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The Right Honourable
Robert Buckland QC MP
Lord Chancellor & Secretary of
State for Justice

11th

September 2019

Dear Peter,

10,000 EXTRA PRISON PLACES: ANNOUNCEMENT ON 12 AUGUST

Thank you for your letter dated 20 August in relation to the Prime Minister's announcement to invest up to £2.5 billion to create 10,000 additional prison places, and for the challenges you outline in relation to the conditions of the prison estate and the work being done to make improvements. I hope to answer all the points you raised, below:

- The previous ambition, announced by the Right Honourable Michael Gove when he was Secretary of State for Justice, was to create up to 10,000 'new for old' prison places. As part of this, a new 206 place houseblock at HMP Stocken was opened in June this year and we have commenced work to construct a modern, decent, uncrowded prison at Wellingborough providing 1,680 places. We also have planning permission to build a 1,680-place prison at Glen Parva and have recently signed a contract with Lendlease to design the prison. Construction is scheduled to start in Summer 2020. This totals to 3,566 places to have been achieved as part of the Prison Reform White Paper. This new investment of up to £2.5 billion to create 10,000 places is in addition to the 3,566 places.
- Following changes to the planned scope and timetable for building new prisons, the Ministry has spent around £230m on increasing prison capacity over the last few years. This includes the early stages of projects to build the new prison at Wellingborough and the start of work at Glen Parva, completing HMP Berwyn which opened in 2017, and completing the new houseblock at HMP Stocken which opened in June this year. Significant further spend is expected in future years to complete the first two prisons at Wellingborough and Glen Parva. This is in addition to the new £2.5 billion funding announced by the Prime Minister.

In both 2017/18 and 2018/19, the Ministry of Justice, with HM Treasury agreement, made choices to live within its overall funding envelope by redirecting funding from its in-year capital budget towards day-to-day spending, to manage wider pressures on the justice system.

- We remain committed to reducing crowding across the estate. In the year to March 2019, the proportion of prisoners held in crowded accommodation was 22.5%, down from 24.2% the previous year and levels of around 25% experienced since 2004.

All new accommodation being planned, including the new prisons at Wellingborough and Glen Parva, will be uncrowded. The Prime Minister's investment and pledge to create 10,000 additional

prison places will have a positive impact on lowering the proportion of crowding within the prison estate by providing accommodation that is safe, decent and uncrowded. However, the extent to which the proportion of prisoners held in crowded accommodation will reduce will be dependent on levels of demand in the system.

- We completed the sale of the former HMP & YOI Holloway in March and we plan to place the former HMYOI Reading on the open market later this month. Following the closure of HMP Camp Hill we have been in discussion with the local MP and the local authority to explore options for its disposal and future use. Our ambition remains to close inefficient prisons that are not fit for purpose. Any further closures will be announced in due course.
- Following the Chancellor's 2019 Spending Review announcement, we are also assessing our maintenance programme for next year to ensure we are focussed on the highest maintenance and renewal priorities within the resource envelope available.
- The Prime Minister's recent announcement set out the overall capital investment of up to £2.5 billion which the MoJ will receive for this programme. The Spending Review also confirmed that the MoJ will receive capital funding of £620m for 2020/21 – and a real terms resource funding increase of 5%. This will enable us to make a start on delivering the 10,000 further places and wider improvements to the justice system.
- In relation to provision for women offenders, I agree that more needs to be done to support women in criminal justice. The Female Offender Strategy announced £5m investment in community provision for women in 2018-2020 to provide a wide range of front line services that provide holistic and specialist support for vulnerable women. The funding is helping to sustain and enhance existing services as well as to fill gaps in provision, including new specialist services and equipment, and the acquisition of buildings for new women's centres. We are committed to ensuring there is sufficient funding for female offenders. The publication of the strategy was the start of a new and significant programme of work to deliver better outcomes for female offenders that will take some years to deliver. We will continue to look at the scope to increase the sustainability of the sector as we take the delivery of the strategy forward into its second year and beyond.

Again, thank you for your letter and thank you for sending over your very comprehensive list of policy undertakings. I look forward to working with you on issues relating to our prisons in the future.

*Yours ever,
Robert*

RT HON ROBERT BUCKLAND QC MP