



Justice Committee

Rt Hon Edward Argar MP
Minister for Prisons, Parole and Probation

By email only

17 April 2024

Dear Edward,

Future prison population and estate capacity inquiry session: follow-up

Thank you for your letter dated 19 March 2024, following up on the oral evidence you gave on 20 February as part of the Committee's inquiry into the future prison population and estate capacity. The letter raised some further questions, which are set out below.

1. Which prisons put red regimes in place in the 6-month period between 1 October 2023 and 31 March 2024, and for how long did the red regime operate in each instance?
2. During our roundtable discussion with prison governors, many voiced their frustration with the facilities management contracts that were in place for their prisons, which they said provided poor value for money and restricted their ability to respond quickly to routine maintenance issues. This was contrasted with the situation in private prisons where governors felt they had greater autonomy to deal with such issues quickly and cost-effectively. Has HMPPS assessed whether prison governors would welcome greater autonomy in their ability to commission services that are currently provided under facilities management contracts?
3. Does HMPPS plan to consult governors on what they would like to see from the upcoming procurement of new facilities management services, and what criteria will HMPPS use to assess those bidding for new contracts?
4. Following HMPPS's analysis of the estate-wide programme of surveys of the condition of each public sector prison, what is the estimated cost of the current backlog of maintenance works?
5. What was the gross number of prison places closed due to dilapidation in each of the last five years?
6. Your letter describes more than 400 prison places delivered through the 20k prison build programme as being "urgent temporary accommodation". Please could



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you provide more information on the nature of this accommodation, and the timeframe in which it is expected to be in use?

7. How many prison places have been brought up to modern fire safety standards in each year of the fire safety improvement programme to date, and how many places will be brought up to standard in each year to 2027 when the programme is due to complete?

8. How many prisoners serving a short custodial sentence were First Time Entrants to the justice system in the most recent year for which figures are available?

9. What methodology did the Department use to estimate the reduction in demand for prison places arising from the proposed introduction of a presumption against short sentences?

I would be grateful if you could respond to this letter by 9 May 2024.

Yours sincerely,

Sir Robert Neill MP
Chair
Justice Committee