
STATES OF JERSEY



PRISON BOARD OF VISITORS: ANNUAL REPORT 2012

Presented to the States on 28th March 2013
by the Minister for Home Affairs

STATES GREFFE

REPORT

In accordance with Article 6 of the Prison (Jersey) Law 1957, the following Jurats were appointed by the Superior Number of the Royal Court on 6th December 2011 to constitute the Prison Board of Visitors for 2012 –

Jurat J.C. Tibbo (Chairman)
Jurat J. Le Breton (Vice-Chairman)
Jurat Mrs. J.M. Clapham (Lieutenant Bailiff)
Jurat R.J. Kerley
Jurat Mrs. S. Marett-Crosby
Jurat Mrs. S. Milner
Jurat A.J. Olsen.

Jurat Tibbo retired in January 2012 after 15 years' service on the Board. He was replaced on the Board by Jurat P. Morgan, and Jurat R. Kerley replaced him as Chairman.

Jurat Le Breton retired in August 2012 after 13 years' service on the Board. He was replaced on the Board by Jurat M. Liston, and Jurat Mrs. Marett-Crosby replaced him as Vice-Chairman. The Board would like to express its sincerest thanks to Jurats Tibbo and Le Breton for their many years of dedicated service to the work of the Board.

Role of the Board of Visitors

The Board of Visitors endeavours to provide a sensitive and caring approach to the problems and concerns of the prisoners. This it does by providing an independent perspective on the conditions in and the work of the Prison. By its regular monthly visits the Board is able to keep abreast of the day-to-day workings of the Prison, and in particular the welfare and treatment of the prisoners.

All prisoners are made aware of the Board of Visitors; that the Board visits the Prison once a month and that a Board member makes a further unscheduled visit between the Board's monthly meetings. Each Wing in the Prison has a box into which prisoners can put their requests to see the Board or the visiting member. Whereas some requests are beyond the remit of the Board, it will always listen to them, where necessary look into the prisoner's complaint and, if possible, assist in resolving the problem.

Requests to see the Board

During the year there were 31 applications to see the Board at its monthly meetings, and a further 45 requests made when members of the Board visited individually. Requests for assistance covered a variety of subjects ranging from problems in locating personal possessions, legal concerns and family matters, as well as health and medical problems.

A quorum for a meeting of the Board is 3, and on average 4 members attend each monthly meeting. All monthly meetings of the Board and its meetings with prisoners are minuted. A note is also kept of the subsequent action taken.

Liaison with Home Affairs

The Board held regular meetings throughout the year with the Minister of Home Affairs. Four such meetings took place during 2012. They were attended by the Minister, the Assistant Minister and the Chief Officer, as well as the Prison Governor. These Meetings continue to be a useful forum for the exchange of views on a variety of matters relating to the Prison. The main topics for discussions during the past year have been remand times, prisoners with mental health issues, the introduction of unrestricted transfers and repatriation of prisoners to serve their sentence in their home country.

On 9th November the Board met by invitation with the Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel. The subjects discussed were remand times, prisoners with mental health issues and the accommodation of juvenile and young offenders at La Moye. The Meeting was useful and constructive and the Board was pleased to have the opportunity to express its concerns to the Panel.

Operational matters

The Prison population remained low throughout the year, fluctuating between 150 and 160. The Board has been encouraged by this pleasing trend, and is aware that the Prison population could fall further when the unrestricted transfer and the repatriation of sentenced prisoners schemes come into force in 2013. The Board has noted that there are likely to be staffing implications related to the implementation of these schemes.

It is encouraging to see that most prisoners take full advantage of the many facilities and educational programmes available to them. The sports hall and astro-turf football pitch are well used, as are the library and the art room.

The Board pays regular visits to the kitchens and is always impressed by the quality and variety of food provided for the prisoners. The Board would like to compliment Mr. Pattison-Sowden and his staff, as well as those prisoners who work in the kitchens, on the standard of cleanliness and the enthusiasm that goes into ensuring all inmates get a healthy daily diet. The kitchens are also a popular place for work, and a number of training courses are run to enable prisoners to work towards achieving qualifications in catering.

Staff

In March, members of the Board attended a 'Passing Out Parade' held for 14 new recruits who had successfully completed an intensive period of training to qualify as Prison Officers. The quality of the recruits was very high, as was their performance on the training course. It was an impressive parade that was well attended. These new Prison Officers have made a valuable contribution to staffing efficiencies. A similar recruitment exercise is planned for 2013.

In June, 63 members of staff were presented with the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal. The Board was delighted that the excellent service provided by staff had been recognised. Further recognition of staff efficiency was recognised in October when the Prison won the award for 'The Most Successful Change Management Programme' in a competition organised by CIPD.

Property

During the year the Board has closely followed the building of the new Visitors' Centre and the problems that have led to the delay in its completion. This building will provide a modern facility for Prison visits, as well as much-needed facilities for staff.

The Board has also followed the redevelopment of the horticultural compound with particular interest. The Board is concerned that the size of the compound is continually being reduced to provide room for other development projects. The compound provides a popular and valuable work opportunity for prisoners, as well as the chance to gain useful qualifications in horticulture. It has also provided fresh vegetables for the Prison kitchens. The Board was impressed by the new greenhouse and the classroom block and hopes that the compound will again be able to provide prisoners with the opportunities it did in the past. The Board also hopes that there will be no further reduction to the size of the compound.

Art and Crafts

Now a regular feature in the calendar of the Harbour Gallery, St. Aubin, the 'Inside Out Exhibition' of prisoners' art was again held in March. The Exhibition was opened by Lady McColl and was very well attended by families and the public. The quality of the artwork was again of a high standard, which reflects the success of the Art Department at La Moye. This continues to provide a popular and constructive way for prisoners to spend their time and to express their feelings and frustrations.

Remand times

The length of time that some prisoners are held on remand continues to be of concern to the Board. A review of remand times is presented to the Board at each of its monthly meetings. Through these reviews, the Board is able to monitor the build-up of remand times and to satisfy itself that any delay is unavoidable.

The Board regularly discusses its concerns at the regular meetings held with the Minister for Home Affairs. Although remand times are not his responsibility, the Minister has agreed to pass on the Board's concerns to the Justice Board.

Juvenile and Young Offenders

The Board has been encouraged by the interest shown in this matter by both the Minister for Home Affairs and the Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel, with whom the Board met in November. The Board was pleased to have the opportunity to discuss its concerns with the Panel.

The Board accepts that it does not make economic sense to have a dedicated unit for juvenile and young offenders, as there are times when there are few, if any, such offenders in custody. The Board is of the view that although the existing situation is far from ideal, it may be the only option in these circumstances. The Board pays regular visits to the Juvenile and Young Offenders Wing, and is of the opinion that given this situation, these young people are receiving the best attention possible and are well supported by the staff at La Moye.

Prisoners with mental health problems

The Board is concerned that there are prisoners suffering from what appears to the Board to be mental health problems. Where the problem has been identified and recognised, the prisoners are referred to suitable accommodation either on the mainland or locally. It is the occasional case where reports prepared by professionals do not identify any treatable illness that causes the Board most concern. In such cases, prisoners are held at La Moye where they are a drain on resources and can be a potential source of harm to both staff and inmates. In the Board's view, La Moye is not the appropriate place for these individuals to be held. From the Board's observations, when meeting with these prisoners, their anxieties and worries appear to be aggravated by being held in a prison environment.

This matter is discussed at the regular meetings with the Minister for Home Affairs, and the Board was again pleased to have had the opportunity to discuss this with the Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel. In addition, the Minister for Health and Social Services has agreed to meet the Board in 2013 to discuss this matter.

Unrestricted transfers and repatriation of prisoners

The Board has followed with interest the progress of the implementation of these 2 separate but related schemes. Both have been of considerable interest to many prisoners, a number of whom have sought the assistance of the Board in clarifying the way in which they could take advantage of the schemes. The Prison authorities have done a good job of keeping prisoners advised of the progress made towards bringing these schemes into force, which was finally achieved at the end of 2012. Although the repatriation scheme came into force at the end of 2012, there was a delay while the Convention on The Repatriation of Sentenced Prisoners was extended to Jersey. The repatriation programme is expected to commence in June 2013 and prisoners are now able to put themselves forward for either transfer or repatriation, whichever is appropriate for them.

Concluding remarks

The Board would like to thank the Prison Governor and his staff for their assistance and co-operation during the year. Their professionalism and dedicated commitment has developed an excellent working relationship between staff and prisoners. This has created a positive atmosphere within the Prison to the advantage of all concerned. The Board hopes that this atmosphere will be further enhanced by the new facilities coming on-stream in 2013. The Board was particularly pleased to note that the Governor has extended his contract for a further 2 years.

The Board has been encouraged by the way that the educational and rehabilitation programmes, drug and alcohol counselling and the work schemes are all being well used by prisoners. However, the Board is concerned that more could be done to assist prisoners upon release and to help them reintegrate back into the community. This is an area of interest that the Board will look into during the coming year.

Jurat R.J. Kerley
Chairman, Prison Board of Visitors
March 2013