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CHIEF CONSTABLE

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Dear Colleague

As I'm sure you are aware, there has been a lot of coverage around our plans for West Midlands Police buildings in the last few weeks with the main focus being on what is being taken away from communities rather than the future vision.

I understand this completely. In the current climate, communities are sensitive to police changes and are worried about how building closures will affect crime and response times.

Let me take this opportunity to reassure you that I am committed to serving our public and ensure any change to our estate will not adversely affect them.

The West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner David Jamieson has signed off the overall estates strategy but nothing will close immediately. The programme is expected to run over six years and individual buildings will not be signed off for release until we are satisfied thorough local engagement has taken place.

There is a lot to discuss before any of the sites close and I hope for some inspirational ideas on how we can share with partners.

The majority of our buildings are underused or at the end of life. Our future strategy for the force's buildings is driven by three main issues:

We need buildings fit for modern policing. The force is, and will be, investing heavily in technology which will create an ever more mobile organisation. The custody redesign has shown big sites are better than smaller buildings. We have a Commonwealth Games to police in four years and our command and control site is in need of development.

The second issue is cost. Some of our buildings are just not fit for purpose and there is a backlog of £20m in repairs. Some of the buildings, indeed some of the most interesting or externally attractive, are at the end of their life and hugely underused. We need modern buildings fit for purpose that enable great team work by really thinking about which teams would benefit from co-locating. The new strategy can save us around £5m a year in building costs and create more efficient buildings.

Finally we know we can share. A large number of the poor buildings that we intend to dispose of are small neighbourhood offices and this has caused a lot of concern. With 22 per cent of our police officers in local policing and just under 500 PCSOs, it remains essential they are locally based. I promise neighbourhood teams will be based in their communities.

This is why a large part of the estate plan is to look at re-provision of the neighbourhood buildings with partners. Currently we have not worked out where these sites will be **but** I promise we won't close buildings until we have engaged with our communities to look at where the alternative provision will be and identified suitable sites for officers to be based locally.

I also attach the proposed timelines for the estate changes:

<http://www.westmidlands-pcc.gov.uk/media/479287/Item-7a-SPCB-20-Mar-18-WMP-Estates-Update.pdf>

In the meantime, if there is something about the estate plan you would like to discuss direct, please contact my PA Bev Godward on 0121 626 5300.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "David Thompson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial 'D'.

Chief Constable David Thompson