



Ministry  
of Justice

# Accounting Officer Memorandum

## Prisoner Education Service (PES) – 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 make a summary of the key points from these assessments available to Parliament when an accounting officer has agreed an assessment of projects within the Government's Major Projects Portfolio.

### Background and context

Prisoner Education Service (Re-competition)

Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) – approved by accounting officer in April 2022

Outline Business Case (OBC) – approved by accounting officer in March 2023

#### *Project Outline*

The delivery of education in prison is a statutory requirement.

The current Prison Education Framework contracts expire on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025. This accounting officer assessment concerns the re-competition for a new service to run from 01/04/2025 (2025/26) for 4 years contract and a maximum of 3 years extension to 31/03/32 (2031/32).

This assessment has been made at Programme Outline Business Case stage.

### Assessment against the accounting officer standards

#### Regularity

The provision of education in prisons is a statutory duty. Section 86 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 provides that the Secretary of State must secure the provision of such education and training facilities as he considers appropriate for education and training suitable to the requirements of prisoners.



Under the Prison Rules 1999, educational classes must be arranged at every prison, and every prisoner able to benefit from the education facilities, must be encouraged to do so.

### **Propriety**

The proposal for the re-competition and its implementation aligns with managing public money standards and obligations. The re-competition will be conducted fairly, and all suppliers will be treated equally and will be administered to a standard that meets public expectations. The risks associated with the re-competition are known, manageable and acceptable. The proposals are sustainable, and sufficient public resources are available to support the re-competition and the new contract.

### **Value for Money**

The Prison Education Service Programme is aiming to balance its delivery requirements whilst at the same time offering good value for money to the taxpayer and an affordable solution to HMPPS principal budget holder for the programme. Value for money continues to be appropriately addressed throughout the Business Case through the design and implementation of performance metrics and lessons learnt from managing the existing contract. Value for money will be further assessed and confirmed in the Full Business Case at the end of the procurement exercise.

### **Feasibility**

A dedicated Programme team led by a Programme Manager has been established to oversee the day to day management of the programme and reports progress and escalates issues regularly to the Programme Board. The SRO and the Programme Board have the necessary skills and capability to manage the programme. The programme's budget is managed through appropriate MoJ governance.

Proceeding to live procurement will be subject to the approval of HM Treasury and the Cabinet Office.

### **Conclusion**

My conclusion is that the PES Programme is ready to proceed to seek Cabinet Office and HM Treasury external approval of the Programme OBC, which is required to commence the live procurement process.

As the accounting officer for HMPPS I considered this assessment of the PES Programme and approved it on 24 March 2023.

I have prepared this summary to set out the key points which informed my decision. If any of these factors change materially during the remaining lifetime of this programme, I will ensure a revised summary is prepared, setting out my assessment of them.

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This summary will be published on 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 Accounting Officer responsibilities are met.

A. Rees.

Amy Rees

HMPPS Chief Executive and Accounting Officer