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Commissioner defends new review of police headquarters

The appointment of a consultant to review a new headquarters for Hampshire Constabulary has been defended by the police and crime commissioner.

Oona Muirhead has been given up to eight weeks to assess the £83m plan to redevelop the force's estate.

She will look at Alpha Park near Eastleigh, which was bought for £9.2m as part of the review costing £10,000.

Police and crime commissioner Simon Hayes said an outside expert was needed to take a "fresh look" at plans.

'Fresh look'

He said: "I wanted a fresh look, somebody who hasn't been involved in this for the last eight years or so, somebody who is outside the police or even better, has worked in the public sector and somebody with experience of running projects of this size. We didn't have that criteria in-house."

The future of Alpha Park, which has stood empty since being bought in 2008, has been thrown into doubt amid Mr Hayes' concerns about the cost of moving Hampshire Constabulary's headquarters there.

The now defunct Hampshire Police Authority announced in September some services would transfer to the site.

Mr Hayes said he launched the review after discovering the move would cost £15m.

Redevelopment plans also included purchasing a building in the city centre and investing in custody provision.

Mr Hayes added: "We are spending £10,000 just to review the estate, but we would be spending £15m to move into Alpha Park.

"I accept that it's an expensive process to move into a building, but I don't think we need to spend £15m."

The police and crime commissioner's office said staff jobs were not under threat as a result of the review.

It comes as Hampshire's force tries to save £54m by April 2015 due to government spending cuts.

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