

OPEN

HMP Open Estate Prison Visiting Committee

ANNUAL REPORT 2010/11



Executive Summary

By George de Gernier
(Chair of the Visiting Committee)

It gives me great pleasure to present the 2010/11 Open Estate Annual Report, my fourth as Chair.

Whilst not wishing my comments to appear as entirely negative 2010/11 was marked as a very low point as regards the Open Estate brought about by the Scottish Prison Service's decision to close the prison at Noranside. The circumstances surrounding this decision have been the subject of much debate and I do not wish to repeat them suffice to say that the Visiting Committee as whole were shocked by such a decision and disappointed that we learnt of this decision through the media.

The campaign to retain Noranside was one which we as a VC entirely supported and I was able to articulate these views at a meeting with Rhona Sweeney. I am satisfied that the VC did as much as it could

to make a case for the retention of Noranside. However, I await a decision with some degree of trepidation.

I would also like to commend the professionalism displayed by the local prison staff throughout this period of uncertainty. Visiting Committee members have always been well supported by prison staff whilst undertaking rota visits and any follow up action.

In conclusion, I would like to thank all the members of the VC for their help and support over the past year, the Governor and his staff for their co-operation and understanding and Donald Macaskill, our Clerk, for servicing our Committee so efficiently and for bringing to us the benefit of his vast experience.

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HMP Open Estate

HMP Open Estate occupies a unique position within the Scottish Prison Service in that it is the only open prison operating in Scotland.

HMP Castle Huntly and Noranside jointly make up the HMP Open Estate. Both focus on providing employment, training and transitional/through care for prisoners working towards a structured reintegration into society.

Castle Huntly is in Longforgan, three miles west of Dundee, whilst Noranside lies ten miles north-west of Forfar in Angus. Both are open prisons holding low supervision adult male prisoners serving eighteen months and over, including life sentence prisoners, who have been assessed as suitable to serve part of their sentence in open conditions.

The regimes operated by both establishments, though differentiated, are also increasingly complementary. Noranside holds a small number of prisoners convicted of sexual offences, while Castle Huntly holds prisoners who require the support of the SPS methadone programme.

Report on Areas Within the Prison

Health Care and a Mental Health

The Open Estate has a full time GP service split over the two sites. The waiting list for a doctor is 2-3 days for non-urgent appointments. Optician and chiropody clinics are held once a month. Dermatology clinics are held 6 weekly as required.

It is interesting to note that the programme for prisoners to be issued with Naxalone packs on liberation and Home Leave is in the early stages of implementation. The introduction phase has been problem free.

It is also good to note that prisoners are experiencing low waiting times for services and complaints also remain low.

Throughout the year work has continued across a number of work streams for the transfer of prisoner healthcare to the NHS. Within NHS Tayside prisoner healthcare within the Open Estate will sit within Perth and Kinross Community Health Partnership. A Local Implementation Plan has been submitted by NHS Tayside and the National Board for Prisoner's Health is to review and feedback on the plan direct to NHS Tayside. It is hoped that the transition will be a seamless one and there will be no adverse effect on the provision of prisoner healthcare.

Food

Packed lunches are provided which generate savings to enable the provision of a three course evening meal. Generally, the quality of the food in the prison is of a high standard. Visiting Committee members have sampled the food on a number of occasions and have no complaints in this regard.

Equality and Diversity

Equality and Diversity impact assessments have been progressed considerably at the Open Estate.

An Equality & Diversity Group is in operation with a Manager on each site. Meetings are held regularly when the Governor leads the Group with E & D Officers, Representatives from outside Agencies, a VC member and a representative from the Prisoner Forum/Service user in attendance.

One of the highlights during the year was the Remembrance Service, an event looking at the multi-cultural aspects of war and the second World War in particular. Another event worthy of mention was an Anne Frank Exhibition held at Castle Huntly when prisoners were trained as guides to show guests around.

The E & D Group continues to look at bringing multi-cultural events to the two sites to promote better relationships within prison life.

Education, Training and Work

The formal delivery of the education contract at Open Estate remains a concern. This was provided in 2010/11 by Motherwell College. We maintain our previously stated position that the absence of a local provider is a serious flaw.

In the context of prisoner induction, every new prisoner coming to the Open Estate is invited to a half day education induction where an assessment of needs is carried out. An individual learning plan is compiled and an SPS progress file is prepared for each prisoner. Core skills are IT and communication, numeracy and working with others.

Employability and education involves compiling a CV, interview skills, job searches, careers advice and small business start ups.

An information video was filmed at the Open Estate for distribution to the closed estate aimed at providing prisoners with an accurate up to date view of what its like to be in the Open Estate.

The prisoners were active in helping to clear snow and ice during the spell of severe winter weather. These efforts were very much appreciated by the local community. The cold weather did however highlight the need for some improvements in the heating and ventilation systems. Work is ongoing to ensure specific areas are targeted to increase systems efficiency and effectiveness.

Residential Accommodation

Work has been undertaken to improve the standard of cleanliness within the Residential areas. Bruce Wing section toilets were completed including the refurbishment of the section toilets and a new shower room.

Under bed lockers were provided for prisoners which is a secure facility to store medical and personal items they have been authorised to use.

Prison Estate and Administration

The Open Estate was allocated monies for the purchase of capital equipment covering such areas as the gym, kitchen and grounds.

A new process was implemented at Noranside which provides prisoners with the opportunity to purchase newspapers from the local newsagent. The process has proved very popular with the prisoner group.

A new process was also implemented on both sites which provides prisoners with the opportunity to purchase over the counter medication from a chemist. The canteen facility is used to collate orders and prisoners are provided with a list of authorised goods and associated prices if they wish to participate in this.

It was agreed by the SPS to increase the PPC access from £15 to £20. This was designed to help prisoners afford the cost of goods in light of the increase in the VAT rate.

In light of feedback from the Prisoner Forums the Open Estate introduced supplements such as multi-vitamins and cod liver oil to enhance Healthy Living options through the Prisoner Canteen.

Links Centre

The video conferencing suite was relocated within the Links Centre to make them more accessible for ICM case conferences and other video link activity.

Training

Awareness training sessions are held before every meeting of the Visiting Committee. These sessions are timed for about half an hour which normally involves a presentation followed by questions. The Local Training Co-ordinator agrees a programme of topics in consultation with the Committee and the VC liaison officer with the opportunity for VC members to suggest areas for training.

In addition to local training, AVC organise National Training and during the year, several OEVC Members have attended Induction Training, Continued Development Training as well as attending the Annual Conference. All this is to ensure that VC Members are the best they can be in serving on the Open Estate Visiting Committee.

Visiting Committee Training Records *(April 2010 - March 2011) HMP Open Estate

Member's Name	VC Training delivered locally								National Training (AVC)			
	Induction (date)	Tour (date)	Expenses	Rotas	Interviews	Requests/Complaints	Minute Book	C & R Training	FC/1	CD/1 or CD/2	Chair/Vice Chair	Annual Conference
George de Gernier	1993	1993	1993	1993	1993	1993	1993	14.12.09	n/a	n/a	2010	2009
PrueHerriot-Maitland	2002	2002	2002	2002	2002	2002	2002	10.05.10	2002	2005		
Cllr A Andrews	2007	2007	2007	2007	2007	2007	2007	17.05.10		01.09.10	n/a	
Ivan Laird	2000	2000	2000	2000	2000	2000	2000	14.12.09	n/a	n/a	n/a	2007
Anne Williams	2005	2005	2005	2005	2005	2005	2005	18.10.10	n/a	n/a	n/a	2009
Charles Hebenton	1982	1982	1982	1982	1982	1982	1982	07.05.10	n/a	01.09.10	2010	2010
Vera Joiner	2007	2007	2007	2007	2007	2007	2007	18.10.10	2007	01.09.10	n/a	2010
Neil Powrie	1995	1995	1995	1995	1995	1995	1995	03.03.11	n/a	01.09.10	2010	2010
Cllr P Mulheron	1996	1996	1996	1996	1996	1996	1996	2010	n/a	n/a	n/a	2007
Alan Muir	2008	2008	2008	2008	2008	2008	2008	15.3.11	03.03.11		n/a	
Cllr B Vaughan	2009	2009	2009	2009	2009	2009	2009				n/a	
Gavin Dobson	2008	2008	2008	2008	2008	2008	2008	08.02.10	2008	01.09.10	n/a	
Gian Jain	2008	2008	2008	2008	2008	2008	2008	13.05.10	2008	01.09.10	n/a	2010

****Members with 3 years service or more are not required to do VC Induction training though they should still do SPS Induction****

Member's Name	Course Name			
	Management Structures and Roles 6 July 2010	Intelligence Training 28 September 2010	The Role of Social Work at the Open Estate 24 November 2010	Addictions 29 March 2011
George de Gernier	✓	✓	✓	✓
Prue Herriot- Maitland				
Cllr A Andrews		✓	✓	✓
Ivan Laird	✓			✓
Anne Williams	✓		✓	✓
Charles Hebenton		✓	✓	✓
Vera Joiner	✓		✓	✓
Neil Powrie				
Cllr P Mulheron	✓	✓	✓	✓
Alan Muir			✓	✓
Cllr B Vaughan				
Gavin Dobson	✓	✓		✓
Gian Jain	✓	✓	✓	✓

Statutory Role of the Visiting Committee

The statutory responsibilities of Visiting Committees and of their members are set out in Part 17 of The Prisons and Young Offenders Institutions (Scotland) Rules 2006 made under Section 8(2) of the Prisons (Scotland) Act 1989 (c.45).

That states: “Rules made under section 39 of this Act shall prescribe the functions of visiting committees and shall among other things require the members to pay frequent visits to the prison and hear any 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 they 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 31 March each year to Scottish Ministers about the state of the establishment and its administration and include any advice and suggestions they consider appropriate.

The Work of the Visiting Committee

Visiting Committee Statistics	2010/11
Recommended complement of VC members (per Rule 155)	15
Number of members at start of reporting period	13
Number of members at end of reporting period	13
Number of new members joining within the reporting period	0
Number of members leaving within the reporting period	0
Total number of committee meetings during reporting period	7
Average number of attendances at meetings during reporting period	8
Total Number of applications/complaints received	13

Membership of the Visiting Committee as at 31 March 2011 and Details of Rota Visits

MEMBER	NOMINATING AUTHORITY	ROTA VISITS UNDERTAKEN	
		Possible	Actual
Councillor Alison Andrews	Angus Council	9	9
Mr Gavin Dobson	Angus Council	9	9
Mr George de Gernier (Chair)	Dundee City Council	8	11
Mrs Prue Herriot-Maitland (Deputy Chair)	Perth & Kinross Council	7	5
Mr Charles B Heberton MBE	Dundee City Council	9	9
Mrs Vera Joiner	Dundee City Council	9	9
Mr Gian Jain	Dundee City Council	7	5
Mr Ivan Laird	Angus Council	9	8
Councillor Peter Mulheron	Perth & Kinross Council	4	4
Mr Alan Muir	Dundee City Council	9	8
Mr Neil Powrie	Dundee City Council	8	6
Councillor Barbara Vaughan	Perth & Kinross Council	8	1
Mrs Anne Williams	Angus Council	8	8