



Ms Mary Bell
Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Lewes
1 Brighton Road, East Sussex
BN7 1EA

20 July 2017

Dear Mary,

**HMP LEWES: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR
1 FEBRUARY 2016 TO 31 JANUARY 2017**

Thank you for your Board's report for the year ending 31 January 2017. I am grateful to you and your colleagues for all the hard work that has been put into capturing your helpful observations.

You have also rightly raised concerns about the timely manner of responses from Ministers when issues are brought to our attention. Please accept my sincere apologies that Ms Hunter did not receive a response to her letter in June 2016 to my predecessor, Andrew Selous, or indeed a more timely response to her letter of 26 July to me. These failures are unacceptable and are in no way a reflection of Ministers views of Independent Monitoring Boards. The oversights were due to administrative errors in my office and measures have been taken to ensure this does not occur again.

Although there is undoubtedly a lot of work to do at HMP Lewes, I am pleased that following the change in the geographical structure of the prison estate, the new Director for HMP Lewes has met and openly shared with you his thoughts for the future of the prison. I am glad you welcome the more robust management style that is able to prioritise a reliable regime, which in turn should offer a safe and decent environment for staff and prisoners.

Following HMP Lewes' move to a period of Special Measures in December 2016 and the arrival of the new Governor and deputy Governor in January 2017 an action plan, supported by Business Development Group, Organisational Design and the Regional Psychology Group has been put in place to address the failing issues within the prison. The plan is based around six priorities with safety and security at its core and also includes staffing, regime delivery, doing the basics well, ownership, collaborative leadership and improving the built environment. The plan will set out the strategic priorities and development objectives over the next three years with success measured against these objectives. In order to undertake the necessary work and actions, consideration has been sought to make HMP Lewes a complex prison with upgraded senior management posts.

HMP Lewes has received funding from the Government's £10 million fund for safety and following a national review of establishments that demonstrated difficulties in recruiting and/or retaining staff, HMP Lewes was granted priority recruitment status, including a higher salary for new prison officers, which has resulted in 24 job offers made since November 2016. I am pleased to read HMP Lewes has become a training centre for new prison officers and a recruitment advisor is now in post assisting applicants at every stage of the process from familiarisation visits through to the training and probation period for successful applicants.

The recent increase in starting pay for new prison officers has resulted in a good level of interest at HMP Lewes and work continues to attract a diverse range of applicants with the skills to contribute positively to changing people's lives and preventing crime by reducing re-offending. To provide further support a mentor has been appointed for the new officers and a buddy scheme introduced so that experienced staff can support and develop the new recruits.

Although much work has already been undertaken to improve the predictability of the regime, reduce staff sickness levels and improve employee relations, as staffing levels increase further work will be undertaken to review the regime and core day with longer term projects to improve the accommodation and facilities within the prison. Work is already underway to improve safety and increase security processes, through the improvement of the management of Assessment Care in Custody and Teamwork documentation and use of emergency codes, the introduction of body worn cameras and proactively managing security information. Areas highlighted as requiring improvement will be addressed through a number of time bound initiatives and establishment performance measured in line with HMPPS targets.

HMPPS takes seriously the ongoing challenges that drugs, mobile phones and other illicit items pose to our establishments and a range of measures are in place to tackle the threats that they pose. These measures, designed to reduce contraband being smuggled into prisons and to detect those items that do enter prisons, include physical searching, the use of x-ray machines and other technical aids, CCTV surveillance cameras, intelligence-led searches and drug detection dogs. Following the introduction of the Psychoactive Substances Act (PSA) in May 2016, there have been a number of successful convictions for possession in a custodial setting and new drug tests to identify certain psychoactive substances have resulted in reduced use of the drugs at HMP Lewes. The prison are working with criminal justice departments to ensure that crime in prison is given a priority and that prisoners or visitors breaking the law are punished swiftly, and effectively.

Despite the just criticism in other areas it was encouraging to receive your comments that despite the problems encountered throughout the year all serious incidents attended by the Board were dealt with extremely well with an emphasis on the safety of both the prisoners and staff involved. I also note the Board's acknowledgements of the improvements made in the Chaplaincy service provided to staff, prisoners, and their families and the innovative approach of the Library & Education services in offering in-cell services.

HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) comments in response to other issues raised in your report are set out in the attached annex. I also note you have raised some local issues of concern in your report and the Governor will continue to keep you aware of developments as work continues.

The Justice Secretary and I appreciate the valuable role played by members of Independent Monitoring Boards throughout the estate and we are very grateful for your continued hard work on behalf of HMP Lewes.

Yours sincerely



SAM GYIMAH MP

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HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Building and repair works

A Performance Improvement Plan has been in place for Carillion, the maintenance contractors at HMP Lewes, since January 2017 which along with an increase in on-site resources has had a positive impact in the delivery of building repairs, refurbishment of healthcare cells, pest control provision reviewed and increased working to deal with pigeon excrement.

The Deputy Governor and Carillion now conduct weekly meetings to maintain open dialogue and improve the service with all cells in use considered to meet required standards.

Prisoner property

HMPPS understands the importance of property to prisoners and strives to ensure it is managed as effectively and efficiently as possible. It is in the interests of both prisoners and staff that property is dealt with promptly, fairly, and with attention to detail. A review of the Prisoners' Property policy is currently taking place alongside a national project to reduce HMPPS annual litigation expenditure. A national cost reduction project began in early 2017 with work streams focusing on improving the handling of claims and preventing the causes of litigation. This work will feed into the prisoners' property review. We expect to issue a revised policy during 2017.

HMP Lewes' information on the MoJ Website

HMP Lewes is currently in the process of updating information held about the prison on the MoJ website to reflect the recent changes and will ensure it is completed within the next month.