



# Accounting Officer Memorandum

## Rapid Deployment Cells Programme

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

HMPPS is delivering 20k additional prison places. RDCs are prefabricated, self-contained units, designed specifically to be used as prison cells and they represent the fastest current deliverable supply option for the prison estate. As part of the 20k portfolio, HMPPS are planning to deliver c1800 places through the deployment of RDCs.

This memo provides an update on the HMPPS accounting officer responsibilities published on 13 October 2022 in relation to the programme, including Tranches 1 and 2 which were approved in 2022 and the specific approval of Tranches 3 and 4 of the programme in 2024.

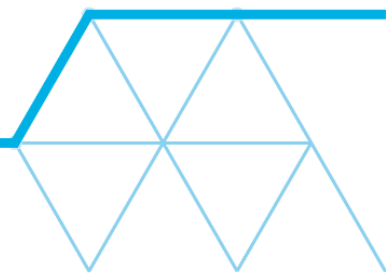
### Assessment against the accounting officer standards

#### Regularity

There has been no change in my assessment that the Rapid Deployment Cells programme continues to be regular as stated in the published memo on 13 October 2022. 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. The programme is fully compliant with other relevant legislation and the project has obtained legal input throughout its development.

#### Propriety

The Rapid Deployment Cells programme continues to be assessed as meeting the required standards of propriety. The FBCs within the programme continue to be subject to passing our internal project and departmental governance. The programme is affordable within current budgets, and was prioritised based on its strategic fit, cost feasibility and overall value for money.



## Value for Money

The investment in the programme has been assessed as delivering value for money. This is based on meeting the demand for prison places, as the fastest deliverable supply options for the prison estate to close the capacity gap in the medium term and delivering a design and specification that meets the operational requirements. Value for money has also been assessed through the total cost per place, assured by cost consultants (industry specialists) and assessed against key set of criteria that takes into consideration, strategic viability, deliverability and the time required to deliver the places.

## Feasibility

The Rapid Deployment Cells programme continues to be assessed as feasible. The project management arrangements, internal governance and assurance processes are already in place and embedded to control, oversee and manage the RDC Tranche builds.

## Conclusion

I have considered this assessment of the RDC Programme against the four Accounting Officer standards of regularity, propriety, value for money, and feasibility. I am satisfied that these responsibilities continue to be met.

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 project, I undertake to prepare a revised summary, setting out my assessment of them.

As the accounting officer for His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service, I approved this memorandum on 6 March 2025.

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