

DEPARTMENT OF HOME AFFAIRS RESPONSE

SECTION 4: ISSUES FOR THE MINISTER

- The Board recognises and appreciates that despite the challenging financial climate, the Department has retained its budget for the prison. However, the Board is concerned that the lack of any increase going forward will have detrimental consequences. The reasons are essentially two-fold:

(1)The aging fabric of the prison estate is presenting increasingly serious challenges and despite the best efforts of the Works Department there is a growing risk of a major equipment failure not to mention the many small but cumulative problems that are arising with increasing frequency. There would appear to be a re-active thinking process in place within Treasury rather than a pro-active one which has a knock-on effect with the Department. Failure to address these issues now to allow forward planning for repair/replacement may result in the necessity for urgent major expenditure in the not too distant future. (6.4)(6.20).

Minister's response:-

The Government's central management of facilities and maintenance does not include the Prison because of its unique requirements and security issues. As a result responsibility for the maintenance and the fabric of the building falls under the responsibility of the Prison management. Therefore subject to budgetary constraints plans for maintaining the fabric etc of the prison building, facilities, and equipment lies with the Prison and not Treasury and any concerns should be raised through the officers responsible in the Prison.

(2)The Board fears that the entirely desirable and we believe achievable strategies of the Prison & Probation Service to facilitate effective rehabilitation of offenders are being restricted by a lack of available funding. The Thinking Skills Module on the Intervention Hub has received positive feedback but consideration needs to be given to the purchase of other Modules. The self-standing Socrates Tablet, an alternative option to the Intervention Hub, could link into booked visits, canteen orders etc. for detainees and could be used right through the system. At present, the Module can only be used by outside probation as the prison has no Wi-Fi and so is unable to access the Modules. Education is another area where budgetary constraints are limiting the opportunities that can be offered to detainees. The Board feels that the substantial long-term savings that could be achieved through the successful implementation of these plans would justify the consideration of some increase in expenditure now. (12.4) (12.7) (16.1)(16.2)(16.3)(18.7).

Minister's response:-

The Department continues to face financial constraints and as result difficult decisions have to be taken on where resources are expended. The Department accepts that facilitating effective rehabilitation of offenders is essential and that when effective it will lead to a reduction in the cost of supporting detainees once they are released and, if re-offending is reduced, less demand on the criminal justice system. The Department is excited by imaginative approaches such as the intervention hub and is fully supportive of the project's development, providing that appropriate governance is in place and internal guidelines are followed.

- The Board appreciates the positive steps that have been taken to improve the position of those with severe mental health issues who find themselves in prison. Referrals for secure placements are generally carried out more expeditiously due to the block booking of beds in secure units in the UK, although they can still take a considerable time. The ring fencing of the Mental Health Budget shared between Departments is a significant improvement. The Board is still disappointed that it was not possible to include a Secure Unit within Mannanan Court and hopes, given the ever-increasing problem of mental health in our society that this does not become a matter of regret. (7.18) (7.19) (7.20) (7.21) (7.22) (15.4) (15.5) (22.15).

Minister's response:-

The Department is in dialogue with the DHSC's Mental Health Service to provide sustainable long term solutions for the provision of access to mental health services for detainees. It is very much recognised that prison is not the right place for those suffering serious mental health issues. It is however not appropriate for me to comment on the facilities provided at Mannanan Court as this is a matter for the DHSC.

- The Minister is asked to encourage Departments in Government to make additional suitable work available for detainees wherever possible to assist with rehabilitation. The Board encourages the Minister to take steps to reduce, within Manx Society, the stigma of detainees working in the outside environment through support for the prison management and positive Public Relations. (PR) (8.6) (8.7) (8.8) (17.6) (17.8).

Minister's response:-

The Department is very supportive of expanding the opportunities for detainees to work whilst imprisoned and will continue to press other departments to provide such work and opportunities. The Department will also support the prison's management in seeking to publicise positive articles on the achievements of this work which is designed to remove any negative public opinion of outside work.

- The Board recognises and commends the decision to allow the introduction of E-cigarettes on a trial basis which we believe will be a benefit to staff and detainees alike. The Board thanks the Governor, Healthcare and the Minister for their efforts on this protracted issue. (6.26) (7.16) (9.7).

Minister's response:-

I am very pleased the Department supported the introduction of a trial of E-cigarettes which I understand is proving a success.

- Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) were not published for 2015-16 breaking a 3 year pattern of information regarding NEETS, release without accommodation, remand times, re-offending rates etc. The Board looks forward to a new suite of KPI's being published at the end of the 2017-18 year including remand rates as well as more meaningful information other than just re-conviction statistics. (16.5).

Minister's response:-

As part of its contribution to the Programme for Government, the Department has refreshed its KPIs and I will ask the Prison Governor to share these on an ongoing basis with you.

The KPI for measuring 'Reducing Re-offending' is being worked on by Prison & Probation staff currently with the aim to develop a more meaningful and timely measure.

- The Board would encourage the Minister to confer with the Department of Infrastructure regarding the work required in the Court's Custody Suite and to facilitate contact with the United Kingdom contractors regarding the temperature problems in the Police Custody Suite. The issues presenting at the Court Cells are Health & Safety matters which require addressing urgently by the Landlord. (22.14)(23.17).

Minister's response:-

The Department will continue to work with the Department of Infrastructure to resolve these issues. The Government's central management of facilities and maintenance is in the process of being reorganised and the new processes will be designed to meet the service maintenance delivery needs across Government which will include the Court House. In addition, the Prison Governor is arranging an inspection of the facilities with representation from the Department of Infrastructure attending to progress improvements.