



Ministry  
of Justice

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

**Tim Flesher**  
PRISON SERVICE PAY REVIEW BODY  
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9<sup>th</sup> December 2020

Dear Tim,

**UPDATE TO GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE PRISON SERVICE PAY REVIEW BODY  
RECOMMENDATIONS 20/21**

Thank you for your letter of 1 December regarding the outstanding response to the PSPRB 20/21 report. I acknowledge that due to the unprecedented circumstances within which we find ourselves, reaching a conclusion on this matter has taken longer than initially anticipated.

I value your integrity and professionalism immensely and wish to share this update with you on a strictly embargoed basis, ahead of a Written Ministerial Statement which will be made later today.

As you know, in July of this year, I was pleased to announce that the government was accepting six out of the seven recommendations made in this year's PSPRB report. At this time, I committed to considering recommendation 3 from the PSPRB 2020/21 report in more detail due to the affordability challenge it presented, and because the recommended uplift in pay was out of step with the awards being given to other public sector workforces.

Since the initial announcement, the Ministry of Justice, together with HM Treasury, has considered further the exceptional costs associated with implementing this recommendation, the impact on the overall pay structure, and the changing labour market conditions due to the exceptional economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Department has also considered if any workforce reforms could be delivered alongside the recommendation which would create efficiencies and savings, and therefore deliver value for money by offsetting some of the cost of the recommendation. These reforms would have then been discussed with recognised trade unions. However, unfortunately, sufficient savings cannot be achieved, and therefore the recommendation remains unaffordable. As such, discussions with trade unions could not be commenced.

Separately, changes in the labour market as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the unpredictable changing state of the economy means that the context in which the PSPRB made its recommendations has changed.

It has therefore been decided not to accept recommendation 3. I can assure you that this decision was not taken lightly, and I recognise that it will be disappointing for the staff affected. I also recognise the

inevitable dissatisfaction from yourself as Chair, and your fellow members of the PSPRB. This year has truly been an exceptional one, and difficult decisions have had to be made in these unprecedented times. However, I want to reiterate my thanks to the continued hard work of the Review Body, and your invaluable contribution to prison service pay.

I am committed to working with the PSPRB, within the constraints of the Chancellor's announcement on public sector pay for the next financial year, and the Minister of State for Prisons will be writing to you very shortly to formally initiate the process.

Yours ever,  
Robert

**RT HON ROBERT BUCKLAND QC MP**