

Probation and After-Care Service

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Deputy Catherine Curtis
Scrutiny Office
States Greffe
Morier House
St Helier
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31 October 2023

Dear Deputy Curtis

Government Plan Review 2024-2027

Thank you for your letter of 20th October in relation to the two Probation Service projects included in the Proposed Government Plan. I hope the following comments will be informative for the Scrutiny Panel:

The Probation/Prison Offender case management system

This project is intended to replace the existing probation case management system following a decision by the current supplier, Unilink, to withdraw from the ongoing contract at the end of 2024 due to other commitments. The Guernsey Probation and Prison services are part of the pan island consortium that are leading on this project.

The intention is to develop a case management system that, inter alia, records the records of clients within the criminal justice and family court arena. This type of data is fundamental to safeguarding, public protection and the efficient management and administration of our work. Poor or inaccurate data is more likely to lead to mistakes, potential serious consequences and an attendant loss of confidence in the legal systems.

This has been an active project and the consortium is currently analysing three bids from suppliers. It is hoped to appoint the preferred supplier within the next two weeks. The States of Jersey prison is intending to use the new system from 2025 after their inspection. At present the project is on course.

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Independent (HMIP) inspection

This project involves hosting a team of inspectors from His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation. The inspection is due for June 2024. The Probation Board and Service is of the opinion that this level of independent scrutiny will provide transparency, a useful critique of the current arrangements and recommendations for developing practice. It is important that the work of the Probation Service remains of the highest possible standard and it is felt that this will be facilitated by the inspection.

A further observation

I think it might be prudent to alert the Panel to the possibility of a small staffing growth bid next year to meet staff increment payments that are not reflected in the base budget. Whilst every effort will be made to find the monies from the existing budget, there is a relatively insignificant proportion of non-staffing costs on which to draw.

The issue arises from a high number of staff who are not yet at top of grade and who meet the criteria for annual increment increases. This is partly due to the investment in staff training which has resulted in two local trainees being appointed and who, as with other colleagues, are working their way through a planned career progression. At the time of writing, the Service employs no agency staff so can offer a continuity of service to clients which is valued. It also reduces agency costs which can be extremely high. It should also be recognised that the Service has, through efficiencies, achieved underspends over the past four years. Nevertheless, I thought it important to highlight a potential budgetary pressure from 2025 onwards.

Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to inform the Panel about the Service's projects and I would be very happy to answer any supplementary questions.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'M Cutland', written in a cursive style.

Mike Cutland
Chief Probation Officer