Dear Bob,

HM COURTS & TRIBUNALS SERVICE ESTATES CONSULTATIONS

Tomorrow I will be announcing separate, but related, public consultations about the future of the HM Courts Tribunals Service estate. These include a consultation on the proposed future strategy and approach to reforming the courts and tribunals estate in England and Wales, and consultations on proposals to close eight courts in England.

As you know, both the Government and the judiciary are committed to supporting HM Courts & Tribunals Service in undertaking a reform programme to transform the justice system and how it is accessed. The investment of over £1 billion will enable us to deploy modern technology, enhance our capabilities and make access to justice quicker, easier whilst still ensuring fairness. This involves a reappraisal of the way we think about accessing the justice system, in particular the physical places, spaces and buildings where this has traditionally happened. We need to consider how we establish a strategy and make decisions about our estate so that we can maximise the benefits of this investment.

The consultation about strategy and approach, Fit for the future: transforming the Court and Tribunal Estate, sets out the proposed future strategy, and underlying principles, for reforming the courts and tribunals estate. It sets this within the wider context of the modernisation work underway in HM Courts & Tribunals Service and discusses our proposals for evaluating how our estate should change as a result.

I will also announce the publication of consultations proposing that six magistrates’ courts, one crown court and one county court should close, with workloads relocated within a reasonable travelling distance. The proposal has been developed on the basis that the services provided can be delivered at other sites, which in turn will improve wider utilisation and the efficiency of the estate.

The court sites which we are considering for closure are: Blackfriars Crown Court, Wandsworth County Court, Banbury Magistrates’ Court, Maidenhead Magistrates’ Court, Cambridge Magistrates’ Court, Northallerton Magistrates’ Court, Fleetwood Magistrates’ Court and Chorley Magistrates’ Court.
The future strategy and approach consultation and the consultation to close eight court sites will be open for a 10 week period ending 29 March 2018. I am happy to discuss this further with you and provide an informal briefing on these proposals should that be helpful to you and the committee.

The consultation documents are published on the Ministry of Justice website at www.gov.uk/moj.

Yours Sincerely,

Lucy Frazer

LUCY FRAZER MP