



Ministry of Defence

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MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE PROCUREMENT

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
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15 September 2022

Dear Sir George,

Thank you for your email of 22 August 2022 on behalf of your constituent regarding the consolidation of the Defence Business Services (DBS) Northwest Estate at Blackpool. I am sorry that the decision has upset your constituent and would like to reassure him that we do very much value his contribution to Defence.

DBS has undertaken a detailed assessment of options to consolidate its three north west sites at one location. In September 2021 the new government hub being developed at Talbot Gate in Blackpool was identified as the preferred location to take forward to a full business case, which was approved in July 2022. The down selection of options was made by comparing the qualitative benefits and through life costs of potential sites based on several factors including operational risk, sustainability, and compliance with key user requirements. Officials have kept staff and the Trade Unions informed at all stages and been engaged in very positive negotiations with the Unions.

DBS has successfully run bulk recruitment campaigns, including family and friends, in Blackpool and other regions over many years. These result in reserve lists from which successful candidates can be drawn when the need arises. On this occasion, officials have agreed with the Trades Unions to withdraw the advert and hold further discussions to ensure the right balance is struck between retaining the existing workforce and attracting new staff to fill critical roles.

I am very much aware of the impact the move to Blackpool will have on staff based in Liverpool and Manchester. The experience of responding to COVID-19 and the opportunities that arise from new ways of working, including hybrid working, all formed part of the business case and a collective agreement has been entered into with the Trade Unions that all options for personnel will be exhausted before any potential

The Rt Hon Sir George Howarth MP
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redundancies are made. These options include limited mobility waivers, flexible working options, different working patterns, maximisation of excess fares, delayed movers' package, and redeployment to other government departments.

I am sorry that this may be disappointing, but I hope it provides some reassurance.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alec Shelbrooke', with a long horizontal flourish underneath.

RT HON ALEC SHELBROOKE MP