

ACCOUNTABILITY AND GOVERNANCE BOARD

22nd April 2025

2023 Revised Estates Strategy

Presented by: Andy Kelly, Assistant Director Corporate Asset Management

Cover Report

1. Police and Crime Plan

This paper provides an update on progress against the revised 2023 Estates Strategy for the board's consideration.

The last update in October 2023 to the Strategic Policing and Crime Board, set out the 2023 revised Estates Strategy, outlining a programme of work driven by the force's recently revised operating model, following the overarching strategic principles, and providing a fit-for-purpose estate to meet operational demand. This included integrating more effectively with partners and providing an estate that reflects more flexible working approaches through the introduction of agile working technologies.

The programme of work to deliver such a comprehensive change in estate is a long-term undertaking and will be delivered over a number of years. With that in mind, this report links directly to the 2021-2025 Police and Crime Plan whilst also supporting the revised 2025-2029 Crime Plan which is currently out for consultation.

2. Achievements and Challenges

The comprehensive estates strategy approved at SPCB in October 2023, provided projected delivery dates as a guide to completion of building works in support of future solutions and/or when the earliest a site is likely to be available for disposal. Whilst this outlined broadly the key projects, with a number of these now in-flight or complete, there are several other deliverables that are key to the successful delivery of the programme.

Property Design & Security Standards - classification of buildings exercise

In order to correctly classify each building in terms of its criticality to business operations, and therefore ensuring that the appropriate design of security and resilience are applied to each property, WMP have utilised a scoring matrix devised through a set of questions. Four classification levels (1 to 4) have been identified that will be applied to buildings, with individual Resilience Standards devised containing the details for each respective level of classification.

Whilst the question set used in all buildings provides an evidence-based rationale assessment, it does not negate the ability to instigate further discussions to change the classification, where required, based on additional factors such as risk, geographical or operational considerations.

The new process has been piloted and now forms part of a regular quarterly review with a set of key security and property leads within WMP. In addition, the new classification levels are factored into all new project design standards, ensuring a standardised and auditable approach across the board.

Disposals - development of a social value matrix

The PCC has made a commitment to give proper consideration to social value when disposing of surplus WMP property assets. It is stated that “We will seek best value when disposing of surplus estate, having tested alternative uses for unwanted sites and giving proper consideration to wider social value, including crime prevention and /or reduction”.

During recent property disposal exercises, an increasingly thorough and mature approach to achieving this goal has been developed. We have gone from simply asking the bidders to provide a statement committing to their social value credentials, to a product that now allows for independent scrutiny and evaluation to accurately inform the final decision-making process.

At the end of the marketing period of any given site, all short-listed bidders are asked, via our appointed disposal agents, to complete a questionnaire matrix which has been approved by the PCC. This method allows WMP and the PCC to assess the relative value and importance of four important factors. These are as follows; firstly the price which can be achieved for reinvestment in policing, secondly the deliverability of the project, thirdly its strategic alignment with both the PCC’s crime prevention plans and the local council’s plans, and finally the social value to be delivered during the build phase and that after completion.

Environmental Strategy – delivery & funding

Aligned to the Carbon Trust decarbonisation action plan recommendations, the Strategy is in the process of rolling out a number of measures including LED lighting replacements, loft insulation, upgraded building management systems, replacement of plant and installation of PV systems and progressing electric vehicle charging infrastructure for all suitable refurbishment projects. Whilst this is a much improved position not just for the estate, but also the Fleet as the strategy in this space develops nationally, it only really touches the surface of the green technologies available to WMP to help drive further efficiencies out of the estate.

Due to the significantly higher cost of electricity and government funding only supporting initial capital costs, there are no plans to transition away from gas in the short term. Additionally, the replacement of heating systems falls out of scope for planned refurbishment projects due to cost constraints, delivery timeframes and the need to maintain business continuity. The existing electrical supply capacity, cost and timeframes associated with reinforcement are also an additional constraint on refurbishment projects.

3. Actions undertaken

Refurbishments

A new contract award for the Dudley refurbishment, secured in December 2024, has enabled the project to prepare for works to start in Spring 2025. The existing teams and functions based at Brierley Hill will relocate post refurbishment, in Winter 2025. The Brierley Hill NHT's will be relocated within Brierley Hill.

The conclusion of the enhancement projects at Newtown and Willenhall in 2024, has enabled both sites to be re-occupied with teams from Birmingham and Coventry LPA's further supporting the new force operating model.

Contracts have been awarded for the Wolverhampton and Stechford refurbishment projects, enabling detailed design phases to progress for both projects, with works planned later in 2025.

With the enhancement works at Quinton concluded, a site previously earmarked for disposal, this has enabled the site to be re-opened to support Neighbourhood Teams (NHTs) from Harborne and supporting the eventual sale of the Harborne site.

The relocation of Digital Forensics to Lloyd House in 2024 has enabled enhancement works to commenced at Ridgepoint House in Winter 2024. Completion will support the centralisation of teams from Ladywood, Oldbury and Wednesbury with the eventual disposal of these three sites.

Site Acquisitions

The freehold purchase of 39 Anchorage Road, Sutton has extended the site portfolio of our existing Anchorage Road properties, enabling WMP to retain a footprint within the same location for our operationally critical services, whilst allowing the wider surplus site to be sold.

A freehold purchase of supplementary land in Stechford from Birmingham City Council, will enable the expansion of the existing car park, post refurbishment, to support additional WMP staff and officers on site, whilst also providing a site compound during the refurbishment.

Securing a leasehold acquisition at Copthall House, Stourbridge has provided a much needed and well overdue, town centre location for the Stourbridge and Lye NHTs, enabling their relocation from Brierley Hill in Autumn 2024.

The leasehold acquisition of Bow Court, Canley has supported the relocation of teams from the existing Canley site following in-going works in Spring 2025. This has supported the plans to progress the eventual disposal of the Canley WMP site which is now sold subject to contract.

A further a co-location with West Midlands Fire and Rescue (WMFRS) at Aldridge expands upon other successful WMFRS & WMP co-locations. This site will support the relocation of NHTs from Aldridge later in Spring 2025.

Disposals

Billesley, Willenhall Coventry Single Quarters and Willenhall Walsall sales completed in 2024, achieving capital receipts of £3,023,440, netting on-going revenue savings of £424,476 and enabling backlog maintenance liabilities to be written off amounting to £279,314.

Sites at Harborne, Sutton Coldfield, Windmill House, Bradford Street, Ladywood, Canley and Steelhouse Lane have all sold 'subject to contract', with sales particulars progressing. The final sale of these sites is expected to achieve capital receipts in excess of £17m, on-going revenue savings of £1.8m and write off back log maintenance liabilities of £5.5m.

Aldridge and Smethwick were placed on the market in March'25 with a view to concluding marketing and inviting offers in April'25.

Force Operating Model

WMPs command and control and call handling functionality has now centralised into one location at Park Lane, following the centralisation of sites from Wednesfield, Bournville Lane, Lloyd House, Coventry and West Bromwich. With West Bromwich remaining as a resilience command and control site.

In line with the new Operating Model and commitment to the wellbeing of staff and the provision of wellbeing spaces, a number of high-quality personal use gyms are now available at Wolverhampton, Bloxwich, West Bromwich, Willenhall Coventry, Lloyd House and Bournville Lane. A further site at Stechford will be available in the future following refurbishment.

4. Future Work

As we move into the next financial year, there are a number projects that will be launched alongside a few changes in the operational space that will be incorporated into the Estates Strategy. The custody facility at Bournville Lane has been refurbished and will be made available from Spring'25, supplementing the existing custody facilities across the WMP estate.

In Coventry, the Willenhall custody facility will temporary relocate back to Little Park Street in Spring'25 whilst HMIRC upgrades are undertaken together with an increase in cell capacity and interview provision. This work follows the upgrades completed at Bournville Lane.

Options to extend Public Contact Offices (PCO) are currently being reviewed, as we look to extend the current provision of 10 sites to 13. Birmingham LPA will see the re-opening of the PCO at Digbeth after a refresh in Spring'25, whilst the Erdington refurbishment project designs will incorporate a new PCO, with the project set to launch later in 2025. Coventry LPA, will see the light refurbishment of the old PCO at Willenhall Coventry and will re-open alongside the Custody block in Summer'25.

Work continues in the refurbishment, re-provision and disposals workstreams with further projects due to be brought online, aligned with resource capacity and budgets throughout 2025 and 2026.

5. Financial Implications

The cost summaries below outline the budgets agreed at SPCB in November 2023. The profiling is kept under continuous review through monthly finance meetings with the Estates Strategy Delivery Manager and Finance Team, twice yearly discussions with the Assistant Director for CAM and an annual re-baselining exercise. This is in addition to other regular meetings with each of the Project Managers.

The next review point will be after the 2024/25 Financial Year end where some re-profiling is inevitable and will inform financial monitoring for the start of the 2025/26 year.

At the point that the detailed budget work for the 2025/26 financial year was undertaken, the annual budgetary allocations for the Estates Strategy were as follows:

Expenditure	Capital	Revenue
Forecast 24/25	£3.749m	£4.705m
Budget 25/26	£28.953m	£5.693m
Projection 26/27	£7.660m	£2.731m

Benefit savings (one-off & on-going)	Capital (cashable)	Revenue (cashable on-going)	Revenue (Backlog maintenance liability non-cashable)
Forecast 24/25	£8.675m	£1.105m	£3.059m
Forecast 25/26	£30.545m	£3.472m	£9.445m
Forecast 26/27	£18.127m	£2.931m	£6.380m

6. Legal Implications

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.

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.

7. Equality Implications

A full EQIA assessment has been prepared and approved at programme level, and is currently under its annual review. Additionally, equality assessments are built into the planning cycles of the individual projects.

Background

Detailed appendix (Please see additional documents):

- 2023 Revised Estates Strategy paper
- 2023 Estates Strategy supplementary information for PCC (updated to inc. Nov'24 revised baseline)

Author(s): **Andy Kelly & Amy Newman**

Job Title(s): **Assistant Director Corporate Asset Management & Estates Strategy Delivery Manager**