



Accounting Officer Memorandum

Small Secure Houseblocks Project – Outline Business Case (OBC)

It is normal practice for accounting officers to scrutinise significant policy proposals or plans to start or vary major projects, and then assess whether they measure up to the standards set out in Managing Public Money. From April 2017, the government has committed to provide a summary of the key points from these assessments, making them available to Parliament when an accounting officer has agreed an assessment of projects within the Government's Major Projects Portfolio.

Background and context

The Small Secure Houseblocks Project (SSHP) will provide c.1,200 of the places within the 20k programme.

This OBC is seeking approval to:

- Deliver 1,200 places in a final repeatable design for a single cell, 60-bed small, permanent, secure houseblock that can be deployed at short notice across the Cat C (resettlement) prison estate.

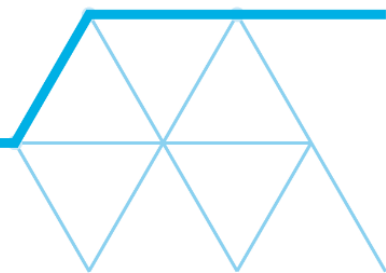
Assessment against the accounting officer standards

Regularity

The Small Secure Houseblocks OBC is assessed as regular. The Prison Act 1952 includes that the Secretary of State may, with the approval of the Treasury alter, enlarge, or rebuild any prison and build new prisons. I therefore consider that the department has the required spending powers to progress the project to its next decision point at Full Business Case (FBC) stage. The OBC is fully compliant with other relevant legislation and the project has obtained legal input throughout its development.

Propriety

The Small Secure Houseblocks OBC is assessed as proper. The OBC has passed the internal project and departmental governance. I am satisfied that all relevant governance and assurance procedures are in place and expected to be complete ahead of submission to HM Treasury and Cabinet Office for final assent. The OBC is fully compliant with the relevant legislation. The project is affordable within SR21 budgets, and has been selected based on its cost, feasibility, strategic fit and overall value for money.



Value for Money

The Small Secure Houseblocks OBC is assessed as value for money. There is national and regional demand for the places proposed under this project. Progressing Small Secure Houseblocks will provide capacity for Category C standard places. This will support the department in upholding the sentences of courts and the law across England and Wales. This project is therefore of significant value in terms of increasing capacity within the prison estate.

Feasibility

The Small Secure Houseblocks OBC is assessed as feasible. The project management arrangements, internal governance and assurance processes are already in place and embedded to control, oversee and manage the Small Secure Houseblocks builds.

Conclusion

This business case was first considered by Dr Jo Farrar, Accounting Officer, HM Prisons and Probation Service, in June 2022.

Dr Jo Farrar considered this Small Secure Houseblocks Project OBC against the four Accounting Officer standards of regularity, propriety, value for money, and feasibility at the time the OBC was considered and was satisfied that these responsibilities are met.

I have prepared and approved this summary to set out the key points which informed the decision taken by the accounting officer at the time. If any of these factors change materially during the lifetime of this project, I undertake to prepare a revised summary, setting out my assessment of them.

This summary will be published on the government's website (GOV.UK). Copies will be deposited in the Library of the House of Commons, and sent to the Comptroller and Auditor General and Treasury Officer of Accounts.

A copy has also been provided to the principal accounting officer for the Ministry of Justice, who has seen my assessment and endorsed my decision on the basis of my assurance that my, and my, predecessor's accounting officer responsibilities are met.



Amy Rees

HMPPS Chief Executive and Accounting Officer