Ministry of Justice

Victoria Atkins MP
Minister of State for Justice and
Minister for Afghan resettlement

Tim Flesher
Prison Service Pay Review Body
8TH Floor
Fleetbank House
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2 December 2021

Dear Tim,

THE PRISON SERVICE PAY REVIEW BODY (PSPRB) REMIT 2022/23

I would firstly like to reiterate my thanks to the Prison Service Pay Review Body (PSPRB) for their continued hard work and dedication to Prison Service pay. As you know, the Government is committed to working with the PSPRB, and while the circumstances of recent years have meant that not all recommendations have been accepted by Government, we value the independence and expertise of the body immensely.

I am now writing to formally commence the 2022/23 pay round, and to set to set out how the Government proposes to work with the PSPRB throughout this pay round.

As you will be aware, the Government must balance the need to ensure fair pay for public sector workers with protecting funding for frontline services and ensuring affordability for taxpayers. We must ensure that the affordability of a pay award is taken into consideration to ensure that the Prison Service are able to ensure we can recruit and retain the best public servants.

As a department, the Ministry of Justice is also investing to improve safety and security across the prison estate and in the rehabilitation of offenders – all of which contributes to better outcomes 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 per previous years, I request in your final report that 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.

We also ask that the Pay Review Body is mindful of the current fluctuating and uncertain labour market, and the implications this will have for recruitment and retention trends, and similarly for trends in wider prison workforce issues.

I recently wrote to you regarding the importance of an affordable effective future pay strategy and look forward to working with you through this process to achieve that.

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As usual, we would welcome the opportunity to discuss further at an oral evidence session. I ask that you submit your report by May 2022, subject to further discussion with the secretariat in the Office for Manpower Economics (OME) to determine the most appropriate timetable.

I acknowledge that there were significant delays to the conclusion of the previous year's pay round, and I recognise the frustration that will have caused to both the Review Body members and to staff. Inevitably, delays in recent years will have a knock-on impact to the timing of this year's pay round. However, I want to assure you that I will do all I can to improve timeliness of this and future year's pay round process. Officials will work closely with OME to ensure that there is a clear and joint understanding of the timetable and that you are kept informed of any delays should they occur.

Thank you, again, for your continued hard work and contribution to prison service pay. I look forward to working with you going forward.

Yours ever,

VICTORIA ATKINS MP