

COUNCIL

7 JULY 2015

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR: CORPORATE SERVICES

A.2 **PETITION – CLACTON POLICE STATION**

(Report prepared by Colin Sweeney and Leanne Thornton)

PART 1 – KEY INFORMATION

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To consider a petition in excess of 800 signatures received by the Council relating to the future as Clacton Police Station.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Council has received a petition entitled “*Say NO to closing Clacton Police Station*” following a proposed review, in September 2015, of police buildings by the Essex Police and Crime Commissioner. Receipt of the petition was announced at the Annual Meeting of the Council held on 26 May 2015.

The petition includes over 800 checked signatures from Tendring residents and a number have been discounted as these cannot be verified.

The Council’s scheme for dealing with petitions requires that where a petition received contains more than 250 signatures, then it is reported to Council at its next meeting, investigated and reported back to the next ordinary meeting of the Council, which, in this case is 7 July 2015.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

That Council considers the petition and decides what action, if any, should be taken.

PART 2 – IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

DELIVERING PRIORITIES

The retention of staffed police buildings would contribute to ensuring that the District remained a low crime area and reduce the fear of crime.

FINANCE, OTHER RESOURCES AND RISK

Finance and other resources

There are no financial implications for the Council arising from this report.

Risk

The risk highlighted by the petitioners is the perception that the closure of Clacton Police Station would encourage more crime-related activity and increase the fear of crime amongst the local community.

LEGAL

The Council adopted its Petition Policy on 11 February 2014. The current petition was

received and noted at the Annual Meeting of the Council held on 26 May 2015. In accordance with the procedure, officers have investigated the request made in the petition. Council may now consider the petition and determine what action, if any, it wishes to take.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Consideration has been given to the implications of the proposed decision in respect of the following and any significant issues are set out below.

Crime and Disorder/Equality and Diversity/Health Inequalities/Consultation/Public Engagement

Crime and Disorder

Any proposed closure (which is a matter for the Police and Crime Commissioner) of staffed police buildings may result in higher crime-related activity and an increase in the fear of crime amongst residents within Tendring.

Consultation/Public Engagement

A petition has been received and should be considered under the new procedure.

Ward

All Clacton Wards

PART 3 – SUPPORTING INFORMATION

BACKGROUND

Clacton Police Station is one of a number of staffed police buildings in Essex, which is the subject of a review to be conducted by the County's Police and Crime Commissioner. The outcome of that review and the identity of those buildings which are to be closed is expected in September 2015.

CURRENT POSITION

The Police and Crime Commissioner for Essex is undertaking a review of its police property estate, comprising over 80 properties, given that sustainability is poor and the majority of these are more than 50 years old.

The Council has received a petition entitled "*Say NO to closing Clacton Police Station*". Receipt of the petition was announced at the Annual Meeting of the Council meeting on 26 May 2015. The petition includes over 800 checked signatures from Tendring residents. The Council's Constitution and procedures provide for the Council to consider petitions of more than 250 signatures.

INVESTIGATION

The petition clearly demonstrates that a large number of people are concerned to ensure that the Clacton Police Station remains open to reduce the risk of increased crime-related activity and a heightened fear of crime amongst local residents.

In a letter dated 30 March 2015 to Mr Alston, Police and Crime Commissioner for Essex, the former Leader of Tendring District Council, Councillor Mick Page, urged Mr Alston to pay careful attention to the needs of Clacton, and the other towns in Tendring, when he considered the options for reducing the cost of the Essex Police Property Estate. A copy of the letter is attached as an Appendix to this report.

The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Essex has produced the following public information:

“The Essex Police property estate totals 1.25 million square feet and in excess of 80 properties. Many of the current buildings are old, in need of extensive and expensive maintenance and no longer fit for the demands and purposes of modern policing. The backlog of maintenance work required to these buildings has been estimated at £30 million, with an additional £1.75 million per year needed to maintain and keep the estate in its current condition.

It is my judgement, and that of Chief Constable Stephen Kavanagh, that these ongoing costs cannot be justified. In order to deliver professional, effective, policing which is accessible to the public in the ways in which people tell us they want to communicate with Essex Police, we have decided that it is necessary to transform the property estate. It is essential that a review of the existing property estate and plans for its future was informed by a professional analysis and evaluation. To fail to commission and conduct such an analysis would have been negligent and wrong.

Following a competitive tendering process, Mouchel Consulting was engaged to undertake work, including:

- 1. A full condition survey of 80 properties. Full surveys were undertaken to allow for planned maintenance as well as future cash-flow modelling for items requiring significant expenditure over the course of a thirty-year period;*
- 2. A full valuation of each site, both as existing and a valuation of future hope value with alternative planning consents;*
- 3. A detailed options analysis, which looked to grade the portfolio into operationally significant sites, as well as highlight opportunities to add value as well as rationalise and better utilise the estate we currently have. This includes a strategic analysis about the possibilities to expand, reduce or maintain the current geographical footprint;*
- 4. An HQ Strategic Options Analysis, which includes full benchmarking exercise on the long list sites, as well as computer-generated imagery and architectural layouts of future HQs. This will enable full cash-flows to be produced as well as confirm acceptability of the HQ site.*
- 5. A detailed Essex-wide property estate document, which will put architectural and other key metrics into a coherent context for future estates strategy and transformation work.*

The total cost of this consulting work is £240,000 plus VAT. This was commissioned through competitive tender, and I am assured that this is a fair market rate for work of this complexity.

As part of a formal process to identify possible locations for a new Essex Police headquarters, a long list of sites has now been reduced to three. Two of these sites are in Chelmsford and the other is elsewhere in the county. It would not be appropriate to identify the location of any of those three sites for reasons of commercial confidentiality and to ensure a fair market price is secured.

No decision was made as to the preferred site for a new Essex Police Headquarters at the meeting on Friday May 29.

Final decisions about the 30 or so core buildings, which will be at the heart of the new Essex Police property estate have not yet been made. It is intended to share full details of the findings of the estates review in September 2015.

The emerging Estates Strategy seeks to employ a hub and spoke type model with a single, large and centrally located Headquarters building. Around the new HQ will be 'Hub' Police Stations, which will house the majority of operational officers. There will also be approximately 14 strategically located smaller police premises, which will maintain a policing presence in local communities. This will see the portfolio reduce to around 30 core buildings from a current total of 80.

The above is only in relation to the specific police estate. In addition to this, collaborative spaces with other public sector partners will be sought. Negotiations are already underway with ECC, Essex Fire and Rescue as well as local community groups."

Nick Alston, Police and Crime Commissioner for Essex

APPENDICES

Appendix – Letter dated 30 March 2015 from Former Leader Councillor Mick Page, to Mr Nick Alston, Police and Crime Commissioner for Essex



Mr Nick Alston
Police & Crime Commissioner for Essex
3 Hoffmanns Way
Chelmsford
Essex
CM1 1GU

OFFICE OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

Tendring District Council
Town Hall
Station Road
Clacton on Sea
Essex CO15 1SE

Tel: (01255) 686583

Email: cldr.mpage@tendringdc.gov.uk

30 March 2015

Our Ref: MP/MBK/alw

Dear Mr Alston

Review of the Essex Police Property Estate - Police Stations in Tendring

Following a request by Members at our recent Full Council meeting, I am writing to urge you to pay careful attention to the needs of Clacton and the other towns in Tendring when you consider the options for reducing the cost of the Essex Police property estate.

Very often I fear that the geographical location – the peripherality – of Tendring means that it loses out because service planning decisions follow the thinking of centralising services and withdrawing them from the district. But –especially in the case of policing - this approach would fail to take account of the real NEEDS of the District and the evidence which support the location of a significant police hub provision in Clacton as well as continued police presence in the relatively dispersed towns of Harwich, Walton, Manningtree and (shared with the Fire Service) in Brightlingsea.

Please also take into account that the seaside towns see a very significant increase in population in the Summer months and a corresponding sharp increase in the crime and community safety issues in the district.

If you ARE considering closing Clacton Police Station I would ask you to think again as to seek to provide policing to the 140 square miles of Tendring with its 5 separate urban areas, and large rural hinterland and the great majority of its population on the coast (at the furthest point from a police service hub if it were in Colchester) would not be tenable.

The Tendring Community Safety Partnership is already exploring the better use of office space with the Police through the Community Safety Hub which was opened last Autumn. It is based in Clacton Police Station where joint tasking and extensive side by side partnership working is building closer and more efficient working for all of us. This sort of practical co-location and service planning and delivery is tangible evidence of joined up public services at their best. But we have only just started and want to do more.

The recent Home Office led peer review of Gangs and Youth Violence has identified a serious emerging risk to the very significant number of vulnerable people in the coastal communities of Tendring in the form of drug sales based gang influences extending from London along the so called County Lines. The police (together with the Community Safety Partnership) are responding vigorously to this issue and I welcome that but I doubt whether the same degree of focus would be achieved without the centre of service delivery based here in Clacton where the risk is the greatest.


Which brings me to Jaywick. The Police Station at Clacton serves the community of Jaywick which has a greater focus of deprivation and vulnerability than anywhere else in England. We the district Council, with the County Council and other partners are determined to bring about the regeneration of Jaywick and the transformation of the housing and social conditions there. Locally delivered community focussed policing from the Clacton Police Station will, I hope, be a valuable part of that transformation. Remote service delivery from Colchester would never be able to do so in the same way.

The Police facilities in each of the towns in Tendring represent points of community focus and stability and make a significant contribution to the visibility of policing and the suppression of fear of crime. Visible, locally based neighbourhood policing is vital in our coastal communities and also in the extensive rural areas of Tendring.

With all of the above in mind I would urge you to take a strategic approach which maximises the savings on the property estate which can be made in the larger urban areas of Essex where I know the Police service has very significant (and valuable) assets - for example at the Headquarters complex in Chelmsford - and to seek to maintain the service delivery locations in the many smaller towns such as those in Tendring.

I look forward to learning of the outcome of your review and hope very much that it will reflect the approach set out above which is both commercially sound (maximising savings on the most valuable and costly assets) and customer focussed (with neighbourhoods and communities at the heart of the approach).

Yours sincerely



Councillor Mick Page
Leader and Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Inward Investment & Asset Management

cc: Stephen Kavanagh, Chief Constable
Russ Cole, Acting Chief Inspector