



Justice Committee

Lord Timpson
Minister of State for Justice
By email only

20 January 2026

Dear James,

HMP Rye Hill and HMP Dovegate operator competitions

Thank you for your letter dated 7 January 2026 providing an update on the operator competitions for the abovenamed prisons.

I am writing with regard to the failure of the operator competition for HMP Rye Hill. We were concerned to hear that the level of participation in the procurement exercise was lower than in previous competitions, generating only two bidders neither of which was able to demonstrate the required quality outcomes. You say that the lower level of participation was “not unexpected” and that this “selective participation reflects a mature and responsible market”, however it could also be interpreted as being reflective of a market in poor health with insufficient operators able to put forward high quality bids.

While I appreciate that this scenario is unprecedented, it is nevertheless concerning, especially given the Ministry of Justice is in the process of establishing the Prison Operator Services Framework 2. I would be grateful if you could answer the following clarifying questions relating to the operator competition:

1. Whether your assessment of the reasoning behind the low number of bids (i.e. focusing on existing operations, focusing on mobilising new contracts) comes from the providers themselves or is being inferred by HMPPS?
 - It would also be helpful if you could indicate what the level of participation by operators has been in previous procurement exercises?
2. In which areas of the Prison Operator Services Framework (POSF) were providers not meeting the required quality outcomes?
3. Did HMPPS consider running HMP Rye Hill themselves rather than negotiating an extension to the existing PFI contract?
4. Whether G4S was one of the bidders to run HMP Rye Hill under the POSF?
5. Regarding HMP Dovegate, why was this operator competition run outside the POSF?
6. What assurances does HMPPS have that future operator competitions will result in bids which meet required quality outcomes?



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I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Andy Slaughter MP
Chair, Justice Committee