

[2024] PBPH 10

Application for a Public Hearing in the case of Mr Colin Pitchfork

Preliminary Matters: Since his conviction in 1988, Mr Colin Pitchfork has changed his name by deed poll a number of times. Mr Pitchfork's motivation for these name changes appears to be a desire to protect his identity given the public reaction to his offences and his potential release. From the representations received in this case, it appears that it may be beneficial to the agencies tasked with managing Mr Pitchfork, both inside and outside the prison estate, for knowledge of Mr Pitchfork's current name not to become widespread. In this decision I will therefore use the name, Mr Pitchfork. This is the name that will also be used at Mr Pitchfork's oral hearing.

Outcome: The application for a public hearing has been granted.

Background Information

1. The Parole Board is an independent body which acts as a court when deciding whether prisoners in England and Wales are safe to be released, or not, and makes recommendations to the Secretary of State on a prisoner's suitability for open conditions if the release test has not been met. Prisoners are referred to the Parole Board only after they have served the minimum period for punishment set by the sentencing judge ('the tariff'). When considering a case, the Parole Board's role is to consider whether a prisoner's risk can be safely managed in the community. This is the test set out in the relevant legislation. The Parole Board will not direct release of a prisoner unless it is satisfied that their risk can be managed. Public protection is always the Parole Board's primary concern.
2. If the Parole Board decides that a prisoner's risk cannot be safely managed in the community, the Secretary of State will automatically refer the prisoner back to the Parole Board for another consideration of their risk in due course.

3. Parole Board hearings are usually held in private, however, where it is in the interests of justice, the Chair of the Parole Board can direct that a hearing be held in public. The Parole Board has Guidance on the Criteria for Public Hearings for the Chair to consider when making a decision ([Applying for a Parole review to be public - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/parole-board-guidance-on-the-criteria-for-public-hearings)).
4. The definition in the Victims' Code of a victim is '*a person who has suffered harm, including physical, mental or emotional harm or economic loss which was directly caused by a criminal offence; a close relative (or a nominated family spokesperson) of a person whose death was directly caused by a criminal offence*'. A victim may also be someone who has opted into the Victim Contact Service which is run by the Probation Service. A victim, as well as the parties and members of the public, may ask for a public hearing. Before deciding whether the application meets the interest of justice test, the Chair asks for representations from the parties to the case – namely the Secretary of State and the prisoner, usually through their legal representative. The Chair will also ask the Secretary of State to find out the views of any victims involved with the case. The Secretary of State will usually seek the views of victims who are signed up to the Victim Contact Service. In some circumstances the Secretary of State may choose to seek the views of victims who have not opted into Victim Contact Service or are not eligible for the service for technical reasons. This is a matter for the Secretary of State. The Parole Board does not generally have direct contact with victims.
5. A test in the South-West of England is currently being conducted by the Ministry of Justice on victims automatically having the right to attend private hearings. The expectation is that this will be rolled out across England and Wales during 2024. Victims attending a private hearing have to agree to maintain the privacy of that hearing. Different rules apply to public hearings.
6. Each year the Parole Board is asked by the Ministry of Justice to review the risk of approximately 900 prisoners with a conviction for murder and approximately 900 prisoners with a conviction for rape. Each prisoner referred to the Parole Board has caused immense pain to the victims or their family and loved ones. The Parole Board tries as best it can to take this into account, but it must decide any referral according to the test set out in law which is focussed on risk.

Background to the case

7. On 22 January 1988, upon his guilty pleas, Mr Pitchfork received a mandatory life sentence for the murder of two young women. He also received concurrent determinate custodial sentences for two counts of rape, two counts of indecent

assault and one count of perverting the course of justice. The offences were committed between 1979 and 1987 (these are referred to together as the index offences).

8. The Home Secretary originally set the minimum tariff to be served for punishment at 30 years. In 2009, this was reduced to 28 years by the Court of Appeal as a result of what they described as Mr Pitchfork's 'exceptional progress' in custody.
9. Mr Pitchfork became eligible for consideration for release or potential transfer to open conditions in September 2015. Mr Pitchfork moved to open conditions in August 2016 and resided in such conditions for over five years.
10. Mr Pitchfork was then twice refused parole. However, in May 2021 a panel of the Parole Board determined that Mr Pitchfork met the statutory test for release. The panel directed an extensive set of licence conditions including GPS tracking, polygraph testing and a direction that he reside at an approved premise.
11. In June 2021, the Secretary of State applied for reconsideration of the release decision. The application was not successful.
12. Mr Pitchfork was released on 1 September 2021 and then recalled to custody on 19 November 2021 for breaching his licence conditions.
13. Following Mr Pitchfork's recall, the Secretary of State referred the case back to the Parole Board in December 2021 to consider whether or not Mr Pitchfork was suitable for release and, if not, whether he was ready to be moved to open prison conditions.
14. Mr Pitchfork's consideration by the Parole Board was delayed due to an investigation into other historic matters.
15. On 12 December 2022, an application was made for Mr Pitchfork's oral hearing to be held in public.
16. On 2 March 2023, the application for a public hearing was not granted, however, Mr Pitchfork's victims were given permission to observe the private hearing.
17. On 19 and 20 April and 15 May 2023, an oral hearing was held – Mr Pitchfork's fourth review by the Parole Board. The panel determined that the decision to recall Mr Pitchfork to custody was flawed. The panel then considered whether Mr Pitchfork met the statutory test for release. At the hearing there were differing views from the professional witnesses. The panel determined that Mr Pitchfork did meet the statutory release test and directed Mr Pitchfork's release subject to licence conditions.

18. In June 2023, the Secretary of State applied for reconsideration of the release decision.
19. A judicial member of the Parole Board considered the reconsideration application and determined '*that the panel had not placed sufficient weight on a number of factors in the evidence, which taken together mean that the decision was irrational*'. 'Irrational' has a specific meaning in law. It means that the decision was outside the range of decisions that were reasonably available to the panel on the evidence heard. The judicial member directed that the case be reheard.
20. On 2 and 3 October and 6 November 2023 an oral hearing was held. The panel determined that Mr Pitchfork did not meet the statutory test for release. The panel did not make a recommendation that Mr Pitchfork be transferred to open conditions. At the hearing there were differing views on release from the professional witnesses.
21. In December 2023, Mr Pitchfork applied for reconsideration of the decision that he did not meet the statutory release test.
22. In February 2024, a judicial member of the Parole Board determined that the panel's decision was irrational as it had failed to take into account a material consideration in reaching its decision in the form of one of the witnesses' recommendation for release. The panel in doing so had also made an error of law which is a further and alternative ground for ordering reconsideration of the panel's decision. The judicial member directed that there should be a re-hearing by a new panel.
23. The oral hearing is provisionally listed to start on 8 July 2024.
24. Mr Pitchfork remains in closed conditions in custody.
25. Mr Pitchfork is now 64 years old.

Details of the Application and Representations

26. On 15 February 2024, given the developments set out in the case as summarised above, I decided that it was appropriate for me to consider whether the balance of arguments in favour, or not, of a public hearing may have shifted since my decision not to grant a public hearing in March 2023. I therefore exercised my powers under Rule 15(3) to initiate the process of determining whether the oral hearing should be in public or not.

27. On 6 March 2024, the Parole Board received representations supporting Mr Pitchfork's oral hearing being held in public.
28. In summary the reasons were as follows:
- a. The lack of confidence in the management of the case given the number of procedural irregularities that have presented Mr Pitchfork with opportunities to challenge the decision. Were the matter not so serious, it would be at risk of being farcical.
 - b. The recurrent issues of parole causes additional distress to the families of his victims given the horrendous crimes.
 - c. A public hearing could offer reassurance that the process is robust and undertaken with probity.
29. On 7 March 2024, the Parole Board received representations from Alberto Costa MP supporting Mr Pitchfork's oral hearing being held in public. Mr Costa is the Member of Parliament for the area in which Mr Pitchfork's crimes took place.
30. In summary, Mr Costa's reasons were:
- a. A public hearing is in the public interest given the special features of the case, the impact on the victims' families and the community and the potential risk to the public Mr Pitchfork's release could pose.
 - b. The public need to have confidence in the parole system. Following a series of seemingly inconsistent decisions, it is essential for the public to see how the Parole Board conducts hearings and assesses risk.
 - c. This case remains a very sensitive matter to Mr Consta's constituents and continues to attract national attention due to the horrific nature of the crimes.
 - d. The victims and hundreds of other women continue to carry the pain and trauma of Mr Pitchfork's fifteen years of sexual offending during which he is believed to have admitted to exposing himself to over 1,000 women.
 - e. Mr Costa understands that a majority of victims expressed their support for a public hearing in 2023 and he has recently had direct contact with some victims who have expressed their support for the re-hearing to be in public.
 - f. The case has unique features in that this is the first time that the Secretary of State and then subsequently the prisoner has successfully applied for reconsideration. Mr Costa is perplexed at how the Rules permit two seemingly contradictory decision on the same grounds of irrationality in less than a year.
 - g. Mr Costa understands that under the Rules there is no limit to the number of applications for reconsideration which can be made. The lack of finality is a perverse and unintended consequence of the 2019 Rules which were introduced to enable a Minister to intervene. Mr Costa is campaigning to

change the Rules. A public hearing in this case can add to the public understanding of the system and inform public debate.

- h. Since the decision of March 2023, there have been significant changes in this case and the threshold for a public hearing has now been crossed.
 - i. The decision of March 2023 focused heavily on the impact of a public hearing on Mr Pitchfork's wellbeing. The severity of the case and the value of transparency now outweigh the potential impact on the prisoner.
 - j. In the March 2023 decision, concerns about Mr Pitchfork's grandiosity were raised. The public need to be reassured on this risk factor.
 - k. A public hearing would allow the public an opportunity to see how the Parole Board assesses risk.
 - l. In December 2023, the Parole Board determined that Mr Pitchfork did not meet the test for release. Since that decision has now been adjudicated as irrational, it is essential for the public to see whether he has changed in such a short period of time.
 - m. In December 2023, the panel found Mr Pitchfork was '*protracted and inconsistent*' about his period on licence and it also highlighted concerns about his behaviour in prison since 2021. The public will be concerned that the decision not to release him is to be reconsidered. It is therefore crucial that the hearing be held in public.
 - n. In media articles it has been reported that Mr Pitchfork has taken pleasure in deception. Without hearing the evidence, the public will only have the media in making an assessment of whether Mr Pitchfork continues to present a danger to the public.
 - o. The public is concerned about the way in which the Parole Board has managed this case. Transparency will therefore be beneficial.
 - p. The grounds for Mr Pitchfork's successful reconsideration was that a witness's recommendation was not taken into account. This means an error by the Parole Board has led to public resources being spent. This could have been avoided if the hearing was conducted properly.
 - q. In 2021, Mr Pitchfork was released with polygraph testing as one of his licence conditions. Following his recall it was realised that this licence condition had been unlawfully imposed. This is further evidence of a chain of errors.
 - r. The growing concerns about the Parole Board's management of Mr Pitchfork's case is central to the call for greater transparency in this case.
31. On 22 February 2024 the Parole Board asked for representations from the parties to the case, namely the Secretary of State for Justice and Mr Pitchfork through his legal representative.
32. In summary, the representations made on behalf of the Secretary of State (dated 7 March 2023 [sic]) were:

- a. The Secretary of State supports the case for a public hearing.
- b. The views of the victims engaged with the Victim Contact Scheme have been sought. Four of the six victims support a public hearing, with one opposing due to concerns that it will increase the notoriety of Mr Pitchfork and another not wishing to be involved.
- c. Some HMPPS staff have advised that a public hearing would create additional press attention which could create difficulties in managing Mr Pitchfork. However, Mr Pitchfork is already notorious and previously HMPPS worked with the police to ensure that media attention did not disrupt Mr Pitchfork's supervision. The Secretary of State does not believe that the concerns raised provide sufficient reason to oppose a public hearing.
- d. The Secretary of State submits that increased transparency is vital to building public confidence, particularly in the most serious cases. Mr Pitchfork is serving a mandatory life sentence for the gravest of all offences, murder.
- e. Part of the rationale for changing the Rules to permit public hearings was to enable victims, the media and the public to gain insight into how the Parole Board reaches its decisions. This is all the more necessary in this case on account of the decisions made by panels which were then found to be irrational.
- f. A public hearing would show how painstaking Parole Board panels are when it comes to assessing risk.

33. In summary, the representations made on behalf of Mr Pitchfork (dated March 2024) were:

- a. The previous two listings have been subject to successful applications for reconsideration. In March 2023 the Panel Chair [sic] considered an application for a public hearing and decided it was not appropriate.
- b. The application has not been renewed by any party for the second listing of this case.
- c. Mr Pitchfork submitted representations in February 2023 against a public hearing and these representations are adopted again. [The reasons in the February 2023 submission included his safety, the benefits of a low profile, the stress for Mr Pitchfork, the potential to undermine his rehabilitation, the need for Mr Pitchfork to speak openly and honestly and the complexity of the case.] Mr Pitchfork's position is that it is not in the interests of justice for his hearing to be held in public.
- d. In addition to the primary submissions of February 2023, it is added that a public hearing will not improve public understanding as the evidence in the hearings will be the same. The issue that has attracted attention has been the competing decisions made by the Parole Board. Even with a public hearing, the media would not see the deliberations of the panel. A public hearing would

therefore not improve understanding of how the Parole Board comes to its decisions.

- e. It is likely that some evidence would be heard in private and this evidence could be a relevant consideration for the Panel.
 - f. Mr Pitchfork will need to answer questions in an open and frank way. There is a risk of serious harm to Mr Pitchfork because of the interest in this case. Questions may be put to Mr Pitchfork which are not in the public domain. This could lead to unwarranted pressures and undermine efforts towards his rehabilitation.
 - g. There is no difference between the upcoming hearing and the hearing in 2023. The legal rationale for the hearing remaining in private has not fundamentally altered.
34. I have also consulted with the Panel Chair as the Panel Chair is most familiar with the details of the case and is therefore best placed to assess: (i) if a public hearing would cause a victim or prisoner undue distress or prevent best evidence being given by witnesses; (ii) if it could adversely affect a prisoner's ability to safely resettle in the community; or (iii) if it could compromise the panel's ability to assess risk.
35. The Panel Chair made some observations including:
- a. The case has achieved considerable notoriety.
 - b. There are at first sight compelling factors in favour of a public hearing. However, since the Panel will be hearing evidence afresh, it will not shed light on the two reconsideration decisions.
 - c. The Panel will need to ensure that a public hearing is fair. A number of issues could compromise a fair hearing such as: media interest; unacceptable pressures placed on witnesses; Mr Pitchfork may be caused undue anxiety so that he could not give his best evidence; a public hearing could compromise Mr Pitchfork ability to resettle in the community if his release is directed.
 - d. Threats have been made to Mr Pitchfork and his identity has previously been revealed in the national media, although no direct attempts were made to cause him harm. Mr Pitchfork could become a target for reprisals if his location were to be revealed.
 - e. Media interest has intensified.
 - f. The hearing is expected to last three days. At least part of the hearing will need to be in private. Consideration needs to be given to whether sufficient parts can be heard in public.
36. Following the Panel Chair's observations, I sought further representations from the Secretary of State and the Mr Pitchfork's representative on: whether witnesses may be concerned about expressing opinions in public; any real or perceived threats to Mr Pitchfork; the likely effect of a public hearing on Mr Pitchfork and his

ability to give evidence; and whether a public hearing could compromise any resettlement plans.

37. In summary, the further representations made on behalf of the Secretary of State (dated 10 April 2024) were:
- a. Given the high media interest in this case, witnesses may wish to remain off camera and to be referred to by job title only. With such safeguards, HMPPS witnesses would have no legitimate grounds for concern.
 - b. HMPPS is not aware of any specific threats to Mr Pitchfork. The Panel Chair has the power to direct that he be known as Colin Pitchfork during the public hearing.
 - c. A public hearing may feed Mr Pitchfork's grandiosity and give him an additional platform, of which he may not be completely disapproving. A public hearing may also add a degree of anxiety to his evidence. However, these observations are not arguments against a public hearing but are relevant to the risk assessment.
 - d. Additional media interest could potentially undermine aspects of the risk management plan. However, the Panel Chair can direct that these parts of the hearing take place in private.
 - e. The Secretary of State strongly supports a public hearing. In particular, the heinous nature of Mr Pitchfork's crimes, his swift recall to custody, and two provisional parole decisions which have subsequently been ruled to be irrational all give grounds for public concern. The Secretary of State submits that transparency argues for the hearing to be held in public.
38. In summary, the further representations made on behalf of Mr Pitchfork (dated April 2024) were:
- a. Mr Pitchfork does not intend to call any witnesses.
 - b. When in an open prison, Mr Pitchfork has previously been advised by that establishment of direct threats, should he be released from custody. These often coincided with media interest in his case. When he was released from custody to an approved premise, threats were made, resulting in protective measures being taken.
 - c. Mr Pitchfork's representatives have in the past had their details and images published in the media without their consent.
 - d. If the hearing were to be held in public, it would significantly impact Mr Pitchfork's evidence. The written media has the greatest interest in the case. They have often provided inaccurate summaries of the case. Mr Pitchfork is concerned that a public hearing would prevent him from giving full answers to the Panel. There is no prohibition upon the media investigating any evidence and his plans in the community. The accumulative effect of this,

coupled with the personal threat, means that the Panel would not receive the kind of evidence that they have received in the past, borne out of fear. The Panel's role would suffer accordingly.

- e. If the hearing were in public, the public would know the details of the risk management plan which would then be compromised. This would be an issue for Mr Pitchfork but also for those managing him in the community.
- f. This case is not suitable for a public hearing and the interest of justice would not be served if it were permitted.

39. In the light of the further presentations, the Panel Chair made some observations including:

- a. The Chair can ensure that witnesses remain off camera and are only referred to by their job title, or the hearing can be audio with only the Panel visible to observers. The prisoner will be referred to as Mr Pitchfork and the resettlement plan can be heard in private. This might mean that a significant part of the hearing will be heard in private.
- b. These measures will assist Mr Pitchfork to give his best evidence but will not remove all his anxiety in a case where threats are frequent.
- c. The further representations from the Secretary of State do not acknowledge the existence of threats and the matter does not appear to have been investigated. In the dossier there is strong evidence of a history of threats. This led to protective steps being taken when Mr Pitchfork was released to an approved premise.
- d. It is likely that threats will be intensified if the hearing is in public. This raises the issue about the fairness of a public hearing if participants are concerned. This can distract from a proper focus on the evidence which may lead to a less accurate assessment.
- e. In this case there is evidence to suggest that the intensity of threats are proportional to the media interest.
- f. There is public interest in this case and a strong element of media sensationalising. Nothing must compromise a fair hearing. The Panel believes that the intensification of threats caused by a public hearing and its impact on participants has the potential to undermine the fairness of the proceedings even with the measures available.
- g. To support a public hearing, the Secretary of State's representations rely on two reconsideration decisions on the basis of irrationality. Irrationality is used in a legal sense and encompasses failure to give reasons. A public hearing will not explain this. Furthermore, a further reconsideration on the basis of procedural irregularity would increase the risk of public misunderstanding.

Reasons for the Decision

40. I would like to express my sympathy for the victims of Mr Pitchfork’s offending, both those who are registered with the Victims Contact Scheme and those who may not be. I have carefully read all of the information that I have been provided by victims either directly or indirectly. The test I must apply is whether it is in the interests of justice for the hearing to be made in public.
41. I have considered all the information in the application and the representations. I have also taken account of the Parole Board’s *Guidance on the Criteria for Public Hearings*.
42. I am aware that some of the matters which have been covered in submissions are not directly relevant to this test. For example, the scope and context of the Parole Board Rules and any future changes to them do not go to the question of public interest. They must be resolved in different forums.
43. I am also aware that in March 2023, I decided that that it would not be in the public interest for an earlier hearing to be in public. That does not bind me to any particular outcome but I am aware of the need to act consistently when approaching this case. I must ask myself whether the position is different now, and if so, how.
44. The normal position is that parole hearings will remain in private. This is because it is of paramount importance that witnesses, including the prisoner, have a fair chance to give their evidence. Furthermore, evidence can relate to highly personal matters including health and evidence that may be distressing to victims. There must therefore be good reasons to depart from the general rule. However, where there are good reasons to depart from the general rule, adjustments can be made to ensure that a public hearing is fair.
45. It should be clear that I would not grant an application to have a hearing in public in circumstances where I thought that a public hearing would impact on the fairness of the hearing.
46. I note that, should a hearing be held in public, it is always open to the Panel Chair to use their case management powers to manage the hearing and to suspend a hearing if they feel that the proceedings are becoming unfair.
47. A high bar has been set for a public hearing to be in the interests of justice and I have decided that this high bar is met in this case. My reasons are as follows:

- a. Mr Pitchfork has been convicted of very serious offences, namely the murder of two young women, two counts of rape, two counts of indecent assault and one count of perverting the course of justice. The seriousness of his crimes raises the potential for the interests of justice to require a public hearing.
- b. There are special features in this case that set it aside from other cases. Namely, Mr Pitchfork was the first murderer convicted following the use of pioneering DNA evidence, Mr Pitchfork was swiftly recalled to custody following a long period of imprisonment, and Mr Pitchfork's case has been subject to two successful reconsiderations, one by the Secretary of State and one by Mr Pitchfork.
- c. The fact that there have been two decisions in this case that have been found to be irrational has inevitably caused public disquiet and raised the public's attention to this case. Although '*irrational*' has a particular meaning in law which is discussed above, it has another meaning in common parlance which has the potential to add to the public's anxiety. I do note that a rehearing will not necessarily explain or deal with the issues which resulted in the two successful reconsiderations, as it will be hearing evidence afresh. It does mean that the public's interest in the case will be greater and greater transparency will better assist understanding of how the Parole Board assesses risk. Parliament has determined that in the interests of transparency and public confidence, parole proceedings should be held in public when in the interests of justice. Given the history of this case, increased transparency could help rebuild confidence in the criminal justice system. This is a relevant and material change from when I last considered the position on a public hearing.
- d. Mr Pitchfork was recalled back to custody after around 11 weeks in the community following a period of over 30 years of imprisonment. It is in the interests of justice for the public to understand how the Parole Board deals with such issues.
- e. The Parole Board's work is often misunderstood by the public. Mr Pitchfork's case is a high profile one. It has become even more high profile due to the events that have taken place in the proceedings. There is therefore a public interest in increasing understanding which can properly be taken into account when considering the interests of justice test. There is also a public interest in the potential for transparency going forward to help restore confidence in the criminal justice system.
- f. There are case management powers which are available to the Panel Chair to deal with risks that having the hearing in public might create or exacerbate. This includes holding some of the hearing in private, when particularly sensitive matters or practical details of the risk management plan can be discussed. Although some of the hearing will need to be in private, including any discussion of the details of the risk management plan, a sufficient part of

the hearing can be held in public to allow for a deeper understanding of the parole process.

- g. Arrangements can be made to reduce the threat to witnesses and representatives. Their identities can be protected by not being seen on camera and being addressed by their job titles rather than names.
- h. It is said that a public hearing may impact on Mr Pitchfork's levels of anxiety. However, no medical evidence has been provided to suggest that Mr Pitchfork could not give evidence or that his evidence would be severely impacted, should the hearing be held in public. In any event, the Panel Chair has extensive case management powers to enable the relevant parts of the evidence to be taken in private.
- i. The Panel Chair observes that threats have been made against Mr Pitchfork, both during his time in custody and during the short period when he was in the community. Although threats to Mr Pitchfork appear to increase during a time of media interest, these threats have occurred despite all previous reviews by the Parole Board taking place in private. It is accepted that a threat to Mr Pitchfork exists. However, no compelling evidence has been provided to suggest that the risk to Mr Pitchfork would be materially increased by the hearing being held in public. Whether the oral hearing is in private or in public, the agencies entrusted with looking after Mr Pitchfork would need to be aware of the threats that have been made and to ensure that appropriate steps are taken to safeguard him. In any event, measures can be taken at the oral hearing to not exacerbate the situation, including Mr Pitchfork not being visible to the public.
- j. Four of the victims are supportive of a public hearing, one victim is neutral and one victim is not supportive. The views of all victims weigh very heavily with me. However, the Secretary of State should ensure that all victims are provided with appropriate support if the hearing were to be held in public.
- k. Some victims have said that given the history of the case, they do not have confidence in the parole process but that a public hearing could offer reassurance to them that the parole process is robust. The views of the victims can properly be taken into account when considering the interests of justice test.

48. I have carefully considered Mr Pitchfork's representations and I have concluded that the interests of justice outweigh the points raised on Mr Pitchfork's behalf.

49. I am satisfied that the position is different now, primarily due to the events that have taken place in the proceedings to date, to when I last made a decision on a public hearing. I have made this new decision with reference to the updated position and all of the submissions and issues before me.

50. I therefore grant the application for the hearing to be held in public.

51. It should be noted that in certain circumstances a future panel may decide that this referral can be appropriately concluded on the papers. The parties do not have a right to a conclusion on the papers; that decision will be made by the Panel Chair. My decision to grant this application for the oral hearing to be held in public does not rule out this possibility.
52. The next step is that the Panel Chair will hold a preliminary hearing to deal with any practical matters associated with this hearing.
53. The hearing itself will take place at a face to face hearing with the parties and panel at a secure location. However, arrangements will be made for members of the public to view the hearing remotely at a place where they will be able to more easily attend.
54. This matter will only revert back to me if there is any fresh information which represents a significant change in the relevant circumstances.

Caroline Corby

The Chair of the Parole Board for England and Wales

16 May 2024