cell Investigative Hub at Durham Gate, Spennymoor commenced in January 2022 and was handed over in August 2024. Since handover, the building has been fitted out for occupation and training/familiarisation has taken place to ensure smooth operational transition to the new facility. The building is due to become operational with effect from 12th December 2024.
- 2.3. In view of this substantial change to the property portfolio, this report provides a position statement in relation the next steps for development of an achievable strategy in relation to the wider estate.

3. Current Position – where are we now?

- 3.1. The current estate extends to just over 47,000 square metres with 38 sites to include HQ, the new Investigative Hub, main stations and section offices. There are also specialist facilities to include training, dog kennelling, workshops and laboratories.
- 3.2. Operation of the estate is one of the highest annual costs behind the staffing budget and in 2023/24, £6m was spent to keep the buildings running as follows:
 - £2.2M utilities
 - £1M rates
 - £700K reactive maintenance
 - £450K planned maintenance
 - £650K cleaning
 - £1M misc incl waste, pest control, rents, personal hygiene.

- 3.3. Allocation of this budget has been a challenge over recent years where work to ensure the safety of officers, staff and visitors has had to be the main priority alongside other essential costs such as business rates and utility charges. Estate management is conducted in house by a very small team of professional surveyors and administrative staff. Building cleaning, repairs and maintenance services are outsourced where good working relationships have been established with the incumbent contractors.
- 3.4. Around 40% of the estate is over 25 years old with 29% predating 1975, the ageing condition of some of the buildings means that repair requirements continue to increase. These buildings are also not easy to adapt to modern technology and flexible ways of working which are now essential to accommodate police officers and staff.
- 3.5. There is therefore a growing backlog of maintenance needed to bring some of the sites up to modern standards and good condition. The value of this backlog maintenance work is roughly estimated to be over £40million based on the existing estate footprint although this requires fuller investigation.
- 3.6. Recognising the PCCs ambition that police buildings need to be accessible, welcoming and part of the community, she is keen that in any Strategy, it takes account of the views of the public and victims of crime.
- 3.7. Over the last decade, these issues have been emerging and a programme has been implemented to address transformation of the estate. Schemes have included:
 - Provision of a new investigative hub to provide a 48-cell modern custody suite to comply with Home Office guidance as well as an ISO standard CSI facility and a centralised evidence related property store.
 - A new open plan headquarters facility with a substantially smaller footprint than the former 1960s cellular building
 - Provision of new warehouse/workshop facility to accommodate non-office-based functions from HQ site and creation of an archive facility
 - Refurbishment of section offices to include Sherburn and Framwellgate Moor
 - Continued estate collaboration with partners such as Fire, NHS and local authorities
 - Implementation of modern methods of working including open plan, hot desking and agile working as part of a wider cultural change across the force.
- 3.8. As the Investigative Hub becomes operational, there is now an opportunity to review the wider estate with a view to developing an estate strategy that creates an affordable, fit for purpose property portfolio.

4. Estate Strategy

4.1 Where do we need to be?

- 4.1.1 There are a number of key considerations in the development of an estate strategy for the wider estate. Clearly, the opening of the Investigative Hub and the associated operational

closure of the custody elements within the relevant main stations places a fiduciary obligation to achieve efficiencies while creating the opportunity to review operational requirements. Such requirements are both externally and internally driven as set out below.

4.1.2 External Factors

- There is an assortment of regularly changing legislation, regulations and guidance which require procedures to be put in place to achieve compliance. Such estate related legislation and good practice is vast to include (but not limited to) that relating to management of Asbestos, Legionella, Construction Design and Management regulations, Building Regulations, Building Safety Act (relating specifically to fire risk), Equality Act and the Home Office Design Guide for custody. Legislative compliance, good practice and implementation of standard asset management practices are therefore important elements of risk management and running the estate to provide safe, efficient and suitable facilities. Indeed, compliance must take precedence in managing the estate budget and development of any estate strategy.
- National policy and trends also affect operational estate requirements. The nature of crime has become more complex and there are growing non crime related, social demands on policing. This is handled with an increasing reliance on technology, through meeting recognised quality standards associated with investigation and the way policing supports the public. The public have also changed how they interact with policing making digital, mobile methods of communication key to service delivery. Recruitment and retention of good officers and staff must also be considered placing an increasing demand for high quality communal, wellbeing and diverse spaces to support agile working. Much of the existing estate is not capable of meeting these demands without substantial development and investment.
- Environment protection and sustainability have also been on the national and international political agenda for many years and, with increasing concern about climate change, the associated legislation, regulation and policy has a growing impact. Heating, cooling and lighting buildings uses vast amounts of electricity in addition to the growing need for plug in equipment and devices. The lifecycle of building materials and components through manufacture, use and disposal also affects the natural environment. Buildings with old plant and machinery generally use more power and also premises that are not flexible need to be physically adapted more often. Conversion to green technologies is expensive so will require affordable investment plans. Electrical Vehicle charging requirements also place significant investment requirements within the estate. There is however work being undertaken at national and regional level to consider how sustainability can be resourced within the policing service and Durham's Executive team are involved in these discussions.

4.1.2 Internal Factors

- Durham Constabulary and the PCC strive to build on success and continue to deliver a service to the public which provides value for money to the people of County Durham and Darlington. This will be achieved while working towards the NPCC's 6 Policing missions in its 2030 vision. To succeed in this the Chief Constable has identified key deliverables in conjunction with the Police and Crime Plan.
- The estate is a resource required to enable and deliver the Chief Constable's Delivery Plan and Police and Crime Plan. An understanding of the current physical operational requirements is therefore essential and, as crime and policing methods are continuously

changing, the estate must also evolve. Many of the buildings are nearing end of life while budget pressures present barriers to ideal solutions. Creative problem solving is therefore required to ensure estate solutions are affordable.

4.2 How do we get there?

- 4.2.1 To ensure the estate aligns with the Police and Crime Plan and the Chief Constable's Delivery Plan, an estate strategy is in development which will be based on key estate objectives.
- 4.2.2 The key objectives of the estate strategy will be to transform our buildings into an estate that is:
- The right size and in the right location to meet operational requirements
 - Managed safely in line with property related legislation and is compliant, as far as reasonably practicable, with guidance, best practice and industry standards (this will include links to a wider force sustainability plan)
 - Is supportive of the public's ability to access policing services and instil confidence
 - Modern, flexible and welcoming to officers, staff and visitors
 - Affordable, efficient and sustainable
- 4.2.3 These objectives will be set out within the estate transformation plan which will provide an achievable, realistic pathway to success.
- 4.2.4 In terms of methodology, high level operational requirements will be reviewed by the Chief Constable in relation to provision of services and location of operational/business functions. To achieve the estate objectives and fully measure performance of the estate against operational requirements, a full estate evaluation is also required. This will ensure that estate decisions are both data led and in line with operational requirements. This assessment will involve detailed condition surveys, a detailed backlog maintenance assessment, running cost assessment, suitability review, and compliance audit. In addition, financial viability and estate staff capacity needs to be correlated with the transformation plan. Annual action/capital plans can then be agreed via the Estate Board. These plans will set out the projects and workstreams to deliver a modern, fit for purpose estate to meet the needs of operational policing.
- 4.2.5 Due to the long lead in time for many estate projects, there must however be an acknowledgement of timescales for delivery and an understanding of what is achievable with the staffing and financial resources available.
- 4.2.6 The draft estate strategy setting out the intended methodology and key objectives is under consideration of the Estate Board and will be shared with the panel at a future meeting.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1. The financial position is very challenging. This is following years of austerity since 2010. In this time there has been minimal investment in the estate. It is critical that we have an estates strategy that is affordable both now and in the longer term. The policing budget is funded from central government and precept. Forces nationally no longer receive £1m capital funding from government as it did up to 2015/16 - this grant fully ceased after 2021/22 and

therefore any estates related plans need to be funded from existing budgets, reserves, precept – some PCCs have already taken on debt to fund estates related plans.

6. Recommendation

6.1 The Police and Crime Panel are recommended to note the developing Estates Strategy.