



Durham Police Authority

PRESS RELEASE

DURHAM POLICE AUTHORITY CONFIRMS DECISION TO CLOSE AND DEMOLISH AYKLEY HEADS LEISURE CENTRE

Durham Police Authority considered a report from the Chief Constable on Friday 10th December 2010, spelling out the reasons why Aykley Heads Leisure Centre, based on the headquarters site in Durham should be closed and demolished.

An 'in principle' decision to close the Centre was made at a meeting of the Police Authority in July this year, at which Members gave consideration to the usage of the Centre, implications for Leisure Centre staff; the costs of running the Centre and maintaining the buildings; and potential alternative arrangements for officers and staff who currently use the Centre.

Consultation took place with facility staff and Sport England. In addition, representatives of the Authority and the Force met with a voluntary group of Centre members and users, from various organisations, who were keen to develop a new model for the operation and management of the Centre. An initial feasibility study which was prepared by the voluntary group was considered by the Chair and senior officers who were advised by the Authority's internal auditors. Members considered these findings at an Authority meeting held on 20th October 2010 and confirmed their earlier decision to close the Leisure Centre.

The Chief Constable's report presented to the meeting on 10th December, specified that the cost of demolishing the leisure centre will be approximately £95,000, however the Constabulary is estimated to save approximately £213,000 per year in ongoing running costs.

Mr Peter Thompson, Chair of Durham Police Authority said:

"We are constantly looking at ways to secure value for money in all aspects of policing. It is no secret that in the light of decisions made within the Government Spending Review, policing budgets are being squeezed more than ever".

Mr Thompson continued:

“It is regrettable that the Leisure Centre needs to close, however the annual running costs are a significant sum of money which cannot be sustained in the current financial climate. The Authority needs to look to the wider interests of the Force, its staff, and the communities that we serve in County Durham and Darlington. With that in mind, plans are being considered concerning the overall Police Authority Estate and in particular the Aykley Heads Estate, with a view to optimising the benefit that we can obtain from our assets”.

It was expected that the Leisure Centre would close at the end of January, however, at a Police Authority meeting held on 11th January, Members were informed that the Centre was currently closed because of potentially costly problems with the heating plant and a mains water supply leak, both of which would require investigation and repair before the Centre could reopen. On that basis, Members agreed that permanent closure of the Centre would take immediate effect.

Notes to Editors

Durham Police Authority is an independent body responsible for ensuring Durham Constabulary delivers an efficient and effective police service. It is made up of 17 local people who include 9 councillors, 8 members of the public who are the independent members.

The Authority ensures that the Constabulary is accountable to the people of County Durham and Darlington and ensures that citizens have a say in how they are policed.

The Authority is responsible, amongst other matters, for setting the budget for the Constabulary and, following consultation with local communities, mapping out the strategic direction of policing. This includes agreeing policing priorities and setting the Constabulary challenging targets to drive performance higher.

The Authority's Vision

“To ensure that policing in County Durham and Darlington is fair, effective and visible”

The Authority's Mission

“To be the effective voice of our communities in securing the delivery of high quality policing by:

- Exercising strong & effective leadership
- Engaging positively with communities to build confidence in local policing
- Strengthening partnership working
- Promoting equality, tolerance & respect for human rights
- Scrutinising and challenging police performance to secure continuous improvement

- Scrutinising and challenging business systems and processes to ensure effective use of resources

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