

# Making best use of our Estate, 2016 – 2020



**AVON &  
SOMERSET**  
POLICE & CRIME  
COMMISSIONER



## FOREWORD

*by Sue Mountstevens, PCC for Avon and Somerset*



I know how important your local police service is to you and that is why I've made strengthening and improving your local policing teams a priority in my Police and Crime Plan. I want to be clear that although you may see the police moving out of existing police stations, this does not mean that they are moving from your local area. I reiterate my commitment that the local communities of Avon and Somerset will have a defined policing footprint and advances in technology and more strategic bases will support this.

When we talk about selling police stations it's understandable that local people have concerns. It's important to remember why we continually review the police estate; and that any decision is made with complete consideration for the communities of Avon and Somerset. We must also remember that it is not the bricks and mortar that keep us safe but the people within them. Freeing up resources from oversized and costly buildings is essential in order to support frontline policing.

As your independent elected Police and Crime Commissioner, it is my responsibility to ensure that the policing service you receive is value for money. Part of that is managing the police

budget and delivering savings. With the continued financial pressure, pulling ever tighter on the already constricted purse strings, we have to be smarter in order to make the savings required to balance the budget. One area where there are considerable savings to be found, without compromising on frontline policing, is from the police estate.

Many of the police stations are oversized and underutilised, costing considerable investment to ensure the buildings and facilities are compliant. Where this is the case, capital can be raised from the sale of these outdated and unsuitable stations and reinvested in local policing. The reduced running costs from moving to a smaller estate also help in generating savings as well as ensuring we have a sustainable policing service that is as effective and efficient as local people want and expect.

It's more important than ever that we are smarter when exploring the re-location of a police station. I am determined to work closely with our partners and where possible co-locate to establish a convenient local facility, offering multiple services under one roof, within the heart of the community.

As you read this estates strategy, I ask you to keep in mind the following - buildings do not keep us safe; it is the people who make up our policing service who do. We must do all we can to support frontline policing against a backdrop of considerable financial pressure.

Sue Mountstevens  
Police and Crime Commissioner for Avon and Somerset

## **FOREWORD**

*by Andy Marsh, Chief Constable for Avon and Somerset*



### **Police visibility in the community**

When we look at how our communities feel, we see time and time again that one of the biggest influences in their feelings of confidence and safety is the visibility of the police. That confidence is the bedrock of the police service of which I am so proud which is highly cherished and globally unique. For some, the physical presence of a police station is a solid and reassuring icon of that visibility, a footprint in the community. But, inevitably, the last few years of government austerity have impacted on our ability to keep officers on the street as well as police stations in our towns and villages. In making strategic decisions about policing and police buildings there are difficult challenges to overcome which the Police and Crime Commissioner has set out in her foreword here. These challenges if confronted lead to choices and difficult decisions. Like her, I would rather invest in frontline officers than continue to run outdated and expensive buildings. Our footprint should be local policing first, people deliver policing and buildings second. We are committed to maintaining an active presence in every neighbourhood and being there when you need us

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## 1. Strategic Estates Priorities

In these times of austerity we have to strike a balance between our physical footprint on the ground in the shape and location of buildings, and people – police officers, PCSOs and other police staff who work together to help our communities be safe and feel safe.

When we are making decisions about changes to our estate, we consider a number of priorities to help us reach the right conclusion:

- We recognise the importance and value of public and stakeholder opinion and engagement in all new accommodation solutions. We will work with Area Commanders, local councillors and local people to help them understand our thinking behind potential new accommodation solutions, and take their observations and concerns into account in all future decision making.
- We aim to create shared, accessible, flexible, modern workspaces, with partners where possible, to support and encourage an effective and shared approach to problem solving within communities.
- We will work hard to ensure our estate supports and encourages collaboration with partners. With all new and major refurbishment schemes, every effort will be made to incorporate the basic backbone infrastructure in support of this aim.
- We understand the importance of maintaining a visible presence in neighbourhoods as a community focal point and a base from which Beat Teams can deploy to go about their day to day business. Where possible we will explore opportunities for Neighbourhood Policing Teams (NPT's) to share premises with other Blue Light Services such as fire and ambulance and/or Local Authority partners, thereby reducing overheads and encouraging more joint working.
- We will position new response bases on strategic arterial routes, taking account of demand hot-spots whilst also providing optimum response cover for our communities in urban and rural settings.
- We will continue to rationalise our estate by disposing of all old, oversized and inefficient stations and providing alternative, local accommodation that is smaller and more efficient to run whilst ensuring that Neighbourhood Policing Teams always remain within the neighbourhoods they serve, sharing space with partners where appropriate.
- We will ensure our estate supports our work to safeguard vulnerable people by providing bespoke 'soft-suite' interview facilities. We will explore and exploit the potential for direct live-links with the courts and other criminal justice agencies wherever possible.
- To free up space to accommodate the relocation of Avon and Fire and Rescue to Police HQ and facilitate more flexible open plan working we will rationalise/develop the Headquarters site and re-plan existing office accommodation.

- We will progress the delivery of key projects including:
  - response hubs for Somerset including ‘non-designated’ cell provision where appropriate
  - a new base in North Bristol to replace Southmead Police Station
  - maximum usage of all our key facilities, including our three PFI custody centres and the Black Rock police training centre, by ASP personnel and/or partner organisations so our sites are fully utilised, deliver value for money and, where appropriate, also maximise their income generation potential.
- We will regularly review and re-prioritise our capital building programme in light of potential future capital constraints to ensure that we can continue to deliver this strategy.
- We will benchmark the performance of our estate against that of other Police Forces and act on findings that could make us even more efficient.
- With the sustainability officer, we will aim for a programme of continuous improvement in line with the principles of ISO 14001 and strive to deliver sustainable property solutions reflecting the ‘three pillars of sustainability’ and cognisant of the legacy of our decisions for future generations.

## 2. Estates Overview

Our estate portfolio supports the operations of more than 5,000 officers and staff across the force area.

The previous Estate Strategy (published April 2014) established our continuing drive to replace old, oversized and inefficient properties with smaller, more efficient replacements. As a result we have already successfully **reduced the overall size of our estate by more than 11,000m<sup>2</sup>** and **cut our annual property revenue expenditure by more than £800,000 PA.**

We plan to continue this direction of travel which, when fully implemented, will see a **further reduction of more than 19,000m<sup>2</sup>** in our estate and **annual revenue savings of a further £600,000 plus PA.** This will free up funds to invest in officers, PCSOs and other frontline services.

Our aim has been to achieve these reductions, and indeed those going forward, through strategic **rationalisation** not simply station closures.

The reductions have been largely due to the **replacement of large, out-dated under-utilised properties with smaller, more efficient, flexible replacements.**

As we face the prospect of further financial austerity in the years to come, we will still need to divert as much of our revenue expenditure as we can to support frontline resources and we will need to find innovative solutions to provide the required infrastructure at the lowest cost. We believe this is most effectively delivered through closer working and sharing space

with partner agencies, and mobilising officers and staff through the use of digital technology that will allow them to spend more of their time out in the community. Our ultimate aim is for their base to simply be where they start their day, and where they hand over to colleagues at the end of their shift. As a result, we anticipate overall visibility of our police officers and staff in the community improving, along with the confidence such visibility promotes.

In summary, the focus of our Estates Strategy is to achieve savings by reducing the amount of space the force occupies - selling buildings that are surplus to requirements or are no longer fit for purpose; co-locating with partners to minimise costs to the public purse; acquiring smaller more efficient strategically placed property solutions and releasing capital funds to finance future investments.

At the heart of our strategy is a balance between the requirement to meet both operational and financial targets, and the needs of our communities and staff. Public confidence and community reassurance are important priorities for us. Together, these will underpin our implementation plan for the next four years to 2020.





Modern Flexible Open-Plan Workspaces – Sandy Padgett House, Bridgwater



### 3. What does this mean in practice?

Our four year programme is outlined in a more detailed Estates Delivery Plan which provides an overview of the initiatives we are proposing along with an indicative time-scale and the likely capital cash flows associated with their delivery.

All costs and values within the plan will need further refinement and will be tested through a formal *Business Case Process* which will articulate the costs, risks and benefits. It will be widely scrutinised and subject to a stringent formal governance process before any work begins. The estimated project costs within the plan are based on existing market prices and recent tenders for similar work.

The total gross investment requirement for the four year period is c£18m.

Over the same time period, we estimate the potential capital receipts from planned and potential disposals to be c£18m. Again, this is based on the latest formal market valuations adjusted in light of market intelligence and experience of recent transactions.

Although our current (published) 5 year Capital Programme is not yet fully aligned with the reworked Estates Delivery Plan, it covers most investment items set out in the plan and will be fully harmonised following the next financial planning cycle.

We have based the estimated revenue saving of c£600,000 PA on the actual running costs of the old oversized, inefficient stations less the running costs of their smaller more efficient replacements.

We expect to see more substantial *notional* savings from a significant reduction in backlog maintenance expenditure which would be required for old/surplus properties should we keep them.

#### **4. Communication and Consultation**

We recognise the importance of keeping local communities and stakeholders informed and engaged as we progress our plans for estates. Where possible, we hope to win the support of all stakeholders based on their understanding of the potential risks and benefits of each scheme. We will identify and involve key stakeholders at an early stage, especially where decisions are likely to be of significant interest to elected members and the wider general public. As a result we hope they will consider changes to the estate in the context of their impacts (both positive and negative) and not just as the perceived loss of a valued community facility.

As a matter of principle we will not formally offer for sale, nor market, surplus assets until there is a fully developed and approved 'to be' solution. The approved solution will need to have reached a stage where we can demonstrate deliverability and, where possible, back it up with formal documentation and or agreed Heads of Terms.

Each property disposal/re-provision will have an individual/bespoke communication plan which will clearly set out the process for consultation, and we will record all observations, objections or indeed support for the intended course of action. The PCC will be kept informed of the views of local residents and/or elected representatives ahead of any final decision to proceed being made.

#### **5. Response to planned population/community growth**

Like other emergency services, we are faced with ongoing challenges of population growth as a result of new developments, particularly housing, which impact on police resources.

We currently do not receive any capital funding for the impact of such developments despite the additional pressure they bring to our estate infrastructure and call upon our services.

Expansion of our estate infrastructure, in terms of facilities and other physical resources necessary to respond to long term growth, must be delivered instead either via rationalisation or through borrowing. Borrowing has to be repaid via existing revenue funding and, as there are no additional sources of external funding available to support such capital projects, we believe Developer S106 or Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) contributions negotiated through the planning system are a legitimate and most appropriate way of responding to these pressures.

Wherever we can, we keep abreast of new developments to understand and take steps to mitigate the impact of significant growth. We work with Police Architectural Liaison Officers (ALOs) to identify planning applications by others that will have an impact on our police resources. Requests for contributions on such applications are made to the Local Planning Authority but it is important that these are reasonable, proportionate and directly related to the development being proposed.

Typically, Developer S106 contributions secure ANPR (automatic number plate recognition) installations, additional CCTV and small neighbourhood police posts. Our estates department will continue to work with its planning consultants to ensure larger funding requirements resulting from significant developments are explicitly mentioned in planning policy documents. This will help to ensure the challenges of accessing such funding is less arduous and developers can factor in the police requirement at the earliest stage.

## **6. Maintenance**

All aspects of our estate portfolio must be regularly maintained, from reactive maintenance following break-downs to planned maintenance schedules dictated by the life expectancy and condition.

Getting on top of the backlog maintenance of our older buildings has been a challenge for us for some considerable time. However the gradual disposal of most of our older problem properties and recent investment in new flexible, fit for purpose facilities has helped us to achieve a significant reduction in the cost of on-going backlog maintenance.

However there is still work to be done to improve the standard of accommodation elsewhere within the portfolio. Our aim is to provide all staff with a consistent quality of working environment irrespective of where they work; we expect this drive will result in a marked reduction in the remaining backlog maintenance issues.

## **7. Accessibility and Visibility**

Our aim is to buy or lease buildings that are open and welcoming to people who want to access our services, through convenient locations such as neighbourhood beat surgeries and one stop shop arrangements with partners, for example. Shared arrangements are often more complex to negotiate. Inevitably, there are sometimes conflicting priorities and differing views on branding and signage when we occupy partner's premises. Local authorities are

often concerned about the potential domination of police – as an emergency service the public will more readily identify with us - and there is often a healthy tension on what we require and what they will permit.

Notwithstanding these concerns, it is important that the public should know where we are, so it is essential that this point is conveyed to any potential landlord / building owner and supported at a senior level in both organisations.

Accessibility and visibility are closely linked to branding. To be visible to our communities it is essential that all facilities are provided with appropriate signage consistent with the accepted Force wide standards for:

- Wayfinding/directional signage.
- Signage for new sites.
- Signage for shared sites.

## **8. Space Utilisation**

For each project, we will consider space and construction quality standards that are appropriate to the use we propose for the building.

Open plan offices will be standard in all buildings and a specific case will be necessary to justify any request for compartmentalised offices, which we will only provide to meet a clear business need.

Wherever and whenever possible we will aim for a ‘hot desk’ environment in office locations. This is increasingly standard design practice in the private sector and we aim for a similar ratio of desks to the number of permanent office based staff members - in the order of 80% (8 workstations for 10 people FTE).

On the basis that response and neighbourhood officers are expected to be out of the office for much of their time, the maximum we will provide is 1 workstation for every 3 personnel, although the requirement is likely to be less in many buildings and we will make an assessment on a site by site basis.

## **9. Security**

We will ensure that security measures proportionate to the defined threat, risk, harm are in place at all sites, buildings and rooms and we will pay particular key attention to controlling access.

At the initial briefing stage of all new-build and/or refurbishment projects we will select assess physical security measures, design features and the integrity of major construction components (Doors/Windows etc.) to make sure that the principles of the national police ‘Secure by Design Standard’ are consistently applied and incorporated as a matter of course.

## 10. Sustainability and the Environment

Sustainability and environmental considerations are important elements of our strategy. They are conditional within planning consents and are key points of interest when we consult with the public over changes to the estate. We will consider these requirements under three headings:

<b>Environment:</b>	Energy efficiency Waste and recycling Water and utilities Travel to work (green travel plans) Car parking
<b>Economy:</b>	Partnerships with public/private sector providers, support for local SME's
<b>Community:</b>	Community impact; this will take account of the impact of the facility on the local community during construction and once in use. We will make every effort to reduce any negative impacts on local residents and exploit all opportunities for apprenticeships and training associated with the development and maintenance of the estate.

We are committed to an ambitious target of reducing our Carbon Footprint. In support of this, we will ensure that all new buildings are constructed in line with the principles of the Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Model (BREEAM) 'Very Good' standard.

## 11. Equality and Diversity

Wherever possible we will adopt the principles of the 'Equality Standard for the Police Service'.

In developing or refurbishing our estate we will aim to improve our buildings by delivering positive equality outcomes. Equality Impact Assessments will be undertaken for all major projects. We will identify gaps in the running and operation of facilities, such as physical barriers which need to be removed, and implement proactive action plans to resolve the problems we identify.



Environmentally Sensitive Development



## 12. Annual Revenue and Planned Maintenance Programme

Condition surveys are carried out every five years and we incorporate the findings into a forward view of major foreseeable repair and replacement requirements which we use to help prioritise and plan maintenance spending and the replacement of major building fabric elements or services.

We update the high-level view annually and the finer detail forms the basis of the repair and maintenance programme for the forthcoming financial year. In this way we can take account of the continual maintenance requirements necessary to maintain asset values and acceptable conditions for our staff.

The head of estates has management oversight of the condition survey and appropriate works are funded through a planned maintenance revenue programme and the estates rolling replacement and renewal capital programme.

Comparison against other estates portfolios is difficult due to the age of buildings and the construction methods originally employed, both of which are greatly influenced by the intensity of use. However we will continue to compare our portfolio maintenance costs with those of other forces to help us in contextualising our maintenance costs, although the variables initially of age and construction will still affect maintenance costs to a high degree.

We will continue to subscribe to the National Benchmarking scheme, organised by the National Police Estates Group (NPEG), to help us achieve this.

### **13. Review**

The strategy will be kept under constant review and will be presented annually to both the PCC and the Force CFO with any proposed amendments.

## Avon and Somerset Police Headquarters



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