



Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Grendon and Springhill
Grendon Underwood
Aylesbury
Buckinghamshire
HP18 0TL

MoJ ref: SUB 96779

31 May 2022

Dear Chair,

**HMP SPRINGHILL: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 JANUARY 2021 – 31 DECEMBER 2021**

Thank you for your Board's report for the year ending 31 December 2021. I am grateful to you and your colleagues for your hard work in capturing these helpful observations, especially as you were short of Board members and only a few trained members. I was pleased to note there were no deaths in custody for another reporting year.

Regarding your concerns about the condition of the accommodation huts, as the Board is aware the portable cabins were brought in during the pandemic as alternative accommodation and to support the function of the prison. Following the closure of units Y and Z, additional cabins were brought to site as a temporary measure. The combination of national Covid-19 compartmentalisation policy and delays to the replacement accommodation due to fire safety has meant that the prison roll has been reduced for a significant period and difficult decisions have had to be made about prioritising access to resettlement opportunities, particularly paid employment, due to restrictions on available accommodation.

HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) is mindful that the main project to replace the spaces decommissioned is now over a year late and does not entirely address concerns over the state of existing accommodation. In terms of future initiatives, the existing accommodation will be refurbished using resources available locally and administered by the Gov Facility Services Limited (GFSL) prisoner working party. The intention is to upgrade the huts on a rotational basis and approval has been given for a pilot to be completed as soon as the replacement accommodation is available to enable decant. Concerns about the longevity of the temporary accommodation will in time be resolved by the delivery of the Category D Expansion Project which will see the installation of 60 new places (one houseblock) to offset the majority of the 80 places that have been lost. There are no plans to refurbish the remaining huts J to X outside of the Governor's own budget although an Asset Investment Bid has been submitted to refurbish four to five showering areas (subject to approval and cost). Once Y and Z units have been demolished, the Ministry of Justice Property Directorate will deliver the longer-term replacement. However, the exact timescales have not yet been confirmed; the Governor will keep you informed of progress.

Turning to some positive comments captured in your report, I agree that the reduced number of absconds at HMP Springhill during the reporting year is a good outcome and that levels of violence and self-harm were pleasingly low. I am pleased the Board has seen noticeable improvements to the healthcare provision and the monitoring of equality and diversity issues. I am grateful to you for highlighting other

good examples in particular, the investment that has gone into the library provision and gym. I welcome the opening of Hope Springs Farm Shop and the plans to involve prisoners in business affairs such as marketing.

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. 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 Springhill.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Victoria Atkins". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'V' and a long, sweeping tail on the 'y'.

VICTORIA ATKINS MP

Annex

HMP SPRINGHILL: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT

FOR 1 JANUARY 2021 – 31 DECEMBER 2021

HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Impact on Resettlement

A significant amount of work has been implemented to mitigate some of the impact, such as agreeing that men will reverse cohort before transfer and a further capacity reduction to use some double spaces as singles to enable more Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL) opportunities. Current accommodation arrangements can sustain 70 men being released on ROTL each day which equates to approximately 30% of the population. This is in line with pre-Covid provision.

The Governor's focus on resettlement opportunities has been a key part of recovery with the number in work up to pre-Covid percentages and a better focus on creating opportunities that remain in place after release (such as not reinvigorating relationships with agency employers). The Employment Board is now well-established, and the self-started Workspace job club is now a part of Springhill's regime. More men than ever before have been engaged in education and learning during this year, and lessons have been learned in ways we did not consider before about engaging men in learning.

Regarding help for prisoners at risk of homelessness on release, as the Board are aware, the new Commissioned Rehabilitative Services (CRS) that formed the unified Probation Service went live in June 2021, and HMPPS is overseeing the effective embedding of the new contracts. All transferring probation practitioners were required to complete the necessary training packages for the new CRS, including where prisoners are deemed at risk of homelessness. Ingeus, the CRS Accommodation services provider for HMP Springhill, is required to provide bespoke training for probation staff as necessary; this issue will be looked in to and resolved at the earliest opportunity.

More broadly, the Homeless Prevention Teams operating across England and Wales, continue to strengthen relationships with local authorities and other strategic partners in order to embed and expand housing options for prison leavers. An extra £200 million will be invested each year by 2024/25 to transform our approach to rehabilitation and expanding our transitional accommodation service, initially launched in five probation regions in July 2021, across England and Wales. The service will support those under supervision from probation who are released from prison at risk of homelessness with up to 12-weeks accommodation. The 'Prior Information Notice' for the contract tender, for six of the remaining regions, including South Central, is accessible here <https://www.find-tender.service.gov.uk/Notice/000136-2022>.

Locally, risk assessment and resettlement outcomes issues are raised either through the Senior Probation Officer or Resettlement Contract Management colleagues. Where delays do occur, they explore what decisions can be made safely with the information available to them at that time to enable progression.

X-ray Machines and Body Scanners

HMPPS recognises that this technology is vital to the prevention and disruption of illicit items being brought into establishments. It can detect all manner of contraband held internally, including mobile phones, SIMs, weapons, explosives and drugs, including small amounts. The equipment offers high-resolution images of the torso and lower bowel area which, in regard to the ingress of illicit items into prisons, is commonly the most critical area for inspection. The scanner was developed to meet HMPPS requirements which can only be lawfully used on adult male prisoners. The prisons selected for installation of X-ray machines were adult male closed prisons given the high prevalence of illicit items.

Following the security investment of £100 million announced on 13 August 2019 as part of plans to crackdown on crime behind bars, a risk assessment was conducted to identify those establishments with the highest risk. The open prison estate was not considered for additional investment in X- ray machines due to the perceived low risk of conveyance of articles internally secreted. There are no plans currently to provide X- ray machines to the open estate. However, this doesn't necessarily rule out in the future the procurement of body scanners for the open estate.

Prisoners' Pay

All prisoners employed in work, induction, education, training or offending behaviour programmes receive at least the minimum rate of 'employment' pay of £4 per week, as set out in Prison Service Order (PSO) 4460, Prisoners' Pay. The resource budget for running public sector prisons is delegated directly to prison leads based on the agreed requirements for different types of prisons. Prison Group Directors and Governors are empowered to utilise their budgets to best effect and will make decisions about the re-investment of any emerging underspends or income generation into prisons requiring additional funding. The PSO requires annual reviews at local level as part of the business plan process to ensure it remains compliant with the national policy.

The pay policy has been reviewed locally. An additional 50 pence per week will be added to the weekly wage (this is limited and sourced from other areas of the prison budget). The cost of canteen and phone credit is centrally controlled, and it is not possible for the Governor to offer cheaper items or to allow items to be brought into the prison as spends and prisoner finance are subject to policy requirements. Opportunities are continually being explored to generate income locally to feed into the pay budget and between 20 % and 30% of prisoners are in paid employment that meet national minimum wage requirements.

Food Budget

Governors have the authority to determine how they spend the overall non-pay budget for their prison. An element which makes up the non-pay budget is food which in 2020-21 was calculated on a formula of £2.12 daily per prisoner. Governors ultimately use their discretion to determine how much is specifically allocated from within their budget for food. Prison Rules require that prisoners are provided with three meals a day that are varied and nutritious and that meet the religious, cultural and medical needs of all. HMPPS will continue to work closely with the Office of Health Improvement and Disparities, following Government guidelines on eating healthy meals. The Governor will continue to offer a menu which meets the national requirements.