

# INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD



## HMP STAFFORD

ANNUAL REPORT  
1 May 2009 to 30 April 2010

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## SECTION 1

### ISSUES TO BE RAISED WITH:

(a) The Minister

1. Notwithstanding the explanations previously given, the Board feels obliged again to express its concern at the length of time which it takes the Home Office Immigration and Nationality Department either to ensure the transfer of foreign national prisoners to appropriate detention/immigration centres immediately upon completion of the prisoners' custodial sentence or, alternatively, to reduce the length of time such prisoners are retained in prison under the IS91 authority (see also paragraph 134 below).

(b) Prison Service

2. Although fewer cases have been drawn to members' attention, and notwithstanding the explanations previously given, the Board feels bound again to draw attention to the frustration caused for those prisoners who are transferred to HMP Stafford, a training establishment, which does not operate the particular vocational/educational course which they were previously undertaking in that it causes a break in the continuity of learning; it is assumed that the same problem applies in reverse. This is particularly pertinent in respect of prisoners who are pursuing college/university courses. However it is understood that prison management intends to address this problem at an early stage. Meaningful prior consultation/liaison between the prisons before transfer to take account of this issue would be desirable (see also paragraph 56 below).

(c) The Governor

3. As the fact that the rate of pay to prisoners attending education classes remains lower than that for prisoners' workshop attendances probably does act, in some cases, as a disincentive to learning and notwithstanding the current financial restraints, will the Governor consider an equalisation of these pay rates (see also paragraphs 20 and 155 below)?

4. Will the Governor consider including the attendance of psychology staff, as standard, at R45 hearings in the Segregation Unit, and also take measures to ensure that the Board's nominated representative is advised, within 24 hours, of all cases when a prisoner is admitted to the Unit (see also paragraphs 76 and 77 below)?

5. Will the Governor consider introducing further measures to alleviate any problems of alcohol abuse in the prison commensurate to the effective measures currently involved in drug abuse (see also paragraph 90 below)?

6. Although the Board does not, in any way, underestimate the importance of the new vocational training centre and the relevant and meaningful training courses now provided, could measures be taken, when circumstances allow, to extend these

arrangements by providing courses in plumbing/joinery, and electrical and mechanical engineering for which there is considerable “outside” demand and therefore better employment opportunities for prisoners after release (see also paragraph 107 below)?

7. Will the Governor urgently pursue the reintroduction of the progressive waste management courses attracting NVQ qualifications in the reclamation unit (see also paragraph 112 below)?

8. Because the Board wishes to increase its monitoring activities in relation to prisoner induction programmes, and in view of the recent difficulties encountered in meeting this obligation, will the Governor please make appropriate arrangements to ensure that Board members are made aware of the location and timings of these events for both mainstream and vulnerable prisoners (see also paragraph 115 below).

9. Notwithstanding the positive progress achieved recently, will the Governor ensure that efforts are continued to ensure an even higher percentage of prisoners are enabled to access the recreational physical education facilities (see also paragraph 146 below)?

## SECTION 2

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

10. The Board appreciates the excellent working relationship which it has with the Governor and the prison's management team and is pleased to observe the continued introduction of progressive initiatives set against an on-going general improvement in staff morale. The continuous, comprehensive flow of information from the Governor demonstrates the manifest difficulties of managing a complex organisation against the ongoing problems of security, financial constraints and the need for an ever increasing level of achievement. Additionally the Board recognises the enthusiasm and dedication shown by staff in their daily tasks which play an important part in the achievement of a largely calm atmosphere around the prison as observed by the HMCIP follow up inspection from 16 – 18 June 2010.

11. The DHL/Booker canteen contract, which replaced the discredited Aramark contract, has still to overcome some notable teething problems which are described elsewhere in the report.

12. The Board's previously expressed concerns about the lack of meaningful vocational training courses have now largely been met following the recent creation of the new vocational training centre which provides courses in roofing, plastering, tiling, warehousing, industrial cleaning, bricklaying and carpentry. The Board would support, when circumstances allow, the introduction of courses in plumbing/joinery, and mechanical and electrical engineering where there is a considerable "outside" demand and therefore better employment opportunities for prisoners after release. The Board does not agree with the National Offender Management Service's assessment that such further provision would impact adversely on other areas of delivery. The Board remains impressed by the continued low level of prisoner unemployment.

13. The Board continues to be impressed with the considerable efforts of the Waste Management (Reclamation) Unit and its excellent recycling reputation which benefits not only the prison and prisoners but also the environment.

14. The Governor continues his efforts to achieve occasions when mainstream and vulnerable prisoners are involved in joint activities. The Board applauds such integration measures which produce tangible benefits and would support, subject to security, an increase in this development.

15. The Board again wishes to draw attention, positively, to the care and attention which is associated with the wide range of work undertaken by the Safer Custody Committee and the important role played by the listeners and the local branch of the Samaritans.

16. For the fourth successive year the Board has again recognised the significant and beneficial changes which have occurred, and continue to occur, in the operation

of the Segregation Unit. The Board congratulates the staff in the work they perform, often under very difficult and trying circumstances. The unit's low occupation rate is testament to the prison staff's successful efforts and endeavours. The Board's earlier concerns at the absence of healthcare staff at weekly Rule 45 hearings in the segregation unit, which is mandatory, remains but is not so significant as hitherto.

17. The Board is, again, happy to report on the positive benefits to the prison which the greenhouse provides for the employment of prisoners. In addition it continues to provide flowers, shrubs, etc which enhance considerably the prison's general appearance: none of this, however, would be possible without the efforts of the dedicated and enthusiastic staff and the prisoners' input. The Board has been particularly pleased to note that, as mentioned in its last report (paragraph 134) wooden framed planters, manufactured in the prison from surplus wood products, have been installed at several vantage points within the prison perimeter, and especially outside the reception building, which certainly has enhanced the previous somewhat stark appearance of these areas.

18. As reported in previous years, and notwithstanding the responses previously given, the Board remains concerned at the length of time which the Home Office Immigration and Nationality Department takes to determine the future of some foreign national prisoners held at HMP Stafford under an IS91 certificate.

19. Although, over the past year, the quality of healthcare provision has generally improved, anecdotal evidence would tend to suggest that more resources should be made available in support of the healthcare arrangements, including additional dental time and the introduction of measures to ensure adequate cover for the dentist during her absence. The Board also considers that more resources should be applied to counter issues associated with alcohol abuse.

20. The Board again expresses its view that it would like to see serious consideration being given to increasing the pay to prisoners attending education classes to a level at least commensurate with that paid to prisoners working in the workshops and the greenhouse/gardens because there remains a strong conviction that the present arrangements could well be serving as a disincentive to some prisoners who would otherwise wish to pursue the education learning process (see also paragraph 155 below).

21. Although acknowledging the difficulties involved, the Board continues to favour the introduction of measures to eliminate, as far as is possible, the situation where prisoners on particular education/vocational courses at other prisons, eg university/college courses, are transferred to HMP Stafford where such courses are not available; the problem is likely to exist in reverse. Such a situation, which causes frustration for prisoners because of the lack of continuity, is also wasteful of resources and effort on the part of the prison estate. It should be noted that there has been a reduction in the number of representations received from prisoners on this issue and it is pleasing to note that prison management intends to address this problem at an early stage.

22. The Board again reports that, at some Safer Custody committee meetings, at which the Board has observer status, some essential areas of the prison, particularly healthcare, are not sufficiently or regularly represented which the Board considers can have a detrimental effect on the smooth running of the Committee. However the position has improved of late.

23. The Board would like to place on record its recognition of the many valuable services which volunteers/voluntary agencies provide for prisoners including Stafford and District Bereavement and Loss Service, the Halow Trust, the Friends of Stafford Prison, Quakers, prison visitors to name but a few.

## SECTION 3

### STATUTORY ROLE OF THE IMB

24. The Prisons Act 1952 requires every prison to be monitored by an Independent Board appointed by the Home Secretary (now the Justice Secretary) from members of the community in which the prison is situated.

25. The Board is specifically charged to:

- (a) satisfy itself as to the humane and just treatment of those held in custody within its prison and the range and adequacy of the programmes preparing them for release;
- (b) inform promptly the Secretary of State, or any official to whom he has delegated authority, as it judges appropriate, any concern it has;
- (c) report annually to the Secretary of State on how well the prison has met the standards and requirements placed on it and what impact these have on those in custody.

26. To enable the Board to carry out these duties effectively its members have right of access to every prisoner and every part of the prison and also, with limited exceptions, to prisoners' records.

## SECTION 4

### DESCRIPTION AND FUNCTION OF THE PRISON

27. HM Prison, Stafford is a category C adult male training establishment with a certified normal accommodation which, during the period January to March 2009, increased from 680 to 741 as part of the “Stafford 60 Project”; the total number now being apportioned as to 332 vulnerable and 409 mainstream prisoners. Being one of the oldest prisons in the country, it is a typical example of a town jail built in 1794 with further wings being added in 1834, 1844 and 1852: much of the prison is “listed” for planning purposes. The prison closed between 1916 and 1940.

28. Each of the six main blocks has four landings and each has accommodation for in excess of 100 prisoners. Each wing has in-cell sanitation and a shower block. The Main Hall comprises A, B and C wings and accommodates mainstream prisoners with B wing also being used for detox, drug therapy and as a healthy living unit. C wing is used for induction although this is expected shortly to be transferred to D wing which also currently accommodates the Healthcare Centre and also the Segregation Unit located below. There has been a considerable amount of refurbishment work carried out this year on C and D wings. The Crescent houses E and F wings, for vulnerable prisoners, with F wing also being used for induction. G wing, which is a single cell, two storey prefabricated building for 40 prisoners, was constructed in 2004 and is now used as part of the “Stepping Stones” project which is available to all prisoners on a compact prior to transfer to category D prisons. Apart from G wing, double cell accommodation is normal for almost all prisoners. The quality of accommodation and facilities in G wing is in stark contrast to the remainder of the prison.

29. All prisoners must attend work which includes employment in the workshops, activities which are integrated with the physical education regime or educational provision, various forms of vocational training, work in the kitchen or laundry or some other form of constructive activity. All activities are designed to include some element of basic and/or key skills outcome or NVQ accreditation. HMP Stafford continues to organise a whole range of courses including enhanced thinking skills, drug awareness and drug therapy, alcohol awareness and substance misuse, relaxation classes, coping skills and relapse prevention measures.

30. In 2003 HMP Stafford partly changed its direction by dedicating almost half of its capacity to vulnerable prisoners, and providing a regime based on the delivery of offending behaviour programmes; a limited number of these prisoners are in the 60-70 years age bracket which can, and does, continue to present additional management problems, particularly from the medical and employment perspectives.

31. There is a visitors’ centre in a freestanding building opposite the prison together with a visits room and tea bar within the prison. There are ten workshops which provide, inter alia, IT work (including computer repairs for despatch to local schools and to African schools), light assembly/electrical work (eg trailer boards, air

hoses etc), tailoring/sewing (a wide range of domestic clothing) and a Braille/printing workshop. There is a separate and successful painting and decorating unit, a busy laundry workshop, and a progressive waste management (reclamation) unit. A “new”, all embracing vocational training centre, which has combined/absorbed the work of some of the previous workshops and which also provides a range of meaningful work opportunities, came into operation in July 2009. This was a most welcome development, which the Board had advocated for several years, and has done much to enhance the prison’s role as a progressive training establishment.

32. Healthcare facilities, including dentistry and chiropody, are provided, under Service Level Agreements, by the South Staffordshire Primary Care Trust (PCT); the library staff are Staffordshire County Council employees. Overall education and training provision, with the exception of horticulture (South Staffordshire College), catering and hospitality (the Holiday Inn organisation) and laundry operations (Stoke College) was supplied by City College, Manchester. There is an active and progressive chaplaincy providing support for all the main religious denominations.

33. As at 30 April 2010 there were 424 full-time equivalent staff at HMP Stafford which is a reduction on the corresponding number last year. Efficiency savings of about £500,000 will need to be achieved this year, and also next year. The Board will monitor any developments which become evident as a result of these measures.

34. The regime at HMP Stafford aims to give prisoners a structured sentence plan and, where possible, provide a range of facilities designed to assist prisoners in meeting the demands of life after release.

## SECTION 5

### THE BOARD

#### (a) Strength and commitments

35. The strength of the Board, which has a good balance of age, gender, experience and background, was 13 at the end of this reporting period, showing a net loss of two members. Board meetings are held on the first Monday of every month. Rota visits are based on a mixture of weekly or fortnightly routines either singly or in pairs. However, members are encouraged to undertake inspection type visits and attendance at prisoner inductions when in the prison for other purposes, eg applications, Rule 45 boards and adjudication hearings.

36. The Board is represented, in an observer capacity only, on the Prisoner Council and 13 committees within the prison where its presence is felt appropriate. Unfortunately some meetings continue to be cancelled at short, or sometimes with no, notice which members often find irksome because the result can be abortive journeys to the prison and/or the tandem inconvenience caused. However, members do understand the daily difficulties which prison management face in ensuring that such calendared events are held. Members are also allocated areas of special responsibility (11 areas at present) and report appropriately to the Board as this cascade principle, including also attendance at committee meetings which helps to keep all members abreast of a wide range of developments within the prison. This arrangement also gives members a special insight into specific prison procedures which would not otherwise be available to all members and provides an ongoing valuable source of information which can result in a sharper focus on contemporary issues.

#### (b) Training and information

37. Training sessions, including recently introduced twice yearly training and development meetings, take place when guest speakers from specific areas of the prison talk about their particular area of expertise: on occasion they also similarly attend Board meetings. In addition to the Secretariat's nationally based training courses and local and national conferences, the Board is represented at the twice yearly meetings of IMB Chairmen of West Midlands prisons. Visits to other nearby prisons are undertaken at least annually: this year to HMP Sudbury. Board members from HMP Shrewsbury visited HMP Stafford in January 2010.

38. Members, and the Chairman and Vice-Chairman in particular, continue to have frequent contact with the governor grades and other senior staff in the prison on a wide range of issues, and are ready to give talks on the work of the Board to local organisations.

39. The IMB is kept well informed about events in the prison through a prison weekly newsletter; the Governor's monthly diary presented at its meetings; the minutes of the key senior management team meetings, staff briefings and monthly heads of functions reports. Another publication includes a monthly 'What's On' internal magazine for prisoners which covers a wide range of useful information, all

of which provide a broad view of any new initiatives or problems. The Board is particularly appreciative of this consistent flow of useful information which demonstrates the difficulty of managing effectively a complex organisation against the ongoing problems of security, financial constraints and the need for an ever increasing level of achievement.

40. The Board is now content with the provision of its office accommodation. However, members await positive information about their immunisation programme which has stalled over the last twelve months partly, it appears, because of a change in health and safety staff and the lack of suitable medically based accommodation.

41. During the year the annual team performance review and a triennial review took place which produced several interesting outcomes. These included the decision to produce a DVD about the Board's role for use in prisoner and staff inductions (in the surprising absence of a 'national' DVD); the appointment of a Board Information and Communications Officer to enhance the Board's profile in the prison; refining the rota visits system to ensure a concentration on the main areas of the prison's activities rather than to attempt to visit every part of the prison on each visit; and the creation of a Training and Development Committee, to meet twice yearly, to enable members to receive detailed presentations from prison staff (probably four at each meeting) which is not always possible at Board meetings because of the amount of business to be transacted.

42. The Board decided in February 2010 to sponsor an arts and literary competition open to all prisoners with a total of £50 prize money to be awarded to the winner(s) to be donated to an acceptable charity of the prisoners' choice. The competition will be organised by Manchester College as part of the prison's educational programme and will be judged by Board members. Based on the considerable initial interest already received, it is envisaged that the competition will be completed by July 2010 and reference to its expected success will be included in the Board's 2010/11 Annual Report. The Board is not aware of any other similar scheme elsewhere in the country.

(c) Statistics

43. As foreshadowed in the last Annual Report (paragraph 18) the Board's review of streamlining the way in which applications from prisoners are processed has resulted in a decrease, as indicated on the next page, in the number of applications received this year. Members now require prisoners to confirm, on the application form, that they have previously made every effort to resolve their questions through consultation with prison staff before making formal application to see a Board member. Whilst retaining the important link, in appropriate cases, between prisoners and Board members, the new arrangement has highlighted the fact that many of the prisoners' requests can be, and often are, dealt with swiftly and efficiently where a good working relationship exists between, for example, prisoners and their personal officers. Indeed, members have observed the benefits derived from this welcome general development over the past 12 months or so and much of the credit for

improving the effectiveness of the role of the personal officer must go to the prison's management (see also paragraph 93 below).

Board	
Recommended complement of Board members	16
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	15
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	13
Number of new members joining within the reporting period	1
Number of members leaving within reporting period	3
Number of Board meetings during reporting period	14
Average number of attendances at Board meetings during reporting period	11
Number of attendances at meetings other than Board meetings	52
Number of visits to the prison (including all meetings)	364
Number of applications processed	43
Number of confidential requests/complaints processed	16
Number of segregation reviews held	47
Number of segregation reviews attended	40

Applications					
Subject		2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
A	Accommodation	0	2	3	0
B	Adjudications	3	2	6	1
C	Diversity related	0	5	2	1
D	Education/employment/training	8	9	10	5
E	Family/visits	12	14	26	5
F	Food/kitchen related	3	0	2	2
G	Health related	11	6	20	1
H	Property	10	23	55	3
I	Sentence related	15	28	27	4
J	Staff/prisoner related	5	12	8	4
K	Transfers	28	15	36	8
L	Miscellaneous	35	44	42	9
	Total number of applications	130	160	237	43

## SECTION 6

### DIVERSITY

44. The Induction programme for all staff and prisoners incorporates details of well published departmental policy statements on diversity in the widest sense: these include many issues but cover particularly points of contact for prisoners, a complaints procedure and measures for safeguarding prisoners' interests in the form of victim support plans.

45. The Race Equality Action Team (REAT), which is chaired by the Deputy Governor, meets monthly and comprises prisoner representatives, Heads of Functions and an IMB member in an observer capacity. Prisoner focus groups report any issues/perceived conflicts direct to REAT which is obliged to ensure compliance with race relations legislation, the elimination of discrimination within the prison and the creation of meaningful equality in all areas.

46. An annual report is produced, which is designed to measure how successful REAT has been and is distributed to all wings: language variants are produced including copies in Braille. Quality assurance is logged by an external agency whose reports are published monthly through REAT and form part of the prison's annual report on diversity.

47. Although the diverse activities of the prison, for example catering, education and religion, have widened over time, diversity issues appear to have taken a somewhat lower profile since issues of race, culture, age and sexuality appears to be less of a major concern of prisoners in general than hitherto.

48. Black Minority Ethnic representatives continue to meet the Race Equality Officer on a regular basis to report issues raised with them by other prisoners. These appear to be creditable and meaningful meetings. There have not been any major issues of a racial nature to be dealt with.

49. The effectiveness of the strategies to support the current work on diversity issues is enhanced by the knowledge that all outputs are auditable and subject to detailed scrutiny.

50. The Governor has achieved success in increasing the number of occasions involving the merging of vulnerable and mainstream prisoners. This has given rise to the perception of a positive move towards the concept of a single 'prison culture' where, for many years, a distinct two culture image was a feature. The Board welcomes this initiative and hopes it will continue.

SECTION 7

LEARNING AND SKILLS

(a) Education

51. The Head of Learning and Skills (HOLS), who had previously had extensive YOI experience, joined the prison management team in November 2008 during which time she has shown professionalism, vision and enthusiasm. She is ably supported directly by the education manager, 35 teaching and seven support staff. A new course is to be introduced next year to train prisoners as classroom assistants.

52. Manchester College, whose current contract expires in 2014, continues to be the main provider for education within the prison: additionally, in August 2009, some work was transferred from Stoke College. Regular meetings between the HOLS and heads of the appropriate departments ensure strong links and partnership working. The delivery of education maintained a high level and, during the year, it reached 99.7% of the planned teaching hours which is comparable with the previous year:

Classroom attendance by month 2009/10													
Year	Target	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
09/10	80%	75%	82%	85%	83%	88%	87%	86%	88%	85%	89%	92%	84%

53. Prisoners continue to be consulted on contemporary issues which result in the highlighting of areas of good practice and areas for improvement. Attendance at the activities group remains good and representatives from all departments, including the Psychology department, attend to discuss and plan forthcoming courses/programmes. The HOLS also attends the Prisoner Council meetings to communicate changes and developments and to listen to, and consider, prisoners' views and queries. Learning and Skills feeds into the prison's internal "What's On?" newsletter to communicate forthcoming events and new courses on offer: the Board considers this to be an effective measure.

54. During the year a new Vocational Training Centre (VTC) was opened (see also paragraph 107 below) and the sports hall was extended. Recently introduced courses include health and safety issues, money management and various matters relating to employment/unemployment. A new barbers shop is to be introduced shortly.

55. Major achievements in education provision during 2009/10 have included a broadening of the curriculum; prisoner surveys and listening to prisoners; interviews with focus groups; and the introduction of the "Learners' Voice". Successes achieved have centred on the improved professionalism of staff and through an ability to teach and produce good lesson plans. Additionally the Board has been impressed by the number of events organised involving external speakers, the most notable being in connection with Holocaust week in November 2009.

56. For several years the Board has expressed its disappointment and concern at the lack of continuity in the provision of education and skills when prisoners are transferred from one prison to another. This has occurred not only with skills but also the total range of academic learning and attainment of qualifications from NVQs, RSA, Diplomas, and GCSE through to ‘A’ level and Graduate courses. However, the Board is pleased to note that education providers in prisons appear to be opening negotiations with the main examination boards to broker a deal so that all prisons ascribe to the same Board with hopefully the easier transfer of studies from one prison to another. Whilst benefiting prisoners, this long overdue development should produce savings in examination fees.

(b) Library

57. The library occupies a conveniently situated free-standing building in a central location and the Flexi Learning Centre in the rear extension operates in conjunction with Education. It houses computers and laptops and is well used. On the first floor are two small workshops – one for Braille transcription and the other for Story Book Dads. The storage space problems in the main library have been largely resolved. New furniture, notice boards and good seating accommodation create a bright and inviting environment.

58. A third permanent part-time librarian was appointed in October 2009. The staff are assisted by one full-time and one part-time orderly from Main Hall. There is more stock and a steady increase in the number of requests for books. It is also planned to lend music CDs.

59. The library is open for two sessions each day, from Monday to Thursday, and also on Friday morning. Within each session about four different groups are able to use the facilities and this averages 220 visits by prisoners each week. Staff continue to offer Poetry Club and Book of the Film discussions on Saturday mornings. They also support Family Visits and help prisoners choose suitable books to share with their children.

60. “Six Book Challenge” is a countrywide Library Services scheme, sponsored by Costa Coffee, which has been adopted by the prison. Emergent and less confident readers are encouraged and supported to read six books and record their comments in a diary following which they are rewarded with a certificate.

61. Whilst the librarians fully understand the increasing financial, and hence staffing, constraints under which the prison is working, the Board considers it a matter of concern and regret that if an officer escort is not available, it is not possible to open the library. The affected group of prisoners on the timetable then have no access to books for a fortnight. Library staff would also appreciate more support from landing officers in encouraging involvement, both for mentors and pupils, in the Toe by Toe reading project (providing support for prisoners with learning difficulties) and the other activities offered.

62. All three librarians are trained to administer the Story Book Dads workshop which is now funded through the library budget and which releases the previous instructor to deal with a larger group elsewhere in the establishment. The three female staff welcome the presence of the previous instructor in the Braille workshop as he is the only male staff member in the whole building.

63. Once again the Board commends the staff for their energy, enthusiasm and commitment. The library service is a valuable resource and offers an opportunity for prisoners to enrich their lives with purposeful activity. Hopefully, this experience may be of value on their release.

## SECTION 8

### SAFER CUSTODY

64. The Board acknowledges the excellent work undertaken by the Safer Custody Co-ordinator (SCC), which covers the violence reduction scheme (VRS), anti-social behaviour strategy and assessment care in custody teamwork. He is now supported by VRS wing representatives who assist in monitoring these activities and providing reports at the monthly Safer Custody meetings.

65. The Board is pleased to note the recent improvement in attendance and representation from essential areas of the prison at the monthly meetings. In the absence of a healthcare representative, which is now less common, information is supplied beforehand to the Safer Custody Co-ordinator for report at the meeting.

66. The Board particularly commends the valuable reporting information from the VRS Co-ordinator who provides a comprehensive monthly report retrospectively to the Safer Custody meeting covering new receptions, levels of disturbance, cell sharing risk management, investigations of non accidental/suspicious injuries, adjudications and anti-social behaviour.

67. The Board also continues to commend the work and commitment of the listeners who have been selected, interviewed and trained throughout the year by Samaritans whose contract has been renewed for a further year. It is pleasing to note the levels in the numbers of listeners across both Mainstream and VP wings has been maintained: listeners are also now employed in Reception. There has been a reduction in the use of the Care Suite, with more listening hours taking place on wings. However, the Board is concerned by the delay in the refitting and the re-instating of the main Care Suite on D wing due, it is understood, to budget restrictions. Heating in the B Wing Care Suite remains inadequate and needs upgrading.

68. A wing listener representative attends Safer Custody meetings and presents a report on Wing/Care Suite listening hours and any issues raised by the listener team of volunteers. The Board is impressed by the level of participation of listeners in these meetings and the value which prison management attaches to their contributions.

69. The Board welcomes the introduction of self harm response kits to all wings which should always be clearly visible to staff in their areas.

70. The Board was concerned over the length of time it took for some initial psychiatric assessments to determine whether to refer patients to the In-Reach team. Although the waiting list has been reduced over recent times it is an issue which needs to be discussed and remedied as soon as possible with the new Head of Healthcare when appointed.

71. The Board is concerned about issues still being experienced in relation to the P-NOMIS flagging system. It understood that these issues will be raised at the next national NOMIS meeting, as it is likely other prisons are experiencing similar issues.

## SECTION 9

### SEGREGATION UNIT

72. The Governor's policy regarding the Segregation Unit as a short-term measure for disruptive/manipulative prisoners is even more effective now that the principle is well embedded and understood: only good behaviour will result, as appropriate, in a transfer out of HMP Stafford and certainly never directly from the unit. As a result its occupancy level is still low, on average about three prisoners at a time. On rare occasions a prisoner may be kept in the unit for a longer than normal period, for instance following a "dirty protest" or when a prisoner will not engage with the staff.

73. The anti-social behaviour strategy (ABS) system continues to be effective with very few prisoners reaching the highest level. The prison's successful policy of isolating the bully in the Segregation Unit rather than the victim is still upheld, as are the interventions undertaken by the unit's staff. However, prisoners who feel at risk do still use bad behaviour to secure relief in the Segregation Unit which then occasionally results in a transfer to another wing.

74. Each week IMB members attend Rule 45 hearings and some adjudication boards; they also speak to prisoners who are not scheduled for review. The unit is also a compulsory part of members' rota visits. Notes of these attendances are kept in separate IMB files. In general some of the notes in prisoners' records maintained by staff are detailed and useful but a few are too sketchy and are, therefore, considered to be unhelpful.

75. The room for these hearings is still of a good standard and the two whiteboards detailing the prisoners' current status is clear, relevant and always up to date. Members rate the standard of adjudications as consistently high as they are always conducted by the Governing Governor (or his deputy if he is away). However Rule 45 hearings are more variable due to the different styles of each Governor leading them. Prisoners are always given the opportunity to make their own representations in all R45 and adjudication hearings. They are usually introduced to the IMB member but, if this is not done, the member must introduce him/herself which the Board feels should not have to happen. There is also IMB attendance at the less regular District Judges' Adjudications. Members are impressed with the effective use of the Big Word translation system which the Board understands is expensive.

76. The Board is concerned that attendance at Rule 45 Boards by Healthcare staff has again started to become patchy. IMB members do not sign approval on the appropriate form if Healthcare staff are not present. The other concern is that psychology staff are rarely represented. The Board considers it important that the mental/physical health of a prisoner is monitored on these occasions as Segregation Unit staff are less likely to spot any deterioration as they are in such close and continuous contact with these prisoners. That said, unit staff are to be congratulated for their continuing care, patience and professionalism with such demanding prisoners. There are usually three officers and a senior officer in the unit but, if

staffing falls below this level, prisoners occasionally miss the important opportunity, for instance, of exercise and fresh air; discontinuity of staffing appears to be a concern for the staff there.

77. Although it is mandatory for the IMB to be informed of an admission to the Segregation Unit within 24 hours, this does not appear to be happening in every case; therefore IMB visits to prisoners in the unit cannot always be within the statutory 72 hours of admission. This appears to have been caused by an administrative oversight and, hopefully, will soon be rectified.

SECTION 10

HEALTHCARE

(a) Primary Care

78. Healthcare is provided by South Staffordshire Primary Care Trust (PCT). A clinical operations group, which includes representation at a senior level from the prison, the PCT and the pharmacy contractors, oversees provision. The group meets bi-monthly and a Board member attends in an observer capacity.

79. There is no in-patient facility at HMP Stafford and the cost of providing bed watches in local hospitals impacts considerably on the PCT's financial resources and on the prison's operations when officers are on watch duty. Prisoners requiring 24 hour care continue to be transferred to HMP Birmingham. All prisoners are medically examined by the health care team within two hours of arrival in the prison.

80. Staffing levels during the year were commensurate with the healthcare profile. A new Head of Healthcare was appointed in March 2010 and the Board looks forward to continuing a positive liaison with the department.

81. The Board welcomes the introduction of a new IT system, "System One" which holds prisoners' medical records and is used when dispensing medication. The new arrangement is a great improvement on the previous "paper based" system.

82. Treatment rooms on wings are subject to necessary on-going refurbishment. The Board welcomes the completion of work in the waiting room for mainstream prisoners and looks forward to the completion of a similar provision for vulnerable prisoners. The physical environment of the Healthcare Unit is such that there continues to be a shortage of consulting rooms available for visiting specialists, and infection control in such an environment can be challenging.

(b) Dentistry

83. Regrettably waiting times have steadily increased over the year. Two sessions, three times weekly are provided but this has frequently proved inadequate. The current dentistry contract is due to be retendered. The average waiting time for an appointment is nine weeks (except for emergencies) which is unacceptable. The Board welcomes the positive steps taken to improve the booking/communications systems in order to reduce the number of prisoners who do not attend for appointments with the resultant waste of valuable resources.

(c) Chiropody

84. The current level of chiropody provision gives no cause for concern. Service provision continues to be good and waiting lists are relatively short.

(d) Mental Health

85. Mental healthcare at HMP Stafford, in common with most prisons, remains a major problem. The “In Reach” project has commenced and is working satisfactorily. Anxiety management groups meet weekly with positive outcomes which will be written up for publication by the staff member in charge of the project.

(e) Older Prisoners

86. The Board welcomes the introduction of the 55+ Social Care Project, the objective of which is annually to assess the well-being, both physically and emotionally, of older prisoners and to provide appropriately for their needs as their age increases.

(f) Health Promotion (including drugs/alcohol)

87. The year has seen a continuation of a variety of campaigns to promote smoking cessation, diabetes care, hepatitis B and swine flu vaccinations, dental health and healthy eating.

88. Drugs entering prisons continue to be worrying and the Board is encouraged by the prison’s ongoing security measures which, on the whole, are proving effective. The Board is also encouraged by the efforts of dedicated staff who work to modify prisoners’ drug behaviour as this can negatively impact on aspects of both prison life and on families outside.

89. Prisoners with drug issues are assessed and receive a 13 week programme as appropriate. The Intervention Drug Treatment Strategy treated in excess of 30 prisoners over the year. Monthly meetings are held with all professionals to monitor drug security and treatments and, on occasion, an IMB member attends in an observer capacity. In addition, quarterly meetings are held with the National Treatment Agency. Prisoners continue to take advantage of the CARAT (Counsellor, Assessment, Referral, Advice and Throughcare) service. The Board will monitor the impact on drug medication abuse as treatment/dispensing rooms are improved.

90. With regard to the major issues and concerns relating to alcohol use/misuse, the Board welcomes the new screening project “AUDIT” for prisoners entering HMP Stafford. Services for alcohol abuse in the prison are currently limited and the Board would wish to see, notwithstanding present financial constraints, a greater emphasis on the problems created by alcohol abuse to a level commensurate to the effective measures involved in drug abuse.

91. On the general healthcare issue, the Board was impressed by the way in which the concerns of the swine ‘flu pandemic was handled by prison management. The Board was kept fully informed of developments at regular intervals.

## SECTION 11

### MISCELLANEOUS AREAS

#### (a) Management/staff

92. There has been, in the last three/four years, a general improvement in staff morale, which continues. However, there remains some limited concerns about staffing and sickness levels and the effect this can have, for example, on association, prisoner activity or staff training targets. The problem is less noticeable than in previous years primarily because of prison management's robust response to the problem which is being well managed. The amount of staff time incurred on bed watches remains a noticeable drain on resources. The Governor's rewards scheme which highlights members of staff who have introduced new projects, initiatives etc, including a new Staff Recognition Committee Annual Award, continues to benefit staff morale. A Board member sits, in an observer capacity, on the Performance Recognition Committee but, unfortunately, some of its meetings continue to be cancelled at very short notice, which can cause inconvenience.

93. The Board is pleased to report that the number of occasions when, previously, members have received conflicting reports from prisoners as to their perception of the effectiveness of the personal officer scheme has reduced considerably. As indicated in paragraph 41 above, the improved relationship between prisoners and their personal officers has, inter alia, reduced the number of occasions when prisoners make formal application to see an IMB member to resolve conflicts/difficulties.

#### (b) Security

94. During the year, Board members again observed various serious incidents involving prisoners, including "mock exercises", and continue to be impressed by the professionalism of prison staff in dealing with often delicate and dangerous situations. Some of these incidents involved members' attendance in the command suite when developments were explained, in detail, by the Duty Governor or his/her representative. Members also attend any de-briefing sessions which are essential and from which much of benefit can be learned, ready to be implemented, if necessary, when "next" incidents occur.

#### (c) Reception

95. On arrival at the prison, mainstream and vulnerable prisoners continue to be placed in separate holding rooms. Board members have not only observed that officers attend to their tasks carefully and professionally, and in a cheerful and friendly manner, but that there are occasions when there is considerable pressure on staff when large numbers of prisoners arrive from other prisons: for example 78 new prisoners arrived in December 2009 representing more than 10% of the prison's population. The Board welcomes anticipated structural improvements which are

expected to be introduced shortly to the reception area together with improved service provision.

96. The distribution of prisoners' letters has, largely, been up to date whenever it was monitored by Board members: however, this continues not always to be the case with parcels distribution although the number of complaints has reduced.

97. The officers in the reception department remain ever helpful in assisting Board members in dealing with "lost" property applications from prisoners which seem slightly to be on the decline.

(d) Drugs

98. Drugs entering prisons has always been a worrying factor and the Board encourages the prison's continuing security measures which, over recent times, have proved increasingly effective. During the year overall levels of drug usage in HMP Stafford was the lowest in category C prisons in the West Midlands which has confirmed the prison's effective drug strategies. Much of the bullying and threatening behaviour affecting prisoners is linked with drug debt. Staff in the visits areas remain vigilant and continue to have considerable success with drug finds which has resulted in offenders being brought to court when heavy sentences have been imposed. Dogs continue to be used effectively. As previously reported, the Board supports the frequent use of structured and random searches of all who enter and leave the prison.

(e) Kitchen

99. This again has been a demanding year for the kitchen as a result of the many changes which have taken place to cater for the additional 60 prisoners who were absorbed in the early months of 2009. Both staff and prisoners working in the kitchen are to be congratulated on their achievements.

100. Special religious festivals were marked during the year including Christmas, Eid and Buddha's birthday. The kitchen now prepares most special food in-house. This year, in addition to increased catering provision, prisoners have gained experience in food presentation now that the kitchen caters for all buffets required in the prison.

101. The Board is aware that only by careful budgeting and commitment by the staff is the kitchen able to produce its quality, diversity and variety within such a small budget of £1.97 per day per prisoner. The Board is concerned, however, that it may not be possible to sustain these standards during the coming year within the same budget at a time of rising food prices.

102. The number of occasions Board members have reported items of kitchen equipment which have been out of order has reduced over the past months. However, as the heavy use on equipment will inevitably impact on the reliability of some items,

the Board remains of the view that a rolling programme for the replacement of such equipment would be a wise move.

103. The Board continues to be impressed with the opportunities for training which takes place in the kitchen where up to 30 prisoners are employed seven days a week.

(f) Canteen

104. Following the ending of what the Board considered to be the discredited Aramark contract, much was expected from the successor company. However, there were significant ongoing problems with the DHL/Booker service during its first full year of operation. Prisoners were not offered alternatives when their ordered item was not available: however they were reimbursed for the cost, but had to wait till the following week to reorder. Although DHL staff carried some spares in case of packing errors, if a missing item could not be replaced immediately, the prisoner once again had to wait a week for a replacement.

105. The Board deems the foregoing arrangement to be unacceptable. Members understand that the reason there are so many shortages is that HMP Stafford's orders are dealt with last in the packing workshop; therefore it is more likely that some items run out of stock. The Board sees no reason why the orders of the various prisons in the catchment area cannot be dealt with in weekly rotation so that each prison suffers from shortages in rotation. In addition errors could be rectified more promptly in view of the proximity of HMP Drake Hall, where the bagging operation takes place, to HMP Stafford. The Board considers that, with sufficient forethought, the problem is largely rectifiable.

(g) Workshops (including horticulture)

106. There are eight workshops, which provide ten units, offering employment opportunities: three producing motor vehicle accessories, two undertaking sewing/tailoring work, two undertaking light electrical assemblies, one undertaking computer repairs where refurbished machines are sent to local schools or schools in Africa, and one which has recently received extra monitors where stories are installed on CDs ('Storybook Dads'). The Braille workshop continues to undertake contract work for the RNIB and also produces, inter alia, books in large print for various customers. The self contained laundry unit continues to be an extremely busy workshop. The painting and decorating workshop is accommodated on the first floor of a stand alone building. Reference to the horticulture and waste management (reclamation) units are made elsewhere in this report. All the workshops are working to full - or near full - capacity.

107. The Board has, for the past several years, advocated strongly for the replacement, wherever possible, of repetitive and mundane component assembly work with more meaningful vocational training courses which would equip and train prisoners in skills which are more relevant to outside employment and are more socially worthwhile. This strategy would benefit the employment prospects of

prisoners after release and also help, in some cases, to meet labour demands. Although the retention of some of this type of work is inevitable, the Board has wholeheartedly welcomed the provision, in July 2009, of a new vocational training centre (VTC) providing a series of progressive training courses and, importantly, all with accreditation. These courses include carpentry, roofing, plastering, tiling, bricklaying, industrial cleaning and fork lift truck training. These necessary improvements were long overdue and their provision will undoubtedly enhance the prison's status as a competent training establishment. However, notwithstanding these very welcome developments, the Board encourages the creation, when current financial constraints permit, of further progressive courses such as plumbing/joinery, and vehicle and electrical maintenance, for which there is considerable "outside" demand and therefore better employment opportunities for prisoners after release. The Board is most impressed with the quality of the training provided in the VTC and the positive and meaningful results which have consequently been achieved.

108. HMP Stafford's greenhouse and garden area continues to provide NVQ levels 1 and 2 courses in horticulture, under the auspices of the South Staffordshire College, for up to 20 prisoners in the summer and a reduced number in the winter months. There has been a record number of NVQs awarded this year. The number of red band prisoners associated with this area of activity has increased from five to seven and their efforts are recognised. Both main stream and vulnerable prisoners are involved in the work of the horticulture unit. Over a four year period, and supported by dedicated and enthusiastic staff, the prison's Garden Project has seen a most significant transformation of land within the south east perimeter of the prison to include a garden of tranquillity (Buddhist theme which was designed and constructed as part of the NVQ in horticulture, in consultation with the Buddhist chaplain), ponds, vegetable and wild flower gardens. The provision of fresh vegetables for the prison's kitchen has doubled over the past 12 months. The production of hanging flower baskets, plants and shrubs grown in the greenhouse has increased and they continue to adorn many vantage points in the prison to improve the visual impact and to generate a greater interest in gardening: cut flowers decorate the chapel.

109. The Board has been most impressed by the achievements of the horticulture unit and particularly the manufacture of 30 new wooden planters, made by prisoners in the VTC from surplus wood products, and which have been sited at many vantage points within the prison's walls. Apart from producing work for prisoners, these planters do much to improve the visual appearance of what would otherwise be somewhat oppressive surroundings: indirectly the impact also helps to raise morale generally. One other interesting and welcoming aspect of the ongoing Garden Project, where prisoners' ages range from 23 years to 78 years, and as previously reported, are the benefits derived particularly by prisoners suffering from mental health problems or those more susceptible to self harm.

(h) Waste Management (Reclamation) Unit

110. The Board continues to express its strong support for the excellent work and pioneering initiatives undertaken within the unit which currently employs in excess of

16 mainstream prisoners which is a 25% increase over the previous year. The main area of training continues to be centred on waste management which is designed to assist prisoners, on release, to enter the vibrant waste disposal industry. All these projects offer prisoners purposeful activity and the opportunity to learn transferrable skills for later use.

111. Over two thirds of the prison's waste continues to be recycled including such items as surplus clothing, cutlery, bowls, towels, cardboard, hard and soft plastics, footwear and glass which previously would have been sent to landfill but is now collected and allocated for various uses including supply to charities. However storage capacity remains a problem.

112. As reported last year the courses attracting NVQ qualifications had had to be suspended because of the then departure of the qualified trainer as part of the change over of provider from Stoke College to Manchester College. The Board is disappointed to see that there has not been any corresponding funding allocated this year which it is felt disadvantages prisoners wishing to achieve appropriate NVQ qualifications and runs contrary to this aspect of the prison's general educational theme affecting other parts of the prison.

113. One positive new initiative has been the benefit derived from the recent provision of an industrial shredder for waste paper products which has achieved considerable efficiency and financial savings. Additionally contracts for the disposal of waste materials are currently being renegotiated and, even before finalisation, it is clear that further savings in expenditure will be achieved. The Board will monitor these developments with interest.

114. Quarterly Environmental and Energy Committee meetings involving representatives of many parts of the prison continue to be held at which prisoners make substantial contributions to the prison's environmental and energy performance. The widespread support in the prison for the work of the unit, including prisoners' contributions, and the excellent results which it continues to achieve are welcomed.

(i) Prisoner's Induction Programme

115. Members have encountered some difficulties in fulfilling their monitoring responsibilities in relation to the prisoners' induction programme mainly because of frequent changes in timing and location of induction board meetings. There have also been occasions when members have attended at what was understood to have been the correct time and place only to find that the induction briefing had unexpectedly been transferred to another location or had been completed earlier than expected because the start time had been brought forward without notification. There have been ongoing discussions with the Governor about this problem and it is hoped that the understanding which has now been reached will enable the Board properly to fulfil its obligation to prisoners which members consider to be important.

116. In the context of members' attendances at induction briefings, the Board has been surprised that a "national" DVD about IMBs has not been available. Accordingly the Board has decided to commission its own DVD which, with the Governor's agreement, will be included in future induction briefings irrespective of whether a member is present.

(j) Resettlement

117. A new Head of Resettlement was appointed in March 2010 following a 15 month period under two previous managers. Monthly reports will be produced for various groups in the prison. There will be monthly Resettlement Committee meetings, on which the IMB has observer representation, which will produce an action plan for the following seven pathway strategies each of which have a direct impact on prisoners' resettlement plans, ie accommodation; education, training and employment; physical and mental health; drugs and alcohol issues; finance, benefits and debts; family support; and attitudes, thinking and behaviour.

118. Well researched and progressive resettlement measures are crucial in terms of reducing the risks of prisoners reoffending after release. This is particularly so because HMP Stafford is a training prison and, as such, must view each prisoner's sentence as an opportunity to train him throughout his time at HMP Stafford to re-enter society as a low offending risk.

119. Training/employment is now coupled with education where relevant and appropriate vocational training courses, including warehousing, barbering, and hospitality and catering are to be introduced shortly. The Board endorses this strategy. The data about employment, in particular, is a concern perhaps because so many people and organisations are involved. Confusion could be lessened if all the data was put on P-NOMIS under the "Education" and "Employment" tags, thus enabling clearer tracking.

120. Mental and physical health provision is being furthered by the planning of a Health Day but more health trainers are needed from amongst the prisoners. Prisoners above the age of 55 years will now be screened annually by a social worker for age related problems such as dementia.

121. There has been positive progress on the impact made on prisoners with drug related problems through Subitex, detox and drug programmes; the drug intervention programme rooms will improve as a result of refurbishment.

122. Finance/benefit and debt training has been delivered to prisoners on the risks in becoming involved with loan sharks but there is now a need for the trainers to receive more intense training themselves on these topics which are wide ranging. A NACRO course on avoiding debt started in August. Prior to prisoners' discharge, it is hoped the Co-op Bank will set up basic accounts which should help prisoners manage their financial resources.

123. The pathway for the children and families of offenders is important and changes are to be introduced shortly with a view to it being revitalised. This includes, first, the building stronger families programme (a series of six Friday sessions which may include prisoners' partners); second, a post release mentoring programme, tapping in to the support of established volunteer organisations; and, third, reintroducing a crèche in the visitors' centre staffed, hopefully, by representatives of the Mothers' Union. It is recognised that initiatives like these, coupled with the Story Book Dads initiative, should begin at the sentence outset so that prisoners keep a continuing strong link with their families.

124. The current pathway relating to attitudes, thinking and behaviour is undergoing a period of change and revitalisation which the Board intend to monitor over the coming months.

125. The Board welcomes the introduction of twice yearly one day presentations/forums for IPP prisoners, the first being held in October 2009. Board members attended this innovative development and passed their comments on the content and form of presentation, which they found generally constructive, to the Governor.

(k) Deaths in custody

126. There has been one death in custody, from natural causes, which occurred in hospital. The circumstances were explained fully to the Board

(l) The Chaplaincy

127. The chaplaincy is managed by a full-time co-ordinating chaplain with a team of part-time and sessional chaplains, who work to support prisoners of all faiths and none. During the year a sessional Roman Catholic chaplain was appointed. In addition a second part-time Imam was appointed thus allowing both vulnerable and mainstream prisoners to have Friday Prayers lead by an Imam.

128. Services and faith-based groups take place throughout the week and are reasonably well attended. The main festivals for Christians, Muslims, Sikhs and Buddhists were celebrated, and the kitchen co-operated in providing excellent meals to which prison staff were invited.

129. The chaplaincy delivers a "Living with Loss" course, supporting those dealing with bereavement and loss. Two sessions of individual bereavement counselling are offered each week by trained counsellors from the Stafford and District Bereavement and Loss Service (a local voluntary organisation), but there is three month wait for this service. The Board endorses the chaplaincy's wish to offer a third session each week, thereby being able to provide professional help sooner.

130. All new prisoners are seen individually by a chaplain within 2-3 days of arrival, usually in their cells. The Board values the spiritual and pastoral role that the

chaplaincy team offers to all prisoners. The chaplains are always ready to respond to prisoners in time of need, regardless of their religious affiliation.

131. The chaplaincy recognises the need to engage more with the voluntary sector and proposes to seek such support outside the prison for prisoners upon resettlement.

132. The chaplaincy organises, trains and supports seven official prison visitors and hopes to increase this number. During the year a Governor took on the responsibility of overseeing this system which consequently became more workable.

133. The Board recognises the valuable and valued contribution that the committed team of chaplains makes to the life of HMP Stafford.

(m) Foreign National Prisoners

134. The Board receives monthly reports about the foreign national prisoners (FNPs) held at HMP Stafford, which continues to average about 9% of the total number of prisoners, ie between 60 – 90 at any one time: these figures include prisoners in receipt of an IS91 certificate and those held solely as immigration detainees. In continuing to monitor these figures and notwithstanding the explanations already given, the Board remains concerned at the sometimes lengthy delays by the Home Office Immigration and Nationality Department in deciding whether these prisoners should be deported or otherwise: periods in excess of five months in individual cases are still not uncommon. The Board continues to take the view that these prisoners should be transferred, as appropriate, to detention and/or immigration centres immediately upon completion of their sentence or at least much earlier than at present. In recent times Board members have noted that similar concerns are beginning to be made by some prisoners who fall into this category.

135. An audit into issues affecting FNPs took place in September 2009 which resulted in revised policies being introduced in April 2010 which are now more locally orientated than hitherto. FNPs on IS91 licences are given the same rights as civil prisoners and are allowed a daily phone call.

136. Due to reprofiling, a uniformed officer has now assumed the role of the FNP co-ordinator: this has the benefit of being able to move easily to provide cover in the specified officer's absence.

137. There are now two prisoner representatives on the FNP committee, on which there is IMB observer representation, one for each of the mainstream and vulnerable prisoner categories. These representatives have badges and T-shirts to identify who they are. Each wing has a notice board displaying the representative's name. Each representative has a list of all FNPs with information such as: names, release dates, countries of origin, native language etc and prisoner access to the representatives is clear and straightforward. The existence of these representatives is also mentioned at the induction sessions.

138. Forum and discussion meetings for FNPs are held separately from Race Equality Action Team meetings, both of which should be held on a monthly basis. The Board is impressed by the efforts made by prison management to meet the requirements of FNPs but would like to see more frequent meetings.

(n) Visitors' Centre

139. The visitors' centre occupies the ground floor of a free standing building on Gaol Road, opposite the prison; it is staffed by the Halow Trust supported by local volunteers. The visits room tea bar, within the prison, continues to be operated by the Friends of Stafford Prison (formerly by the WRVS) who serve drinks and snacks. The Board continues to applaud all these voluntary efforts particularly since up to 150 visitors use these facilities each visiting day.

140. As reported in the last Annual Report (paragraph 130) the Board had been receiving, over several months, adverse comments from families visiting prisoners particularly in relation to delays in booking visits: these were occasionally mirrored by prisoners. The Board discussed this matter with the Governor who was also very receptive to the need for improvements to be made to the system. Against the background of financial constraints, the discussions included the possibility of booking visits by e-mail; providing separate 'phone lines for domestic and legal visits; upgrading the telephone switchboard software (queuing system) and providing additional resources by way of staff redeployment. The Board is pleased to report that there have been positive results and, as a consequence, markedly fewer adverse representations to the Board. The Board will, however, continue to monitor this important area of activity which was affected by the introduction of P-Nomis in November 2009.

141. Additionally the Board raised the possible provision of some form of a simple shelter near to, or adjacent to, the visits centre entrance to help to protect visitors who arrived before the centre opened from the worst effects of inclement weather. The Board appreciates the positive resolution of this problem.

(o) Volunteers' Forum

142. The many volunteers who are involved with HMP Stafford make a small but none the less significant contribution to prison life. This is recognised and valued by prison management. There are two or three meetings a year which are well attended and include members of the local Bereavement and Loss Counselling Service, the ladies who staff the tea bar in the visits hall, official prison visitors, staff from the visitors' centre and the chaplaincy. Occasionally an appropriate Governor also attends as does a Board member.

143. The volunteers are able to hear topical news of interest within the prison and to receive copies of the prisoners' monthly newsletter. Each meeting also has a training element. During the last year two excellent presentations were made by prison staff: a member of the Psychology Department offered a workshop about the

Thinking Skills programme and a member of the CARAT team gave a most interesting talk about his work and that of his colleagues. Importantly these volunteers have the chance to raise and discuss issues and concerns for them and the prison, which results in a meaningful, constructive two way flow of information. The Board commends this initiative.

(p) Physical Education

144. The new facilities in the extended sports hall were fully operational by the start of the reporting year and security issues, having been addressed, allowed mainstream and vulnerable prisoners to use different facilities in the building at the same time. In September 2009 the responsibilities of the physical education Principal Officer post were transferred to two Senior Officers operating a shift pattern. The staff are enthusiastic and committed.

145. An average of 75 prisoners use the facilities during the working day: 45 mainstream and 35 vulnerable prisoners (VPs) in the mornings and 35 mainstream and 35 VPs in the afternoons. A range of vocational courses were completed during the year including first aid at work and healthy active living. Special provision was made for those who need help with key skills.

146. Recreational physical education (PE) takes place during evening association and at weekends throughout the year with Christmas Day being the only exception. Complaints about access to recreational gym, ie that the same prisoners were attending, has been a recurring theme. A departmental report in April 2009 indicated that the selection process needed to be improved and this was achieved in October whereby there would be no discrimination. At that time only 30% of prisoners used the gym, now increased to 47%, with prisoners having the opportunity to attend twice a week. This system works even better where a dedicated officer is in charge of the waiting list. The Board therefore hopes that, in the coming year, the PE staff monitor the recreational gym waiting lists to ensure that all prisoners have fair access.

147. Special events were organised during the Christmas period and on some Bank Holidays including competitions in football and volleyball open to both sides of the prison. Small prizes were awarded. During the year the PE department raised over £500 for charity through a sponsored “Everest Climb” by prisoners and staff.

148. In December 2009 it was agreed in principle to give all prisoners responsibility for their own kit and this was achieved by March. Enhanced prisoners can now wear their own kit within certain guidelines.

149. The PE department has a mandatory input into the Induction process for new prisoners who are given a questionnaire to assess their suitability for various aspects of PE, and instructed on the safe use of equipment.

150. The Department’s business plan includes provision for another instructor to enable it to develop CARAT (Counselling, Assessment, Referral, Advice and

Throughcare) services and offender behaviour programmes as well as to accept medical exercise referrals. The Board endorses this ambitious proposal but recognises that, in the present financial climate, it may not be easy to fulfil.

(q) Premises

151. The previously reported improvements in the prison's surroundings, including the elimination of unwanted litter, continues. Most noticeable has been the extended use of some of the produce of the greenhouse, eg shrubs, plants, hanging flower baskets, etc which has further enhanced the general appearance of the prison to a considerable degree. The Board suggested in its last Report (paragraph 134) that still further improvements could be achieved, subject to any security implications, by providing planters, made from surplus wood products, in thoroughfares and exercise yards thereby helping to eliminate their somewhat stark appearances. The Board is pleased to report that this has now been achieved, with excellent results, by the provision of 30 additional hanging baskets and 30 wooden planters (see also paragraphs 108 and 109 above).

152. The foregoing general improvements to the physical appearance of the prison has played an important part, in the Board's view, in lifting the atmosphere within the prison and enhancing what the Board has previously described as the "air of optimism". Considering the nature of the establishment, it seems now to be a happier place than in previous years.

(r) Prisoners' pay/remuneration

153. The prison's pay policy has been revised twice during the year. The overall pay budget has increased to take account of the 60 extra prisoners now accommodated but the average prisoner pay of £10.18 per week has not changed for three years.

154. The main changes to the pay scales relate to the workshops which now have three pay bands, giving prisoners the opportunity to move up the pay bands as they become more experienced and productive. Workshops 5 and 6 have two additional pay bands to take account of the different tasks performed within these workshops.

155. The Board remains unhappy that the pay rate for prisoners in education remains relatively low. Although attendance rates and academic achievement within the education department are both high, a pay rate that is less than 75% of that, for example, for working in the workshops or the gardens/greenhouse, not only devalues education but must act as a disincentive for many prisoners to improve their education and skills in preparation for release (see also paragraph 20 above).

156. Over the past four years the prison's level of employment has risen from 75% to almost 100%. This should have had significant implications for the prison's pay budget yet, because of the current financial climate, the prison's resources have not proportionately been increased. It is to the prison management's great credit that full employment has been achieved with only minimal overspend.

(s) Incentives and earned privileges

157. The incentives and earned privileges (IEP) policy document was reviewed early in 2009. The main changes related to those prisoners on basic regime who, in certain circumstances, would now be entitled to a second visit per month. A review of their basic IEP status would now take place sooner: every 14 days after an initial seven day review. Enhanced prisoners would now be expected to gain at least one “over-achieved” in the eleven week period between reviews, as failure to do so could result in their downgrading to the standard IEP level.

158. The minimum requirement of attendance at all IEP review Boards is the wing senior officer, the personal or landing officer and, if he wishes to attend, the prisoner. As reported in the last Annual Report (paragraph 140) the Board was not able to monitor IEP review boards as it would have wished because they were often either cancelled at short notice or did not always take place at a specified time on the allotted day. The Board then looked forward to a process whereby IEP review boards were held, as was originally intended, on a consistent basis as to frequency/timing. Unfortunately, however, IEP review Boards on all wings are now held at weekends at a time that each wing finds convenient. Whilst the reasons for this arrangement are appreciated, it means that it is almost impossible for members to undertake meaningful monitoring of this arrangement which is of importance to prisoners.

(t) The Prisoners’ Council

159. The Prisoners’ Council, upon which the Board has observer representation, fulfils an important role in that it is an effective forum for prisoners’ representations, across a wide range of issues, to be discussed openly and directly with appropriate Governors and senior prison staff. One significant recent development has been the formal election, by secret ballot, of prisoner representatives from each of the seven wings rather than by nomination as hitherto. The results of the monthly meetings are reflected in the prison’s “What’s On?” monthly newsletter. The Board is very impressed with the format and content of this document which is edited by a Senior Officer and published in the “print” workshop. It is colourful and informative and its wide area of content makes it interesting and readable. All Board members receive a copy for information.

SECTION 12

CONCLUSION

160. The Board again wishes to commend the good working relationship it has with Governor Small, his management team and prison officers/civilian employees with whom members come into contact; they are highly motivated, endlessly helpful and also open and constructive in their responses which members do appreciate. Members are indebted to their Clerk for his excellent support and also to his immediate office colleagues who willingly assist members in his absence. The Board continues to acknowledge the professionalism, patience and dedication of prison officers who often perform their work in difficult and trying circumstances.

161. The Board wishes to re-emphasise its earlier statements applauding the positive effects which Governor Small's new and enterprising initiatives have produced which have included enhanced service provision in many areas and the continued general improvement in staff morale. The Board also welcomes the effect which the continued reduction in the number of prisoners held in segregation has had; the increased number of occasions/activities involving, jointly, mainstream and vulnerable prisoners, and the continued improvement in the appearance of the prison's surroundings within the perimeter walls; all these issues are constantly commented upon favourably by members. The Board is also pleased to report that the previously reported increased air of optimism in the prison continues, notwithstanding the usual stresses and strains encountered almost daily within the prison.

162. The Board has been particularly impressed, following the opening of the new vocational training centre in July 2009, at the increased range of purposeful vocational training initiatives now provided, which also attract accreditation. This long overdue and necessary development, for which the Board had been pressing for over five years will, because of its comprehensive nature, undoubtedly enhance the prison's status as a competent training establishment.

163. Notwithstanding recent welcome improvements in the healthcare facilities provided by the South Staffordshire Primary Care Trust, the Board continues to feel that the resources provided for some of the Trust's Services, including dentistry, has been insufficient; this concern has extended to the absence, on occasion although not so frequently, of healthcare staff at Rule 45 hearings which is a mandatory requirement.

164. Finally I wish to pay particular tribute to my colleagues on the Board for their hard work, dedication and commitment to ensure, as far as they are able, that prisoners at HMP Stafford continue to be dealt with in a decent and humane way.

Malcolm Price  
Chairman  
December 2010

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*This report was approved by the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Stafford on 10 January 2011  
This report to be sent to the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice on 17 January 2011.*

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