

John Healey MP

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By email

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30th September 2019

Wath Police Station

Dear Mr Healey,

Thank you for your correspondence dated 3rd September 2019 regarding Wath Police Station. I have taken the opportunity to personally review the circumstances of the station's closure and imminent sale and I have discussed this matter with the command team at Rotherham. I know that you are due to meet Chief Supt Jennings in a few weeks but in the meantime I wanted to ensure that you understood my view around this particular issue.

As you will already be aware, South Yorkshire Police is looking forward to a net increase in the number of police officers by virtue of internal efficiencies, our PCSO review which will convert exiting PCSOs into additional police constables dedicated to Neighbourhood policing teams, and more recently through a national uplift pledged by central government. This growth may mean that we need additional accommodation and may mean a wider review of our existing premises. It is my current view, however, that it is too early for us to fully understand the extent of the impact all of this will have on our accommodation strategy because many of the details around our workforce are yet to be finalised. We do realise, however, 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.

Specifically addressing your concerns around Wath Police Station there are some considerations around its' geography in relation to our existing buildings. We do understand that 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. This is immediately opposite the old site and is clearly valued by residents enabling the team to interact quickly and easily with the public and ensures they are within the heart of the community.

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. The building has not been in use since 2011. Since that time, it has fallen into disrepair. As part of the force's estates review, all such redundant buildings have been assessed and I am advised that to get the building into a safe and useable condition and with security structures consistent with the rest of our estate it would cost at least £220,000. New heating would be required at a cost of £30,000 and initial electrical works

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would be around £25,000. This initial cost would allow us to re-open the building but longer-term, further investment would be required, such as a full re-wire of the building. These are not insignificant sums and as you will be aware, the site is rather large. More than I expect we shall ever need.

The sale of the station is set to complete before the end of this week and I have decided that that sale will go through. The building would cost too much to bring back into service and would ultimately be bigger than we need.

It is my view that this is more a question about South Yorkshire Police's cemented presence in Wath, rather which building we occupy. We do want to achieve again that strong connection with the community, but I do not believe that this will be achieved by refurbishing and re-opening the empty police station. We shall dispose of that building and let a developer create something new for the town. I have, however, 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. This will be a building which is smaller than the site of the existing premises and more consistent with our future needs.

I hope that this explains my position and want to conclude by reiterating that the re-opening of the existing site of Wath Police Station is not a cost effective option, but want to reassure you that we will work towards re-establishing a permanent police base in Wath. I know that you are meeting with Rotherham's new District Commander, Chief Superintendent Jennings on Friday 18th October 2019 and I hope that this will be a positive point from which to begin your discussions.

Yours sincerely,



Stephen Watson QPM
Chief Constable