

Knockview Buildings
Upper Newtownards Road
Belfast BT4 3Sj

20th May 2024

Mr Tim Flesher
Chair, Prison Service Pay Review Body
3rd Floor, Windsor House
50 Victoria Street
LONDON
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PSPRB@businessandtrade.gov.uk

Dear Tim

NORTHERN IRELAND PRISON SERVICE 2024/25 PAY ROUND

Further to the Minister's activation letter, I wanted to write and provide you with an update on the 2024 pay round.

We have now held two meetings with the Prison Officers Association and the Prison Governors Association. I have shared my pay strategy with both unions, and we await their pay claims.

Unfortunately, we find ourselves in mid-May without any public sector pay policy. My understanding is that GB guidance will not issue until late summer. In addition, the Northern Ireland Executive has only recently provided departments with budgets for 2024 and I await confirmation of NIPS funding allocation. You may have read in the media that the demand outstrips the budget available, with Ministers stating they need £2 billion more than the funding allocated. This is going to impact on all departments, not least because the 2023 public sector pay settlement monies were for one year only; rather than recurring. My over-riding priority as Accounting Officer has to be to balance the budget provided to NIPS.

On a more positive note, the trade unions have been very receptive to my pay strategy. While progress may be tempered by affordability, I want to ensure that as much of our budget as possible is used to start as many elements of this strategy as possible - from alignment of the pre 2002 MGO and CPO pay scale maxima, to higher revalorisation for PCO and NCO grades as we move towards one officer grade, and higher overtime payments. I look forward to setting out my approach as part of this year's evidence round.

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My officials have been liaising with the Secretariat and this has led to an agreement on visits in June, written evidence by 30 August, oral evidence in the first half of October, and submission of a report by mid-December.

While this timeline will be disappointing to staff, it is outside our control, and I will take all steps necessary to aim for payment within this financial year.



BEVERLEY WALL
Director General, NIPS