



IMB

Birmingham Prison
Winson Green Road
Birmingham
B18 4AS

18th November 2018

Robert Neill MP
Justice Committee
House of Commons London
SW1A 0AA

Dear Chair,

We met briefly at Birmingham Prison during your recent visit and you asked me to forward a letter detailing the current thoughts of the Board.

Following discussion with Board members a summary of our main concerns is set out below.

Daily Routine and Prison Management;

1. The Board fails to understand why Birmingham was not included in the “top 10 prisons program” with all the benefits being offered by the Minister given the various events of the last 2 years and the fact that Birmingham prison is recorded as being the prison causing most concern to HMPPS.
2. It is now high time to look to the future. There has been sufficient focus and reflection internally at Birmingham on lessons learned from the riot investigation, Urgent Notification and now the HMIP report.
3. The primary question is what is going to happen when the six months for the “Step in” are up. Decisions need to be made now about who will be running the prison for the next two or more years. The hybrid model with HMPS and G4S coexisting is unsustainable.
4. The Prison has suffered from instability at senior level - 4 directors~governors in less than 2 years, with a frequent rejigging of staff roles - allowing little room to bed in any improvements or give them time to produce significant results. 4 Residential managers have been in post in the last 12 months.
5. The SMT need to be able to spend time being visible, leading, and mentoring across the prison, with minimal time responding to requests for reports.
6. The current emphasis on a change of culture is very important and crucial to future progress. Now is the time to allow the Governor to establish clear, stable routines and expectations of staff and prisoners - stability, consistency, and confidence.
7. Much of the additional staff support from HMPPS has provided valuable mentoring support to the significant number of inexperienced officers on wings, when will this support be removed ?

8. There needs to be a management focus on improving administrative systems and communications.

Physical Facilities

1. There needs to be clarity for all on the future plans for refurbishment of the Victorian side of the prison. Without being knocked down and a rebuild the Boards view is they can never return to double occupancy.
2. Conversations with Board members by HMPPS officials have referred to various options; from replacing windows, to a full refurbishment ensuring ventilation, heating, toilet and shower facilities, serveries, etc are all fit for purpose, to a demolition and build of a new facility. It is clear there is determination to provide the best option within budget constraints but the Board fear population pressures may cause the Victorian side to be reopened when not ready. It is generally accepted that the new side of the prison opened too early without staff being fully ready, with access for VP prisoners in wings N and P to many facilities not fully thought through, and with subsequent fixes needed to various utility services.
3. We are enthused that HMPPS are clearly looking at all options, however for staff and prisoners a clear indication of intent by HMPPS would be welcomed.

In summary the Board clearly believes that the improvements being made currently will rapidly disappear if the points we make are not addressed. It is clear that current progress has to be sustained, consolidated and built on in the immediate future. For that objective to be met clarity of roles and responsibilities is needed.

Kind regards;

Roger Swindells

Chair
IMB Birmingham Prison