Dear Bob

I am writing to let you know of outline plans that may be of interest to the Committee as it considers its schedule of work over the coming months.

Firstly, you will know that the criminal justice chief inspectors have recently published our joint plans. During 2019, HMCPSI will lead an inspection of evidence-led prosecutions of domestic abuse offences, following HMI Probation’s September 2018 inspection report on the work undertaken by CRCs in domestic abuse cases. I am pleased that together the chief inspectors maintain an interest in this important area of work. HMICFRS will lead an inspection of crimes against older people, and an inspection of the use of new bail provisions. For our part at HMI Probation, we will lead an inspection of Integrated Offender Management, supported by HMICFRS. With no one prescribed model, chief inspectors are keen to see how it is working, post Transforming Rehabilitation.

At HMI Probation, we intend to begin our regular annual consultation on our own plans later this month. Much of our inspection schedule is already set, as we are committed to inspecting all CRCs and all NPS divisions annually. However, we will be consulting on outline proposals for inspecting probation services as they transition to fewer CRCs and more NPS divisions.

Assuming those proposed changes to probation services go ahead, we will be aiming in due course to conduct inspections of the proposed coterminous NPS divisions and CRCs sufficiently closely in time, so that we bring most benefit to the system overall. It will inevitably take a little time to get to that position, but I am confident that our standards and methodologies will stand us in good stead. I appreciate that with Brexit and other uncertainties, the proposed transition to new probation arrangements is not necessarily certain. We are keeping as well informed as we can.

In our consultation we will be seeking views on future thematic inspections, while reminding consultees of how we determine topics. Our criteria include the potential impact of our findings, risks to public protection, significant changes to public policy, and the views of key stakeholders including of course those of the Select Committee. We already have in hand, thematic inspections of sexual offender work, jointly with HMI Prisons (report to be published later this month) and post sentence probation supervision for those adults sentenced to less than twelve months.

With that consultation completed we will then update our corporate plan. As it is, we do not envisage making any changes to our established strategic objectives. I do expect HMI Probation to make a bigger contribution than previously to the evidence base for what constitutes effective probation services. We began publishing a series of research and analysis bulletins last year,
showing what can be gleaned from our ever-growing data set. We intend to continue with the series and also to conduct more research, in collaboration with others.

Finally, we have two further publications planned for the early part of the year that will be of interest to the Committee. The first is an annual report. We last reported in this way in December 2017. Since then we have changed materially the way we inspect and the questions we ask of all cases, but by early spring we will use the evidence base from our new inspections to report on the systemic issues prevailing nationally. Secondly, as chair of the criminal justice joint chief inspectors’ group, I am leading on the preparation of a state of the nation report for criminal justice as a whole. We aim to publish the report in May. The criminal justice chief inspectors will be happy to appear together before the committee in relation to that report, should the committee wish.

I hope that you and other committee members find this brief update helpful. If you require any further information, please do say.

Yours sincerely,

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