

SECTION 4: ISSUES FOR THE MINISTER

Minister for the Department of Home Affairs Response: in Blue

- The Board would continue to urge the Minister to make sufficient funding available to deal with any repairs, replacement and structural issues which are bound to arise now that the Prison is 11 years old.

A continuing rolling programme of asset replacement is in place and any cases for additional funding for structural issues identified will be considered by the Department.

In addition the Prison's bid for a body scanner, a mobile phone blocker, and a drug identifying machine have been approved which will have a considerable positive impact on the security in the Prison and reduce the opportunities to bring in illegal substances and phones into the Prison.

- With the advent of increased use of New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) and smuggling of unauthorised items into the Prison it is vital that the Senior Management Team is given the resources required to ensure the safety and security of staff and detainees. The Board would ask the Minister to request from Treasury the additional funding required for the security equipment needed to detect NPS, other drugs and illicit articles.

The bid for the equipment to improve safety and security of staff and detainees and to reduce unauthorised items being brought into the Prison has been progressed to Treasury and approved. The new mobile scanner is now in place, as is the drug testing machine.

- The Board acknowledges the significant progress that has been made with the Mental Health Pathway and would urge the Minister to continue to support and fund this.

The funding of the Mental Health Pathway is provided by the Department of Health and Social Care and this is a recurring year on year provision. However, where the need for additional provision is identified the Department will make cases for this to be provided; recognising the demand for funding for general mental health provision across the Island is considerable and that significant recent improvements have been provided in the service provided to the prison.

- Whilst applauding the progress mentioned above, the Board remains concerned that there is no Secure Mental Health Facility on the Island. Vulnerable detainees with serious mental health issues are still being sent to the Prison which is not a safe or suitable place for them. The Board would ask the Minister to consult his ministerial colleagues and reconsider the provision of an on Island Secure Mental Health Facility.

The Minister will raise the Board's concerns with Minister for Health and Social Care.

- The increase in detainees serving short sentences is a concern to the Board. As highlighted in the 2017 – 2018 Annual Report, the Board would urge the Minister to push for the Sentencing Bill to be given priority in the Tynwald Legislative Programme. Alternatives to custody are an essential tool to encourage offenders to become productive members of society.

The Sentencing Bill has now evolved into a substantive Bill entitled the Administration of Justice (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2019 which includes alternatives to custody. Intensive discussion has continued which has further developed the Bill, with considerable work carried out by both the Department and the Attorney General's Chambers over the last 12 months. The Bill is now being finalised with the target of entering the House of Keys in October 2019.

- The Board would encourage the Minister to promote the understanding that reducing re-offending is through a suite of interventions rather than a simple individual statistic.

The Minister would like to discuss the Board's understanding of this matter when he next attends the six monthly meeting with the Board.

- The Board would ask the Minister to ensure that the Department of Home Affairs reported Key Performance Indicators are communicated more widely within the Prison and Probation Service.

The Minister has asked that the Head of the Prison and Probation Service to ensure the Key Performance Indicators are more widely circulated.

- The Board is pleased to report that the Intervention Hub has finally been launched and would urge the Minister to ensure that the necessary finance and technology is available to support this important part of the rehabilitation process. Inter-departmental co-operation is essential if this important tool is to be used to its full potential both in the Prison and with offenders in the community.

The Intervention Hub is proving to be a success and will continue to be utilised in the Prison, and, if approached by the Prison Authorities regarding its further development, the Department will consider its continuing performance and any case made in relation to the benefits of its extended use and development. It is noted, use of the Intervention Hub has continued in June, where 4 Victim Awareness, 3 Cannabis Awareness, 5 Thinking Skills, 1 Alcohol Awareness and 1 Emotional Wellbeing Hubs were completed.

- The Board is concerned that “Tromode House” is still not available as a residential facility in spite of strenuous efforts by the Prison and Probation Service (PAPS) to make this happen. David Gray House has no young offender or female provision and the physical facilities remain far from ideal. Having reported since 2012 about the possibility of new facilities coming online, the Board would urge the Minister to support the efforts of PAPS to achieve this at an early date.

There has regrettably been a delay in opening the facility at least in part due to changes to the operating model. The delay in opening will, however, be beneficial once the facility opens because the changes developed will result in a much improved level of service, support, and accommodation available to offenders.

It is intended that facility will open in October 2019.

- There is still scope for the Judiciary to utilise the “live link” more frequently, particularly now the technology is much improved. The Board would urge the Minister to press for its use to reduce costly and time consuming escorts to the Courts.

The improved and more reliable Live Link has been in place for a while now and it has taken some time to persuade the users of the link that it is indeed more reliable, which is regrettably the case where users were previously let down by technology. The Department is very keen that the Live Link should, in as many cases as possible, be utilised instead of prison escorts and it is pleasing to see there was a significant increase in the use of the video link during June. Court in person reduced from 48 to 32 and Court via Live Link increased from 7 to 19, there was also an increase in Advocate’s use.

The Administration of Justice (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2019 will also move further statutory provisions towards the norm of using the Live Link in Court in more circumstances.

- The Board is extremely concerned that it is proving increasingly difficult to recruit new members. The workload is increasing but the number of members available to do it is reducing. The Board would urge the Department of Home Affairs to devote more resources to publicising and promoting its role to encourage greater public awareness. More regular recruitment campaigns and media coverage are essential if the Board is to recruit, develop and maintain sufficient members as specified in the Custody Rules 2015 Section 82(1).

The Department did conduct a recruitment campaign and conducted interviews in January 2019. Despite the considerable efforts of the Department, and particularly the Board, to advertise and publicise the role the recruitment exercise was not successful.

There have been a number of staff changes in the Chief Executive's Office since the last campaign which has resulted in a delay in running another campaign. The Board is kindly going to conduct some open sessions in Ramsey and Douglas, and the contents of the publicity banners have now been agreed by the Board Chair, and are currently being produced. It is intended to wait until after the summer holiday period and run another recruitment campaign to reach as many people as possible and to also involve the Parole Committee and IMB at the Secure Care Home in the campaign to increase interest.

- The Board is concerned that it has not been notified about a significant number of detainees held in the Police Custody Suite for more than 48 hours before appearing before the Courts. The Board needs to know about these detainees so that they can be monitored properly.

This is an operational matter which is the responsibility of the Chief Constable and will be brought to his attention.

- The Board is pleased to report that after years of highlighting major deficiencies in the facilities at the Court Custody Suite, some improvements were made towards the end of the reporting period. Dialogue with Officers at the Department of Infrastructure is also much improved. However, work remains to be done in a number of areas including the cleanliness and ventilation of the Suite, the Juvenile Room, Catering Facilities, the Interview Room Furniture and Fire Evacuation. The

Board would ask the Minister to maintain pressure to ensure that recent progress continues.

Considerable improvements have now been completed in the Court Custody Suite including painting the area, a new kitchen and equipment installed, improved cleaning and the ventilation ducts cleaned.

Further improvement will be introduced from the beginning of September when a new cleaning contract is being established with budgetary control passing to Prison to provide greater control for the specific needs of the Custody Suite.

In addition, a new air condition unit has been provided and a permanent solution for air-conditioning is being investigated. A list of snagging is being taken forward and is being monitored to ensure it is completed.

It is accepted that improvements have taken too long to be implemented but that work is now being completed and arrangements are in place to ensure any future problems are dealt with in a timely fashion.

Finally, the request for access to underground car park for parking for IMB Members when attending the Court Cells has also now been provided.