

Rt Hon John Healey MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Stephen Watson QPM
Chief Constable
South Yorkshire Police

By email: chief@southyorks.pnn.police.uk

21 February 2021

Dear Stephen

We have been in touch recently about my campaign to see the return of a police station in Wath. You gave me an assurance 18 months ago that you would work towards returning a permanent police base in Wath and my purpose in writing is to re-confirm your commitment and urge you to accelerate the process.

Your letter to me on 30 September 2019 said:

"I have taken the opportunity to personally review the circumstances of the station's closure ... and I have discussed this matter with the command team at Rotherham..."

We do understand this community has challenges which would be better served with officers who are firmly located within the town and it is for this reason that we have placed our Rotherham North Neighbourhood Team within Montgomery Hall... While the benefits of our team in Montgomery Hall are clearly apparent, I would like to improve on that offer and I have re-visited the decision-making around Wath Police Station...

I have instructed my Head of Estates to look for a new building in the town. Something which is well located, and can readily be brought into use in a cost effective way... I want to reassure you that we will work towards re-establishing a permanent police base in Wath."

You also said that the growth in police numbers may mean you "need additional accommodation and may mean a wider review of our existing premises". You said details about the workforce were yet to be finalised but "that there is an opportunity for us to work towards a better mix of buildings, which would enable us to provide a better public service."

I understand Chief Insp Paul Ferguson looked at a number of properties in Wath and Swinton to check their suitability and I put him in touch with Paul Woodcock, strategic director for regeneration at RMBC. More recently, I have discussed this with Chief Supt Steve Chapman.

South Yorkshire Police badly need a base in the northern part of the Rotherham borough. Your neighbourhood team currently does its best to be seen regularly in community centres (outside of Covid restrictions) but there is now no local police station open to the public to report crime or community intelligence outside Rotherham town centre, and no operational base for your officers beyond Rawmarsh so they spend much wasted travel time to reach the northern parts of the borough in the Dearne which may be up to 5 miles away.

It is my firm view that there is a need for a permanent police base in Wath or Swinton, and that Rawmarsh and Goldthorpe stations should also be re-opened to the public, at least part-time. This will provide the strongest possible signal to local people that police want to rebuild trust and neighbourhood strength, and help improve levels of reporting and intelligence from members of the public.

I understand there is support among senior officers for mobile and pop-up police stations,

and this strategy is already being used in parts of South Yorkshire. While this – and any increased visibility of neighbourhood police officers – would be welcome in the Dearne, it should go hand in hand with a permanent base that will give local people confidence that officers are close by if needed and they have a clear understanding of how, where and when they can speak directly to an officer if they have concerns.

This year, central Government funding means South Yorkshire will get 149 new officers and our PCC will fund a further 79 from local resources. Over the next three years SYP will have recruited 487 additional officers as part of the 20,000 the Government wants to see recruited nationally, plus a further 220 from local resources.

These officers will all need somewhere to work from. I'd be grateful to know what proportion of officers you expect to join neighbourhood policing teams, and how many will be allocated to each borough and NPT across South Yorkshire.

I look forward to hearing from you.

With good wishes
John

John Healey MP
Wentworth & Dearne