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Our ref: MC2024/83118

29 October 2024

Dear Cat,

Thank you for your email of 16 October to the Secretary of State on behalf of Ms Lorna Kennedy, Branch Chair of PCS Fylde regarding the Department's new Fylde View office. I am replying as the Minister for Transformation.

I would like to refer you to my letter dated 11 September, regarding the relocation of staff and services to Fylde View, in Blackpool town centre.

The Department intends to relocate approximately 3,150 staff and the services they deliver into Fylde View by June 2025. This move will bring together all the Service Delivery teams from sites across the Fylde coast, into one, high quality, modern and sustainable building located centrally within the town.

The new office forms part of the Talbot Gateway development and has seen the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) supporting Blackpool Council's regeneration of the town and its ambition to create a Central Business District. The Department has been working closely with Blackpool Council to assist in the smooth transition of staff into the town centre.

While the Department is not required to provide parking facilities for staff, details of council and privately owned car parks nearby have been shared with our people. There is some concession for disabled parking, however, in the main, staff will incur a charge for using the local car parks.

Blackpool Council have already invited DWP staff to apply for the same monthly discounted parking permit scheme used by council employees.

There are excellent public transport links with the train station, tram depot and bus stops all within a 2-minute walk. Blackpool Transport has also introduced a 10 per cent discount for 1-day, 7-day and 30-day tickets for staff who register with a DWP email address. The Department and Blackpool Transport are

working together to determine a specialised discount travel scheme for staff which we hope will be available from 2025.

In response to staff safety concerns, please be assured that the safety of our people is paramount. While the Department is not responsible for the external space across its 800+ locations, we take steps to protect the safety of staff while on DWP premises and always actively support and encourage staff to keep safe during their commute. We expect there will be a security presence in the office during operational hours, subject to a final review.

In terms of the potential impact the Illuminations may have on our people's commute from the office, we would ask that staff assess how they are affected once they have relocated to Fylde View. Staff may choose, and will be supported, to make other arrangements during particularly busy times, such as an earlier finish time, or different mode of transport home. Where there is the potential for travel disruption staff could also raise this through normal Business Continuity channels.

As I am sure you can appreciate, the full details of the lease are commercially sensitive, but the Department has negotiated a market value rent for the full term of the lease.

The DWP has made a commitment to maintain a significant Corporate Hub and Service Centre function in Blackpool. The commitment to a long lease without a break clause underlines the broader support by the Department to the ongoing development of the careers for staff and wider employment in Blackpool and the surrounding region.

The new Hub will contribute towards the aim of providing greener and more sustainable buildings. By locating in the town centre, Fylde View has a wider sustainability impact by encouraging the use of public transport and reducing the amount of travel by car. The location of the new office is adjacent to the main train station, Blackpool North, which is the local public transport hub for the region providing connection to other Regional Hubs and adjacent cities in the Northwest. A single, more central location will also mean staff and other visitors are likely to have better connections and shorter journey times.

The move to Fylde View offers several cost savings and sustainability benefits from the significant space reductions achieved by moving from multiple poorer performing sites.

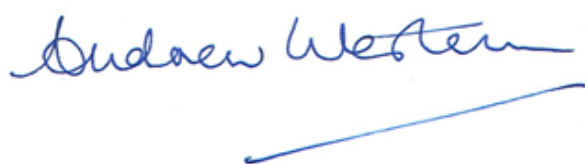
Fylde View has been designed to be an inclusive environment and is ready to accommodate diverse user requirements. A number of rooms, available to all (including trade unions) as a flexible resource, provide a quiet, neutral space away from the office environment.

In addition, a dedicated Trade Union room will be assigned with a digitally coded lock, alongside full access to all other bookable spaces in the building. The Department will also facilitate member recruitment events in the reception area and through the use of notice boards.

The Workplace Transformation Programme engages with Departmental Trade Unions regularly, and is committed to keeping them updated on the progress of the moves. As soon as an individual is appointed to lead for the site – their details will be shared with both local and national trade unions. That individual will then lead on engagement with local union representatives on any issues relating to the new site.

Finally, I would like to take the opportunity to assure you that the Department is continuing to support affected staff through the relocation process. All staff will have the opportunity for a one-to-one discussion with their line managers. Any specific questions relating to a colleague's individual circumstances will be managed locally by line managers and Human Resource staff who are best placed to support individual needs and concerns.

With best wishes



Andrew Western
MINISTER FOR TRANSFORMATION