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THE PRISON SERVICE PAY REVIEW BODY (PSPRB) REMIT 2020/21

I am writing to you to formally commence the 2020/21 pay round.

The Government's pay policy has three central principles which must be considered when determining final pay awards. These are:

- Current and future affordability to the taxpayer;
- Targeting awards to ensure we can recruit and retain the best public servants;
- Accompanying workforce reform and improvements in productivity, which can then be reinvested in higher pay.

As you will be aware, my Department must balance the need to ensure fair pay for prison staff and managers with the need to ensure value for money for taxpayers and meet increasing demands on the justice system. Amongst other areas, the Ministry of Justice is investing to improve safety and security across the prison estate and in the rehabilitation of offenders - all of which contributes to a more effective and efficient prison system and better working conditions for staff.

For those reasons, I expect affordability to be a critical part of your consideration when determining final awards. Officials will set out the Department's affordability position and planned investments that impact employee conditions in our written evidence. As with last year's report, I request in your final report you set out what steps have been taken to ensure that affordability has been given due consideration when reaching your recommendations and in doing so consider the totality of the pay bill – including both progression pay and revalorisation.

In addition, I would like the Pay Review Body to ensure that its deliberations and recommendations have due regard to the HMPPS policy commitment to prioritise investment in the Fair and Sustainable (F&S) pay and grading structure and the principle of F&S being a market facing approach to pay. The intent of closing the gap between F&S and the 'closed grade' terms and conditions was established at the introduction of F&S as part of a long-term plan. Whilst during the period of pay restraint there were limited options to make targeted investments to support this, recent years' pay flexibilities present an opportunity for HMPPS to make progress in this area. I would expect the pay comparability research you have commissioned alongside the evidence from government and others to inform any recommendations.

With a more flexible policy it is of even greater importance that recommendations on annual pay awards are based on independent advice and underpinned by robust evidence, submitted by departments, that considers the wider economic circumstances, private sector comparators, and overall remuneration of public sector workers. The role of the Pay Review Bodies is therefore more important than ever.

The Government is committed to providing you with evidence on a timely basis, to facilitate the PSPRB process that enables staff in your remit group to be paid their awards as early as possible. We hope that through a concerted effort during this pay round and the next we will be able to return to implementing pay settlements in April by the 21/22 round – with this year's implementation date being as early as possible.

Whilst we are starting the pay round now, we do not anticipate providing the Government evidence until November – to ensure there is sufficient time to provide a quality return, and so that the pay comparability research you have commissioned can be finalised and published in advance. On this basis can I request that you provide your recommendations no later than the week commencing 6 April 2020.

Thank you for your continued hard work in this important area and I look forward to receiving your report.

I am copying this letter to Jo Farrar in HMPPS, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury and to representatives of the POA, Prison Governors Association (PGA) and Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS).

LUCY FRAZER QC MP