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*Den Kevin Moody*

**HMP LEICESTER: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT  
FOR 1 FEBRUARY 2017 – 31 JANUARY 2018**

Thank you for your Board's report for the year ending 31 January 2018. I am grateful to you and your colleagues for all the hard work that has been put into capturing your helpful observations.

Following my letter to the Board of 7 February 2018 addressing your concerns about Amey, the maintenance contractor, I am pleased that reactive repairs now seem to be taking place in a more timely manner. Amey have recently changed their management structure for HMP Leicester which should better support core service delivery. Also, HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) Service Delivery Manager will closely monitor performance and work collaboratively with the new managers to ensure the quality of services are delivered as per the requirements of the Total Facilities Management (TFM) contract. At national level, organisational changes within HMPPS should increasingly provide Prison Group Directors, Governors, and staff the support they need to deliver safe, secure and decent regimes which underpin the work of establishments. There should be a more responsive, reactive maintenance provision and improvements to the processes required to manage TFM contracts including delivery of projects.

HMPPS now also have the option of using an alternate provider to tackle any outstanding works where unacceptable delays are experienced, with payment for this levied against Amey. These recent changes should negate the need for Prison Group Directors and Governors to have to get involved in any aspects of work where Amey have been unable to fulfil their contractual obligations.

Reoffending by prisoners released from custody is estimated to cost society approximately £15 billion per year. On 6 March 2018 the Secretary of State announced his intention to convene a cross-government group of senior Ministers to work across all relevant departments to reduce re-offending and the cost of reoffending to society. It is only by working cross-government that we will be able to help ex-offenders secure employment, find a home, get treatment for a drug addiction and support for mental health issues. Further details will be announced in due course.

Regarding the timing of resettlement plans, a Basic Custody Screening Tool (BCST) quality assurance development review took place in September 2015. This report has been used to further develop a project looking to design a new resettlement planning process, replacing the BCST process. Pilots are being carried out and HMPPS' vision is for an end-to-end integrated resettlement planning process that will incorporate early days resettlement planning with sentence planning and pre-release planning.

The Universal Credit Full Service is a digital benefit, and given prisoners cannot typically access the internet, they currently cannot make an advance claim prior to their release. Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Prison Work Coaches however provide comprehensive support to prisoners prior to their release, including booking an appointment at the local jobcentre on the day of release to ensure financial support immediately through advance payments. Recent changes to Universal Credit means all claimants, including prison leavers, can apply for an advance payment of up to 100% of their expected monthly entitlement from day one of their claim.

Another major facet of post-release resettlement is housing and the current pressures on housing across the country is well documented. We are working together with Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to improve access to housing for released prisoners and those serving community sentences. Through the Homelessness Reduction Act (2017), Prisons and Probation providers will be subject to a new duty to refer to the local housing authority someone they support that might be at risk of becoming homeless.

A new national accommodation contract (BASS), to support low and medium risk offenders on bail and those being released from prison on Home Detention Curfew, has just been let. Occupancy levels are high and there is the capacity to expand this contract over time. HMPPS are also looking at the expansion of the National Probation Service's approved premises estate that manages the highest risk offenders on release from prison. This is in its early stages and it is recognised that further work will need to be done to support these offenders as they move on to independent living.

Guidance for probation on Alternatives to Recall was published in 2017 to ensure that recall is only used where necessary to protect the public. Offender managers are required to show that alternatives have been considered before a request for recall is made, however recall remains a vital preventative tool to protect the public. Although resettlement services are now firmly embedded in the prison service, and the number of offenders recalled into custody is falling at national level, evidence of its effectiveness is not available at present.

HMPPS comments in response to other issues raised in your report are set out in the attached annex.

It was encouraging to receive your numerous positive comments and particularly the good interaction between staff and prisoners, 'The Team Leicester' approach to resolve problems, and the Governor's continued drive to make improvements including refurbishments and painting and decorating to improve decency and make the prison more pleasant.

I was also pleased to note the multitude of cultural activities for prisoners throughout 2017, and the improved visitor experience with the redesign of the prisoner visits hall, recognised by the Guardian awards. I note the improved opportunities for purposeful activity, and the improved management of Assessment Care in Custody and Teamwork (ACCT) cases and transfer of mentally ill prisoners to appropriate accommodation.

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 Leicester.

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**RORY STEWART MP**

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**HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report**

**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. Work on producing a new prisoners' property framework was delayed so that it could take place alongside a national project to reduce HMPPS annual litigation expenditure. A national cost reduction project began in 2017, with work streams focusing on improving the handling of claims and preventing the causes of litigation. This work is feeding into the prisoners' property review. We hope to publish the new framework in early 2019.

The Board may wish to also note that the current Prison Service Instruction (PSI) 12/2011 requires Governors to comply with volumetric control requirements. When any prisoner's property levels exceed the volumetric control limit for in-possession items, they will continue to be encouraged to send items out, or have them disposed of, to avoid the risk of loss and cost to the tax payer for the storage of items. This also assists with the moving of property when prisoners transfer establishments.