

BARLINNIE PRISON VISITING COMMITTEE

ANNUAL REPORT

YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2013

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Section 1

STATUTORY ROLE OF THE VISITING COMMITTEE (V.C.)

The statutory responsibilities of V.C's and of their members are set out in Part 17 of The Prisons and Young Offenders Institutions(Scotland) Rules 2006 made under Section8(2) of the Prisons(Scotland)Act 1989(c45).That states:"Rules made under section 39 of this Act shall prescribe the functions of visiting committees,and shall among other things require members to pay frequent visits to the prison and hear complaints which may be made by the prisoners and report to (Scottish Ministers) any matter which they consider it expedient to report; any member of a visiting committee may at any time enter the prison and shall have free access to every part thereof and to every prisoner"

A Visiting Committee is specifically charged to

- Co-operate with Scottish Ministers and the Governor in promoting the efficiency of the prison;
- Inquire into and report to Scottish Ministers upon any matter into which they may ask them to inquire;
- Immediately bring to the attention of the Governor any circumstances pertaining to the administration of the prison or the condition of a prisoner when they consider this necessary;if the Governor has not remedied matters within a reasonable period of time,they shall bring the matter to the notice of Scottish Ministers;
- From time to time,inquire into the state of the prison premises and inspect the food and drink provided to the prisoners and if at any time find these unsatisfactory,record any deficiencies in their minute book and send a copy to Scottish Ministers and the Governor;
- Hear and investigate any applications or complaints which prisoners may make to them and report their findings to the Governor and Scottish Ministers;
- Visit the prison fortnightly by not fewer than two of its members;
- At its discretion inspect prison records other than personal records,prisoners' records and security manuals or other papers which have implications for security and make a note of their inspection in their minutes;

Make an annual report for the period of 12 months ending on 31st March each year to Scottish Ministers about the state of the establishment and its administration and include any advice and suggestions they consider appropriate.

Section 2

HMP BARLINNIE

HMP Barlinnie is the largest prison in Scotland opened in 1882. It has a contract capacity of 1104 although in practice overcrowding means that this figure is exceeded.

It receives prisoners from West of Scotland courts serving sentences of less than 4 years. In July 2012, Letham Hall became a National Top End (NTE) facility providing accommodation for 50 Life or long term convicted prisoners nearing the end of their sentence. The purpose of the NTE is to monitor, assess and prepare individuals for progression to the Open Estate. In Barlinnie, prisoners are housed in 6 residential halls with one of these being exclusively for remand prisoners. All the cellular accommodation has internal sanitation.

Prisoners have access to industries, training and education on a daily basis..

The Social Work service is provided by Glasgow City Council and Education by Motherwell College. Industries, employment and training are all in house provision.

Other external agencies are involved in delivering various prisoner programmes.

Extensive modernisation works have been undertaken over the past few years.

Section 3

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.This is the annual report of the Barlinnie Visiting Committee(VC) for the year 1st April 2012 to 31st March 2013.

During the year the V.C. has held quarterly meetings and carried out visits in accordance with our statutory requirements.All areas of the prison have been visited and prisoners requests dealt with.

As a result of the opening of HMP Low Moss,the prison population at Barlinnie was reduced to a current daily figure of around 1200.This led to a much more relaxed atmosphere and opportunity for more positive interaction between staff and prisoners.The VC observed that more out of cell activity was offered both in work/training and recreation and further extension was made to visiting hours.After all the years commenting on the chronic overcrowding in the prison we very much welcome the reduction in numbers and the resulting benefits to all of a manageable population.

A further development at Barlinnie was the transfer of Life and long term convicted prisoners nearing the end of their sentence from Kerr Hall at HMP Shotts to our new National Top End facility in Letham Hall.The VC has noted that staff and prisoners are settling in well,with the regime operating successfully, good community placements being obtained and we certainly hope this continues.

The Governor,Senior Management and staff remain proactive and implement policies aimed at benefiting prisoners.All areas of the prison function well and Barlinnie provides a safe and secure environment for prisoners.

This has been another uncertain year for VCs as we still await the final outcome of the last review by the Scottish Government into our future.The view now,which we welcome,is that lay monitoring will be retained and the Justice Secretary asked Professor Andrew Coyle,Emeritus Professor of Prison Studies in London University to consider the new proposals.Professor Coyle very positively supports Independant Monitoring,although recommends that this will have to be done by a body other than VCs as presently constituted.We now await the Scottish Government's response and timetable.

As far as we are concerned it has been business as usual.

The Local Government elections in May 2012 meant changes to our membership and some members retired to be replaced by ten new members during the course of the year.

We were visited by colleagues from the Association of Visiting Committees,the VC from HMP Dumfries and The Independant Monitoring Board from HMP Frankland.All reported that they had enjoyed a very enjoyable and informative visit.

I would like to thank Governor Derek McGill and all his staff for their help assistance and co-operation during the year which greatly helps our work.

I also want to thank the VC members current and recently retired for their continuing service and support for the work of the committee during these uncertain times.

Allan Devlin

Chairman

For further information contact the secretary Gerard McElroy
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Section 4

PRISON OPERATION

During our visits we see all aspects of activity within the prison and would comment on the following.

2. Healthcare and Mental Health

The Healthcare centre is an extremely busy part of Barlinnie and there are always high demands made on all healthcare staff. The NHS has finished its first year as health provider and appears to be operating well. The VC did receive prisoner complaints regarding health issues including medication and dental treatment. These were resolved using the usual channels of the Health service Manager and patient confidentiality wasn't compromised.

The range of programmes being offered in the Health Day Centre by prison staff and outside agencies such as Theatre Nemo is proving very popular and valuable and is generally oversubscribed.

3. Food

The size of the establishment and numbers involved present huge challenges for the catering department. All diets are catered for and in line with Scottish Prison service policy, healthy eating is the target.

Summer and winter menus are prepared and issued to the Halls. A very successful food focus group operates and there is always positive feedback. Catering staff help prisoners from different ethnic backgrounds to celebrate various festivals.

Once again, no complaints about food were raised with the VC

4. Equality and Diversity

The SPS is committed to equality, diversity, inclusion and human rights. This is evident in the treatment and provision for prisoners at Barlinnie. Given the ever increasing numbers adherence to this policy is all the more important. Induction for new prisoners outlines the routine and regimes of the prison and information for ethnic minority prisoners is available as is a translation service.

5. Education/Training/Employment

Education, training and work opportunities are offered on a daily basis. The VC responded to the Scottish Government's consultation on Positive Out of Cell Activity and in preparing this response it is clear that a large programme of activities is offered encompassing education training and employment. New ventures are being constantly sought out and major developments this year have been in bicycle repair work, a project to repair and categorise spectacles for the Glasgow Opticians charity effort in India and training for a local plant hire company.

The poly tunnels continue to be a success resulting in Barlinnie always 'being in bloom'. Education is provided by Motherwell College and a full range of educational opportunities is offered. The VC has commented on improving literacy levels among prisoners and courses are available to tackle this and encourage prisoners to participate.

6. Residential Accommodation

The reduction in numbers has eased the problem in the halls although for a while there was a significant increase in remand prisoners which meant an overflow into another hall. This has now eased. Out of cell time is maximised with work, training and recreation being readily available. The visit timetable has been altered and time increased to one hour and convicted prisoners receive four visits per month. The VC has noted cleaning standards remain high in the halls despite the high population.

7. Prison Estates and Management

The Estates Management unit worked in maintaining and upgrading internal and external facilities throughout the year and had a full programme of work. There was a complete renovation of the Gate area and security system which is now complete. New showers are planned for the gym area and eventually there will be a completely new Reception area within the prison.

8. Link Centre

The Link Centre still deals with a large amount of admissions on a daily basis but the reduced population has stabilised the intake and staff continue to manage the situation well and screen all the prisoners coming through and work very well with all the outside agencies which have an input.

9. Family Contact Centre

This is always a very productive part of the Barlinnie regime with many positive outcomes. The Centre is in the process of moving into the small visits area to further develop its work and we are confident the level of success will continue. There is a local visitor drop in centre organised by the local churches and based in a church hall down the road from the prison. The group is seeking premises nearer to the prison and this continues to be a help to families of prisoners.

10. Employment Services.

Work continues with partner agencies and new employability programmes have been developed. The 'Employment Ready' programme has taken the place of 'Changing Lanes'

Section 5.

The Work of the V.C.

11. Statistics

Recommended complement of VC members	25
Number of members at start of year	22
Number of members at end of year	22
New members joining	10
Members leaving	10
Number of VC meetings during year	4
Average attendance at meetings	11
Total number of prisoner requests	23
Total number of VC rota visits to prison	88

The visiting committee has a membership of 25 drawn from eight local authorities nominating a mixture of councillors and lay members. Three Local Authorities have either still to nominate or complete their membership allocation. Members continued to be nominated late into the year. Current membership is as follows:

Name	Nominating Authority
Rees Gallacher	North Lanarkshire Council
Councillor Matt Kerr	Glasgow City Council
Councillor Andy Carmichael	South Lanarkshire Council
Councillor George Black	West Dunbartonshire Council
Maria Corr	Glasgow City Council
Councillor Yvonne Kucuk	Glasgow City Council
Anne Desport	South Lanarkshire Council
Allan Devlin	North Lanarkshire Council
Jason Ditton	Glasgow City Council
Catherine Fallon	Glasgow City Council
Councillor Bobby Lawson	South Lanarkshire Council
Councillor Terry Kelly	Renfrewshire Council
Anne Mills JP	Glasgow City Council
Gerard McElroy	North Lanarkshire Council
Councillor Jim Brown	West Dunbartonshire Council
Frances McGrade	Glasgow City Council
Baillie Hanif Raja	Glasgow City Council
Councillor Alan Graham	North Lanarkshire Council
Councillor Martha Wardrop	Glasgow City Council
Tom Swinney	North Ayrshire Council
Councillor Jim Montgomerie	North Ayrshire Council
Ann Wilkieson	Glasgow City Council

Meetings are held quarterly in the prison. The secretary prepares a rota which ensures two members are in the prison every fortnight. Generally we give notice of our visit so that an escort is provided and we are handed on from one part of the prison to another. Members are currently undergoing Personal Protection Training.

The following is a summary of members' attendance:

Name	Rota visits	Meetings	Comments
Rees Gallacher	4	3	Appointed 4 th October 2012
Matt Kerr	1	0	Appointed September 2012
Andy Carmichael	2	2	Appointed September 2012
George Black	3	3	Appointed August 2012
Maria Corr	2	2	Appointed July 2012
Yvonne Kucuk	1	0	Appointed September 2012
Anne Desport	1	0	Appointed September 2012
Allan Devlin	14	4	Appointed July 2012
Jason Ditton	3	3	Appointed September 2012
Catherine Fallon	2	2	Appointed September 2012
Bobby Lawson	2	2	Appointed September 2012
Terry Kelly	2	2	Appointed September 2012
Anne Mills	5	2	Appointed September 2012
Gerard McElroy	16	4	Appointed July 2012
Jim Brown	3	3	Appointed August 2012
Frances McGrade	2	2	Appointed September 2012
Hanif Raja	1	1	Appointed September 2012
Alan Graham	1	0	Appointed July 2012
Martha Wardrop	3	2	Appointed September 2012
Tom Swinney	19	4	Appointed July 2012
Jim Montgomerie	0	0	Appointed July 2012
Ann Wilkieson	1	3	Appointed September 2012

Note: Existing non-elected members from last year have a three month period of grace to participate and run the committee until other appointments are confirmed.

A system is in operation within the prison for prisoner requests to be dealt with by the VC . Members interview prisoners,log the details of the request and refer to the appropriate prison management.The outcome is noted on the request form and the prisoner is notified.

The following is a summary of the requests received:

Category	2011/12	2012/13
Accomodation	0	0
Education/training/work	0	0
Estates issues/conditions	4	1
Family/visits	6	1
Food	0	0
Health	7	8
Transfers	8	1
Staff/prisoners issues	1	5
Housing	0	0
Sentence Issues	2	1
Canteen Prices	2	1
HDC Issues	2	0
Discipline	0	5

12. Association of Visiting Committees

This is our national association and the Chairman and Secretary attend the business meetings.All AVC communications are circulated to our committee members.

13.Training.

The committee has a local training co-ordinator to assist with local and national training. Members attended the national conference and visits to other establishments arranged by the AVC. At our meetings we have a training input on some aspect of prison operation.

This is a record of members attendance at training events :

MEMBER'S NAME	SPS TRAINING DELIVERED LOCALLY			
	Course Name (Tutor)	Course Name (Tutor)	Course Name (Tutor)	Course Name (Tutor)
	Housing Issues Karen Foley Glasgow District Council	Personal Relationship Programme Mitch Bailey HMP Barlinnie	Family Strategy Karen Norrie HMP Barlinnie	Introduction of the National Top End to Barlinnie Andy Huntson HMP Barlinnie
Andy Carmichael	X	X		
Rees Gallacher	X	X	X	X
George Black	X	X		
Allan Devlin	X	X	X	X
Jason Ditton	X	X	X	X
Maria Corr	X	X	X	X
Bobby Lawson	X	X		
Gerard McElroy	X	X	X	X
Jim Brown	X	X	X	X
Tom Swinney	X	X	X	X
Anne Mills			X	X
Terry Kelly	X	X		
Martha Wardrop			X	X
Ann Wilkieson			X	X
Frances McGrade	X	X		
Cathy Fallon			X	X

