



HM Prison &
Probation Service



Ministry
of Justice

Dr Jo Farrar
Second Permanent Secretary,
Chief Executive, HMPPS
MoJ, 8th Floor 102 Petty France
London SW1H 9AJ
Email: ceohmpps@justice.gov.uk

30/04/2021

Meg Hillier MP
Chair
Public Accounts Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Dear Meg

**UPDATED RESPONSE TO THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE'S 15TH
REPORT OF SESSION 2019-21: IMPROVING THE PRISON ESTATE**

The Government has welcomed the Public Accounts Committee's report on Improving the Prison Estate and we are grateful to the Committee for your continued engagement with us.

Following our initial response to the report in November, and previous communication in February to address recommendations 1,2 and 6, we have provided an update below on recommendations 3 and 4. This shows our learning from the EACS survey and how we will apply this to facility management services, as well as how the department has managed the impact of Covid-19 on the prison population in the short-term, and our plans to create a more resilient estate.

Work continues to progress a number of the areas about which the Committee has made recommendations. We will continue to engage with you as we develop our proposals.

Yours sincerely

Dr Jo Farrar

Annex A – updates on recommendations

Response to recommendation 3

HMPPS's Estate Asset Capture Survey (EACS) Programme ended on 31 March 2021, having surveyed 110 public sector prisons, some non-prison sites, including Forest House and Stirling House, and one privately operated prison. The asset survey exercise identified and logged all mechanical and electrical maintainable assets at these sites, some 2.2 million in all, to provide a standardised national asset database. Alongside this, the EACS Programme also developed a standardised national series of risk-based maintenance schedules for our assets. These maintenance schedules are based on industry standards, customised as necessary to reflect the specific maintenance requirements for prison operation where these are more exacting.

This asset database has been uploaded to a new refreshed 'Planet FM' Computer Aided Facilities Management (CAFM) system, which will be managed by a dedicated CAFM team to ensure relevant oversight and governance. This will allow us to manage performance and assure compliance of our assets to a higher standard and one that aligns with statutory and mandatory compliance standards. This provides an excellent basis for improving delivery of prison facilities management services, with suppliers contractually obliged to work with HMPPS and Ministry of Justice (MoJ) Property Directorate to maintain assets and keep records up to date.

The department is working with Facilities Management (FM) service providers to put processes in place to ensure that assets are managed and maintained effectively and the CAFM database is kept up to date. This will include business as usual maintenance, local minor works and major capital projects, with further governance to ensure asset management audits are carried out. This will be vital in supporting the development and delivery of the next generation of Facilities Management arrangements once the current contracts expire, and showing the true cost of maintaining all assets within our estate.

Several lessons learned workshops have been facilitated by the EACS programme team, which included key internal and external stakeholders. Some early are being used to prepare a forthcoming Building Survey project. This will ensure the project runs smoothly and aligns with the new asset management.

For new prison builds, the MOJ is implementing the 'Government Soft Landing' approach to ensure a smooth hand-over from construction to operation. This mandates effective capture of asset data for each new prison and transfer to the relevant CAFM systems as a key task prior to hand-over.

Response to recommendation 4

Covid-19 has had a significant impact across the criminal justice system. As of 26 March 2021 the prison population has fallen by c.5800. However, an increase is expected in the overall prison population as court activity recovers and the recruitment of 20,000 additional police officers progresses. As published in the National Statistics on the 26 November 2020, the prison population is forecasted to increase to 98,700 by September 2026.

In the short-term, the department's priority has been to protect the prison population against the threat of COVID-19 and ensuring we have the space needed to implement our cohorting strategies. The department has reduced the useable operational capacity in prisons by 3,000, to be able to protect prisoners and staff by shielding the vulnerable, isolating new entrants and isolating those that are symptomatic.

At the start of the pandemic, Public Health England (PHE) forecast up to 2,700 prisoner deaths. We recognise the impact of each loss of life and have worked hard to minimise this. At the end of February 2021, there had been 93 deaths of prisoners confirmed or suspected as due to Covid-19. We continue to implement the cohorting strategy we brought in at pace last year. Additionally, the department has been working collaboratively with Public Health England and Wales, the NHS, and the Department for Health and Social Care to operationalise a comprehensive Covid-19 testing programme and facilitate the swift rollout of vaccinations within prisons. We regularly test prison staff and prisoners moving across the estate to identify

asymptomatic individuals and break the chain of transmission. The vaccination of prisoners is progressing well and in line with those groups being prioritised in the community.

Around 1,180 temporary cells at 31 prisons, including two managed privately by G4S, were successfully introduced to implement compartmentalisation across the estate. This has proven beneficial to prisoners and 891 of these cells were occupied at the end of March. These cells will remain in place until it is safe to remove them. The department is considering continued use of this type of accommodation as part of the management of short-term population pressures and to support the delivery of additional prison places over the coming years, with current plans to retain 400 temporary accommodation units in the prison estate. We are planning for decommissioning, removal or relocation of temporary accommodation where it is no longer required.

Furthermore, a Rapid Deployment Cells Project has been initiated to design and build temporary accommodation to meet the technical and security requirements of the closed estate. This accommodation will be used to support short-term prison population pressures, as well as support maintenance and refurbishment projects..

As announced at the Spending Review, the department has received a settlement of more than £4 billion to deliver 18,000 additional prison places across England and Wales by the mid-2020s. The 18,000 prison places include the 10,000 places being made available through the construction of four new prisons, the expansion of a further four prisons, refurbishment of the existing prison estate and the completion of our ongoing prison builds at HMP Five Wells and at Glen Parva. New programmes will also provide additional prison places and contribute to the 18,000.

Work is already under way at HMP Five Wells and Glen Parva. These prisons will be opening in Winter 2022 and Spring 2023 respectively, subject to any delays incurred due to COVID-19. Additionally, Morton Hall, previously used as an Immigration Removal Centre, will be transferred back to HMPPS from the Home Office this summer to help address the projected increase in capacity across the prison estate; seeing around 350 extra places becoming available from late 2021.

The build programmes will provide safe, decent and secure environments to support effective rehabilitation, help us work towards our aim of reducing crowding in the estate as well as delivering the places needed to continue to protect the public and meet the demand of the courts.

The department has also secured £315 million in capital funding this year to improve the existing estate. This very welcome increase in capital funding will mean that we can make a start on a number of critical refurbishment projects across the prison estate in the next year, including a programme of work that will allow us to bring previously decommissioned places back into use in much better condition..

Alongside meeting the immediate need of protecting the prison population from the threat of COVID-19 and ensuring we have the space to implement our cohorting strategies, we will be setting out our long-term plans for the estate in the summer. The department remains ambitious to improve rehabilitative outcomes for prisoners, whilst creating a more modern and safer environment for both prisoners and staff to live and work in; that is also resilient to potential future shocks from Covid-19 and new demand for places.