



Ministry
of Justice

Damian Hinds
Minister of State for Justice

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP Grendon and Spring Hill
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HP18 0TL

13 June 2023

Dear Chair,

HMP SPRING HILL: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 JANUARY – 31 DECEMBER 2022

Thank you for your Board's report for the year ending 31 December 2022. I am very much aware of the amount of effort that goes into producing annual reports so thank you for your helpful observations, especially as you continued to operate with a severely depleted complement of members. I address below the specific point you have raised for my attention.

I appreciate the Board's continued concerns about prisoner accommodation and thank you for drawing this to my attention. Further to last years' response, funding is being sought to refurbish all the huts at HMP Spring Hill and a decision is awaited. Although funding is being sought, it should be noted that demands for maintenance are much greater than the available funding. Therefore, once a bid for a project is received, HM Prisons and Probation Service (HMPPS) has to prioritise works very carefully to make best use of that funding, focusing on risk to life and risk to capacity, decency and sustainability.

Government Facility Services Limited (GFSL) continues to deal with rat infestations as they arise, regrettably this an issue that can only be fully resolved by replacing the drainage systems at the prison which would entail considerable financial investment. The issue with the heating in the gym has now been rectified and steps to prevent this from reoccurring is being considered.

Although accommodation remains an issue and I recognise more needs to be done, it was encouraging to receive your comments that conditions for some men have improved with the delivery of replacement huts. I was further encouraged to note the improvements in the prisons inspectorate's survey results, the celebration of minority cultures and religions, and the good work of the librarian including the creation of a display celebrating black culture. I hope the future location of the library is resolved swiftly.

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 Spring Hill.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Damian Hinds'.A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Damian Hinds'.

Damian Hinds
Minister for Prisons and Probation

HMP SPRING HILL: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 JANUARY 2022 – 31 DECEMBER 2022

HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Release on Temporary Licence

Further to last years' response, HMPPS appreciates the Board's continued concerns and acknowledges the impact probation issues is having on prisoners. The issues presented are caused by resourcing pressures in other parts of HMPPS. As the Board will be aware, this is a nationwide issue and HMPPS is working hard to resolve the resourcing situation. Locally, staff at HMP Spring Hill will continue to chase information requests regularly and escalate nil responses with senior probation leaders where necessary.

Approved Premises

There are currently 105 Approved Premises delivering around 2400 spaces across England and Wales. In recent years HMPPS has undertaken an Approved Premises expansion programme which has delivered an additional 169 spaces, including the first purpose-built site. We are also developing a new digitalised approach to referrals, through a national Central Referral Unit, that will oversee assessment for suitability and eligibility to match individuals to placements whilst also maximising occupancy and use of national Approved Premises capacity. This new approach will enable HMPPS to improve timeliness and allow greater consistency and responsivity, including for resettlement overnight release cases, and will be underpinned by the department's demand analysis. It will be piloted during the summer and is anticipated to be rolled out nationally from the autumn of this year.

Prisoners' Pay

HMPPS acknowledges that inflationary pressures are affecting the cost of prison canteen items. To mitigate against rising prices, every effort is made to work with retailers and suppliers to ensure that prisoners are offered a range of value items as alternative branded products.

Prison Governors have the autonomy to distribute the prison pay budget as they see fit (under *Prisoners' Pay policy*, Prison Service Order 4460 *Prisoners' Pay*) which gives them the autonomy to set rates of pay to encourage participation in the daily prison regime and to incentivise prisoners to undertake work or activities that contribute to their rehabilitation. The Governor at HMP Spring Hill has recently reviewed their implementation of the prisoner pay policy and has made adjustments to some pay scales. The overall prisoner pay budget remains the same.

Prisoners' Property

The Prisoners' Property Policy Framework, implemented during September 2022, has been designed with procedural justice at its core and aims to ensure consistency and fairness and enhance prisoners' satisfaction with processes and outcomes. Given the nature of property, and the movement of prisoners between establishments, the Framework looks to provide greater direction and standardisation on a national basis. It strengthens processes in relation to the main problem areas identified by IMBs and staff including the handling of valuable property, managing cell clearances, compliance with volumetric control and forwarding on excess property following a prisoner's transfer.

The Framework is clear that Governors should ensure management checks are undertaken to have confidence that prisoners' property is being handled correctly and with care, for example that property cards are being completed accurately and that the volume of property held by prisoners is checked regularly and does not become excessive. HMPPS plans to undertake work in due course to establish the impact of the new Framework.