SGB Police – September 2026

NACF Refurbishment

Request for decision by the Staffordshire Commissioner			
	Policing	Crime	Fire & Rescue
This decision relates to:	X		

Approval (for completion by Staffordshire Commissioner only)
Rationale for approval This decision marks a significant investment in Custody Facilities in Staffordshire is key to ensuring Staffordshire Police has the estate it requires to deliver an outstanding service and continue to keep the residents of Staffordshire safe, as outlined in my Police and Crime Plan.
STAFFORDSHIRE COMMISSIONER **Signature**  **Date 15/09/2026**

Date decision required by:
If an urgent approval is required, please state reasons:

For completion by Staffordshire Commissioner's Office only		
Decision Number: SCP/D/202627/03		
Date Received: 15 September 2026		
	Yes	**No**
Has the required decision been considered under the guidance of the Staffordshire Commissioner's Decision-Making Policy?	X	
Has the required decision been deemed to be a Key Decision as defined within the Staffordshire Commissioner's Decision-Making Policy?	X	
Who is empowered to make the required decision? Staffordshire Commissioner		

Title:	**NACF Refurbishment**

Purpose:

This paper acts as a summary to the detail contained within the NACF Refurbishment – Business Case and as such the Business Case should be read in conjunction with this paper A previous decision note was approved in February 2024; however, due to changes in project scope, costs and programme timescales, and because more than 12 months have elapsed since the original approval, a new decision note is required.

Staffordshire Police currently have two custody facilities, north and south of the county of Staffordshire. NACF is the largest and busiest of the facilities with a 50-cell capacity compared to a 15-cell capacity at Watling (South). The continual running and it's fit for purpose nature is vital for ensuring the operating model of the Force can operate effectively and efficiently. Since its construction, NACF has seen little ongoing investment outside of the cell control system and CCTV system upgrades undertaken a number of years ago. Core components such as the cell doors, cell lighting, staff welfare facilities, specialist rooms, vehicular access etc. still remain the same as when first constructed. Over the years this has seen issues raised with regard to cell doors failing anti ligature tests, vehicular access gates failing and staff morale being affected by the lack of welfare facilities. Following a string of issues which saw high numbers of cells deemed unsafe in 2020, a Gold Group was formed to rectify short-term failing and to also look

at the longer-term rectification. In Aug 2021 the then ACC and Ch Insp commissioned an in-depth survey of NACF and Watling Facility by the NPEG lead for Custodial Facilities and West Midlands Counter Terrorism Officer on behalf of the college of policing.

Following the NPEG Survey in 2021 and HMIC inspection in 2017, there are a number of risks The Force currently own:

- Increase in arrest rates – *Puts pressure on cell availability*
- End of life building plant – *Could cause operational impacts*
- Safer detention requirements – *Lack of segregation between Juveniles, Women and Males*
- Increase in need for liaison and diversion(L&D) interventions – *Lack of space to enable interventions to be carried out*
- Lack of detainee decompression space - *Lack of space resulting in van dock being backed up*
- Limited space for officers, partners and visitors - *Lack of space*
- Lack of natural light in booking in area – *Poor working conditions for staff*
- Lack of camera' d cells – *Impacts operational front-line policing*
- Current Van Dock and walkways do not meet current standards – *Detainees disgruntled before entering custody due to impacts by weather, H&S concerns for staff when detainees are resisting*

As part of the Independent Custody Volunteers (ICV) role the Custody Visitors also check the custody environment. Over the last 3 years there has been a number of common themes highlighted by the ICV's. It has also been noted that there is an increase in the number of cells out of order when ICVs visit over the last 18 months in particular.

- Failing to control the temperature. Too hot in summer and too cold in winter. This has been a common and consistent theme in reports for the last three years – *Individual temperature control will be in place in Wing E only if the preferred option is agreed, the Air Handling Units will have internal elements replaced to improve reliability*
- Air vents in the ceilings in wings being consistently dirty and full of dust and debris. Concern over hygiene implications – *This has been escalated to Mitie FM and doesn't form part of this project*
- Cells being continually out of action due to chipping in brick/ paint peeling/ failing the 2p test/ plumbing issues and hatch failures – *Cells will be refurbished and brought upto a standard with plumbing issues resolved due to new sinks being installed and new cell hatches to all doors if the preferred option is agreed*
- Cells not having drinking water available – *This was explored, the costs and practicalities of achieving this outweigh the benefit and don't offer true VFM*
- Exercise yards being out of order – *This has been repaired* and *sits within the remit of Mitie FM to resolved future issues*

- Entrance gates to NACF failed for a considerable number of weeks – *This has been repaired* and *sits within the remit of Mitie FM*
- Entrance door to NACF broken for some considerable time/ intercom out of order too – *This has been repaired* and *sits within the remit of Mitie FM*

As this site is pivotal to ensuring the successful delivery of the operational policing model of Staffordshire Police it requires bringing up to a standard, ensuring the needs of the detainees are met by providing a safe and secure facility but also providing modern day welfare facilities for staff and visitors.

A number of options were presented and discussed at EMB on 3rd September 2026, these are detailed below under section '3 What other options have been considered?' in this paper. All options barring Option 2 were dismissed by EMB as they would not address all the risks owned by The Force or would impact the operational policing mode. EMB Board members and operational colleagues fully supported Option 2 and as such forms the recommendation of this paper. The Tender value to deliver this option is £8.2m, with additional spend of £250,000 for client appointed consultants and £150,000 for pre enabling works to site. It is recommended that a contingency pot is held in the region of £800,000. The remaining approved capital budget available for the delivery of the refurbishment works is approximately £7.9 million. The business case identifies a total project cost of a maximum of £9.4 million, resulting in a funding shortfall of approximately £1.5 million against the currently approved capital provision. This option is forecast to be delivered in 73 weeks, with works commencing mid to late October 2026.

It is proposed that this funding gap is addressed through the realignment of existing capital resources within the Operational Investment and Sustainability Programmes, thereby avoiding any requirement for additional borrowing or capital financing. In 2026/27, the Operational Investment Programme contains £1.0 million of unallocated budget provision, of which £500,000 is proposed to be reallocated to the NACF refurbishment project. In addition, £600,000 will be redirected from the Sustainability Programme, reducing the available sustainability provision from £765,000 to £165,000. In 2027/28, it is proposed that £450,000 from the Operational Investment Programme is reallocated to NACF, reducing the available budget from £1.0 million to £550,000.

Together, these proposed reallocations provide the £1.5 million required to fully fund the identified maximum budget pressure and will have no impact on the delivery of any future planned capital works. This approach enables the Authority to deliver the NACF refurbishment project using existing capital resources within the approved capital programme, without incurring any additional capital financing costs or creating a further revenue burden through borrowing. As a result, the scheme remains affordable whilst ensuring investment in a critical operational asset.

Construction costs over the last few years have dramatically increased, not only due to national changes around Brexit or changes in political parties within the UK, but also worldwide influence is also felt by the UK construction sector. The current war in Ukraine is still adding turbulence

and uncertainty to the sector as well as the addition of the war in Iran, only further adding to the turbulence. These worldwide events only bring uncertainty to the market, meaning costs are ever increasing whilst contractors and suppliers look to protect themselves from the risks, they are facing daily. It has been reported by BlueLight Commercial that construction costs on average have risen by 10% since the start of the war in Iran, demonstrating that even this project is influenced by market conditions, out of our control.

Due to economic uncertainty in order to further protect The Forces Investment a performance bond costing circa £23k will be taken out. The performance bond is issued by an insurance company and provides a guarantee that a contractor will fulfil all obligations under the contract, even if they were to default.

Summary:

NACF has had little to no major investment since its construction in 1998, this has resulted in the site lacking behind the current custody design document standards. A number of risks are owned by The Force following inspections from NPEG in 2021 and HMIC in 2017, in addition to these risks, some common themes have been highlighted by ICV's. This paper looks to mitigate the risks owned and address some of the common themes provided by the ICV's. As construction costs have risen and continue to do so it's important to note that this project is no different. Any further delays or reworking of this project will no doubt add further costs and experience cost increases in the future.

The business case was presented to EMB on 3rd September 2026. The board approved the recommendation to proceed to SGB with Option 2 as the preferred option. All other options presented to EMB either did not address all owned risks or would significantly impact the police operating model. Option 2 would require works to undertaken to one wing at a time, addressing all related risks owned by The Force. This option is very much supported by onsite custody colleagues and strategic partners as this option allows works to be undertaken in a manner which enables the site to still operate in a live status with a 40-cell capacity.

Recommendations:

The recommendation to the board is that Option 2 is approved for a tender value of Tender value of £8.2m, with additional spend of £250,000 for client appointed consultants and £150,000 for pre enabling works to site. It is recommended that a contingency pot is held in the region of £800,000. This option is very much supported by EMB board members, Custody key stakeholders; Chief Superintendent Superintendent and Chief Inspector This Option would see all risks reflected within the business case being mitigated, compared to Options1 & 6 which sees only a few risks mitigated. The risks addressed by this option are provided below with further detail provided in the above section 1.1 Reasons Case;

- Increase in arrest rates

- End of life building plant
- Safer detention requirements
- Increase in need for liaison and diversion(L&D) interventions
- Lack of detainee decompression space
- Limited space for officers, partners and visitors
- Lack of camera' d cells
- Current Van Dock and walkways do not meet current standards

This option will cause some on site disruption due to a reduction in site capacity, down to 40 cells for the duration of the project, however this option is less disruptive than Option 3 which would see cell capacity reduced to 30 cells. This option also provides a resilient number of cell capacity across The Force maintained compared to that of Option 4, which would see a complete reliance on Watling and neighbouring forces.

By approving this option, the Board agree too;

1. The appointment of Willmott Dixon to proceed into the construction phase at a cost of £8.2m
2. The appointment of all clients required consultants at a cost of £250,000
3. The approval to proceed with the pre enabling works at a cost of £150,000
4. Acceptance of budget re-profiling

Setting a new project budget of £9.45m including £800,000 project contingency

Chief Executive

I hereby approve the recommendation for consideration.

Signature **Date 15/09/2026**

Report and advice to the Staffordshire Commissioner

1. Introduction and background:

Northern Area Custody Facility (NACF) was purpose built in 1998 and compromised of 4 wings, each wing having 10 cells giving the facility a total cell capacity of 40. A number of years later it was deemed the site needed to grow so a further wing was added to increase the overall site capacity to 50 cells. NACF is the largest of the two custody facilities within The Force and is positioned to meet demand within the north of Staffordshire. Watling custody facility covers the southern area of Staffordshire and is made up of 15 cells. A feasibility study is currently underway reviewing the southern custody provisions.

A number of years ago it was recognised nationally within the Estates teams across a number of Forces that there was a lack of standardisation with regards to Custodial facilities and in

particular the elements Estate Teams were responsible for. There were a number of guidance documents and best practice documents, however nothing tied all these documents together. A working group was formed as part of National Police Estates Group (NPEG) to formalise a design standard which can be used to not only allow new Custodial facilities to be designed and built against, using a common standard but also to allow Police Forces to modernise existing Custody facilities against an agreed standard. This standard design document has been approved by the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice technical standards team as well as the Police Federation, Academic study and the NPEG group itself. The first version of this document was published in 2019, and we are currently operating to version 6 dated 2026.

In Aug 2021 the then ACC and Ch Insp commissioned an in-depth survey of NACF and Watling Facility by the NPEG lead for Custodial Facilities and West Midlands Counter Terrorism Officer on behalf of the college of policing.

Some of the key findings and recommendations for NACF were:

- Lack of dedicated strip search rooms (Currently undertaken in interview rooms)
- Lack of CCTV covered cells
- No segregation between juveniles and adult detainees (Recommended Juvenile only wing with own van dock and entrances/exits)
- No segregation between male and female detainees (Recommended female only wing)
- Vehicle docks not up to current standards
- Cells fitted with letterbox-style handwash units (known ligature risk)
- Cell toilet not fit with corner units which remove a ligature risk
- Showers currently located at start of wing which doesn't provide privacy
- Privacy is poor in current holding rooms
- Evidence gathering rooms found wanting and require future proof due to incoming legislation changes
- Wing flooring evidencing cracks and damage

In Nov 2024 conversations were held with Willmott Dixon, discussing the project proposal with a construction delivery Director from Willmott Dixon. It was explained that the project given to Willmott Dixon in 2022 was given to Willmott Dixon Interiors Ltd and not Willmott Dixon construction Ltd. While both organisations form part of the wider Willmott Dixon Group, Willmott Dixon Interiors generally undertakes internal refurbishment works, this was not made clear at the time. Assurances were given that if we were to start the journey again with Willmott Dixon then their construction division would own the project. A paper was presented by Service Director Estates to EMB in December 2024 and approved by the board. The paper sought the appointment of Willmott Dixon Construction Ltd to RIBA design stage 2. In November 2025 a further paper was presented by Service Director Estates to EMB and approved, allowing the appointment of Willmott Dixon Construction Ltd to proceed to RIBA design stages 3 & 4. These being the final design stages before moving into the construction phase.

2. Issues for consideration

Cell availability is reduced to 40 cells for the duration of the works

NACF is the larger of the two-custody facilities with 50 cells, [redacted] Watling custody is over 28 miles from NACF, taking approximately 40 minutes to drive. It is therefore not feasible to transport detainees from NACF to Watling continually without significantly impacting front line operational teams. [redacted] In order to provide suitable space to allow the contractor to undertake works it has been agreed with custody stakeholders that one wing can be provided to the contractor at a time, reducing cell capacity to 40 cells. The reduction in cell availability is manageable, during times when capacity exceeds availability the Custody BCM will be enacted [redacted]

Increase in detainee's complaints

Due to experiencing noise disruption and potential delays in booking in detainee complaints could increase. To help mitigate this, noise reduction panels will be installed at the start of each wing and any works which will generate any significant noise will be undertaken during normal hours, informing custody beforehand.

Onsite disruption to staff

The works in a live custody environment will no doubt cause disruption to staff. The phasing of the works has considered this impact and where possible mitigation has been put in place. Based on the different phases of the project, staff will have to park in different locations on site, with overflow parking available in neighbouring businesses. Staff will also have to enter and leave site through different doors, dependant on the stage of the phase plan.

There will be an impact on visitors to site which will see an increase in demand on the top desk. To mitigate this the principal contractor will be providing a banks person, who will be responsible for navigating visitors into site and will co-ordinate visitors movements direct with the top desk via a radio.

Staff will have to operate two custody control systems and two CCTV systems until works to all the wings are complete. To help mitigate confusion staff will be trained on the new system following completion of wing E, with staff prioritise placing at risk detainees in cells with camera's connected to the old system until such a time that the new system has more cameras available. The subcontractor will be based on site so any issues with the new system can be resolved instantly and a 24/7 call out system will be available.

3. What other options have been considered?

The following options were considered by EMB on 3rd September. These options were dismissed by EMB as not suitable in addressing the risk associated with The Force.

	Estimated Cost	Timescales for delivery	Details
Option 1 – Do nothing	£1.1m	N/A	
Option 3 – Two wings at a time	£7.8m	50 Weeks	Undertake works to two wings at a time
Option 4 – Close NACF for the works	£8.2m	48 Weeks	Close down site and relocate staff else where within the business, this gives the contractor vacant possession
Option 5 – Omit Admin block	£6.8m	73 Weeks	Undertake works one wing at a time and omit any works to the admin block
Option 6 – Wing E only	£3m (Estimated)	16 Weeks (Estimated)	Refurbish wing E, providing a female and juvenile wing only

Option 1 - Do Nothing – Estimated £1.1m - The board should note that this option **would not** address the risks presented within the paper and business case

Option 3 - Phased approach, undertaking works to two Wings at a time – Tender value £7.8m + £250,000 client consultant costs + £150,000 pre enabling work costs - NACF is the larger of the two-custody facilities with 50 cells, [redacted] Watling custody is over 28 miles from NACF, taking approximately 40 minutes to drive. It is therefore not feasible to transport detainees from NACF to Watling continually without significantly impacting front line operational teams.

Option 4 - Close custody facility and provide vacant possession to the principle contractor – Tender value £8.2m The Force would have to operate with one dedicated custody facility. Cell availability across Staffordshire would drastically reduce to 15 cells out of 65 cells currently. This would be a high reliance on utilising other Forces custody facilities as well as significantly impacting front line operational teams due to the need to move detainees around the country.

Option 5 - Phased approach, undertaking works to one wing at a time and omit all works to the Admin block – Tender value £6.8m The entire project would require retendering due to the significant change in the scope of works, this would delay the onsite start date by 3-4 months. The programme of works would not be reduced as these elements are not on the critical path. Lockering/showering and welfare facilities would still be in a poor condition and staff morale would remain low.

Option 6 - Part refurbishment of site – Estimated Total Project Cost £3m – Undertaking works to Wing E only to address the risk of the lack of segregation between Juvenile, Women and Male detainees. Doesn't resolve all the reasons referenced within the paper and business case. Staff welfare facilities remain as is and no onsite gym provision provided

4. Consultation and Engagement undertaken

With the recommendation that the project is undertaken whilst the custody facility remains in a live state of operation, it's been vital that the right stakeholders have been involved at the right time, bringing with them knowledge and experience as well as a layer of scrutiny, ensuring all aspects of the design and project delivery encompass all known risks, project and operational.

Early discussions were had with the then Chief Inspector, discussions have been had with the now Chief Inspector. Custody Sergeant has been the consistent entity throughout the various phases of change in Custody Management, as well as representing the Police Federation, brings with him an understanding of how the site works operationally day to day and has been instrumental in assisting the design team in getting the project to this point. Other internal colleagues that have been involved in the project to date; Capital Account, Commercial Business Partner, DDAT Project Manager, Estates Business Partner , just to name a few. Additional partner agencies have been working closely with the team, they include; Police Federation, NHS, Mitie Healthcare and Prison service to name a few.

Feedback has been very positive with all consultees working together to ensure this project is successful in not only the design but the delivery aspects.

Report Implications

5. Monitoring Officer comments:

The force has undertaken a robust analysis of all options and presented a detailed business case summarising the rationale for the force's preferred option. Due process has been followed.

Signature Date 15/09/2026



Section 151 Officer comments:

The report and accompanying business case set out a strong rationale for the operational need to invest in modernising Northern Area Custody Facility (NACF). As arrest volumes continue to increase, legislation and guidance continues to evolve alongside the continual ageing of the existing building there is an increasingly pressing need to invest to maintain service continuity.

Build inflation since setting the MTFS, as outlined by Bluelight Commerial, remains a concern. This has primarily been driven by events in the Middle East over the last 6 months. Borrowing

costs remain elevated for the UK government and this feeds through to borrowing costs for Local Authority bodies. To account for this increase in build inflation and the current elevated costs of borrowing to fund capital programmes the Service Director Estates has been tasked with reprioritised existing capital budgets. This has been done, with the virements set out above resulting in no overall growth in the capital programme. There are also revenue savings to be captured from the investment in new more energy efficient heating and lighting systems as part of a future MTFS.

There are additional costs, time and associated risks with refurbishing an operational site. The Force does not have capacity across other custody sites to close NACF to reduce refurbishment costs, timelines or risk and has such taken a pragmatic decision to refurbish one wing at a time (10 cells per wing across 5 wings). However, the Force has experience from refurbishing Longton Police station of the challenges of doing so in a live environment with this project being delivered ahead of time and under budget.

Signature  Date 14/9/2026

	Yes	No
Has legal advice (outside of that provided by the Monitoring Officer) been sought on the content of this report?		

6. Legal Comments:

Legal advice on the detail of this report has not been sought, however legal support has been provided by a supplier called TLT in regards to formulation of the construction contract.

7. Risks - please give the details of any operational or strategic risks that are affected by this decision (add risk reference number and title below)

Risk 21: Custody Facilities

8. Equality Comments – please attach the completed EIA

N/A

9. Background/supporting paper

NACF Business Case

Please answer the following questions	Yes	No
10. Public access to information?	X	
11. Does this decision involve the processing of personal data? (If yes please attach a completed Data Impact Assessment)		X
12. Is the publication of this form to be deferred? (If yes approx. how long?)		X
13. Does this form contain commercial or operationally sensitive information which is to be redacted? (If yes, please provide details with the submission of this note) Redactions on page 8 & 9	X	

14. ORIGINATING OFFICER DECLARATION:

Author	Dan Lycett
Signed	Technical Services Manager
Date	07/08/26