



Accounting Officer Memorandum

Accelerated Houseblocks Delivery Programme – Programme Business Case – Iteration 3 (PBC3)

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

The Accelerated Houseblocks Delivery Programme was initiated to ensure HMPPS provide additional, modern prison places. This PBC3 is seeking approval to:

- Deliver 1,850 places across five sites through houseblock expansions along with the associated uplift in ancillaries (HMP Hindley, HMP Highpoint, HMP Wayland, HMP Elmley, and HMP Bullingdon).

Assessment against the accounting officer standard

Regularity

The Accelerated Houseblock Delivery PBC3 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. It is therefore considered that the department has the required spending powers to enter into the contract amendments required to build and then operate the additional houseblocks. The PBC3 is fully compliant with other relevant legislation and the project has obtained legal input throughout its development.

Propriety

The Accelerated Houseblock Delivery PBC3 is assessed as proper. The PBC3 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 PBC3 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 Accelerated Houseblock Delivery PBC3 is assessed as value for money. There is national and regional demand for the places proposed under this project. Progressing this programme will provide 1,850 additional places across five sites. 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 helping to address the need to increase capacity within the prison estate.

Feasibility

The Accelerated Houseblock Delivery PBC3 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 Accelerated Houseblocks builds.

Conclusion

I have considered this assessment of the Accelerated Houseblock Delivery PBC3 against the four accounting officer standards of regularity, propriety, value for money, and feasibility. I am satisfied that these responsibilities are met.

As the accounting officer for His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service. I considered this assessment of the Accelerated Houseblock Delivery Programme and approved it on 22 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 lifetime of this programme, 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 accounting officer responsibilities are met.



Amy Rees

HMPPS Chief Executive and Accounting Officer

