



██████████
Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Erlestoke
Devizes
Wiltshire
SN10 5TU

MoJ Ref: ADR 081703

8 October 2020

Dear ██████████,

**HMP ERLESTOKE: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 APRIL 2019 – 31 MARCH 2020**

Thank you for your Board's report for the year ending 31 March 2020. I am grateful to you and your colleagues for your hard work in capturing these helpful observations especially as Covid-19 impacted significantly on the Board's ability to gather information. I would also like to echo the Board's recognition of HMP Erlestoke's handling of the lockdown.

I was disappointed to learn that repairs and improvements at HMP Erlestoke continues to be an issue and note the Board's concerns about Government Facility Services Limited (GFSL) senior management team. It is the responsibility of GFSL Senior Management to ensure that site teams are properly supported and there are plans to employ a further regional support manager to address any shortfalls. Any change will be monitored and evaluated to measure the improvement on site. There are currently three vacancies at the site and one supervisor is on long-term sick absence. GFSL has informed the Regional Estates Manager that they are recruiting for these positions to ensure staffing levels meet the work demands at HMP Erlestoke.

Turning to the Board's concerns about GFSL's ability to manage large contracts and projects, it is acknowledged that historically the contractors have been slow with project delivery at the site. As mentioned in my response last year, since August 2019 HMP Erlestoke has had a Service Delivery Manager (SDM) who has worked alongside the new GFSL Projects Manager to ensure all largescale projects are delivered in a timely manner. Projects delivered within that time have been the Kennet Unit kitchen, new gated access from the Silbury Unit, floodlighting to the Silbury Unit walkway, enhanced security to the Care and Separation Unit and works on the main water tanks. Projects that are in the process of completion are the Healthcare Unit and Reception screening room. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic some project works have had to be deferred to the 2020/21 financial year, some of which are now due to start this Autumn.

The Board's report notes that there has been an improvement in reactive repairs, although preventative maintenance at the prison remains unsatisfactory. GFSL is monitored using information from Key Performance Indicators (KPI) and Compliance Assurance data. My officials have confirmed that the on-site team currently have 97% statutory compliance and 66% overall compliance rating and have passed all KPI Statutory, Mandatory Compliance and reactive repairs at the site for June 2020. This is an improving picture and will continue to be monitored.

The painting programme had been arranged over a five-year schedule. However, given the volume of wear and tear experienced in the wings it is not surprising to see that some areas need repainting on a bi-annual basis. Currently the GFSL site team has one dedicated painter to cover this work. This professional painter works with a small team of prisoners to deliver the programme and some accommodation units have their own dedicated wing painters. GFSL is contracted to provide the paint within the five-year programme, however, if the volume of paint needs to be increased this must be reviewed with the Senior Management Team, SDM and Regional Estates Manager. This is an area that needs to be monitored and supervised due to the large volumes of paint required and it is recognised that the programme requires improvement.

It was encouraging to receive your comments that in general prisoners are treated fairly and humanely, and that relationships between staff and prisoners are good. I was further encouraged to learn that incidences of self-harm have decreased during the reporting year, that there is now better management of Offender Assessment System reports leading to a significant reduction in the backlog, and that the Drug Recovery Unit was working well although the unit's function has been suspended due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The unit will be restored as soon as possible as the prison moves forward with regime recovery, providing it is safe to do so in respect of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Governor has also undertaken to review how those with substance misuse problems can be supported in the meantime.

I was particularly pleased to hear that HMP Erlestoke continues to uphold a good image in the community and the Governor and his staff keep local residents involved and informed of relevant developments. The generosity of the Friends of Erlestoke Prison charity is also worthy of a special mention.

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

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 Erlestoke.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lucy Frazer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

LUCY FRAZER QC MP

Annex

FOR HMP ERLESTOKE: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 APRIL 2019 – 31 MARCH 2020

HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Fabric of the Prison

Improvements to buildings are ordinarily identified according to site priorities. These are usually discussions between the Governor, GFSL and the SDM. Asset Investment Bids and Major Maintenance bids are submitted on an annual or bi-annual basis to improve the fabric/security of buildings. An investment bid for recladding works for Avebury Unit was lodged previously, however, this was unsuccessful. HMPPS is pleased to advise that funding for the showers has been confirmed and allocated, but has not yet been received at the prison.

Current Asset Investment Bids have been lodged for Malborough wing pipework and Alfred and Wessex safer zones. HMPPS spending for HMP Erlestoke for 2019/20 was approximately £854,551 excluding VAT.

Drugs

At a national level the HMPPS Security Investment Programme is investing significantly in dog handler provision this financial year, bolstering both regional and national teams. Work is also ongoing exploring how best to ensure that dogs are as capable and up-to-date as possible in terms of detection of the most prevalent and concerning narcotic threats. Separately, work is continuing to obtain approval for the Drug Testing Exceptional Delivery Management Plan for the reintroduction of mandatory drug testing. This is currently in consultation with Trade Unions.

Locally, HMP Erlestoke is currently waiting for the work to commence on the enhanced gate facilities which will benefit the prison with the ingress of drugs. The prison is also currently awaiting delivery of an itemiser and a body scanner to provide further elements of security for the establishment. The prison also continues to work closely with police and has seen an increase in the level of crime detected together with arrests.