



## Public Accounts Committee

**Antonia Romeo**  
**Permanent Secretary**  
**Ministry of Justice**  
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**Westminster**  
**London, SW1H 9AJ**  
**By email: [permanent.secretary@justice.gov.uk](mailto:permanent.secretary@justice.gov.uk)**

22 September 2022

### **Ministry of Justice - Accounting Officer Assessments**

Dear Permanent Secretary

You recently published two Accounting Officer Assessment summaries, one into the [Electronic Monitoring Expansion and Future Service Programme](#), the other concerning the [Oasis Restore \(Medway\) Secure School](#). The assessment summaries were completed by Dr Farrar and endorsed by yourself.

In the past I have explained that it is good practice to perform an AO assessment at an early stage of a programme, or when a programme joins the Government Major Projects Portfolio and then subsequent assessments when there are significant changes to the programmes. I have also raised queries around the rationale for the point at which assessments are done. It would therefore be helpful if you could clarify the rationale for signing off the assessment of the Oasis Restore Secure School after construction had begun.

In addition to this, there are also a number of specific points on which I would be grateful if you could provide further clarification, which are set out in the Appendix below.

For wider interest, I will share a copy of this letter with the Chair of the Justice Select Committee, the Comptroller and Auditor General and the Treasury Officer of Accounts.

Yours sincerely

Dame Meg Hillier MP  
Chair of the Committee of Public Accounts



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### APPENDIX

#### **1. Electronic Monitoring Expansion and Future Service Programme**

- a) **Lack of clarity on qualitative benefits.** In forming your view on the value for money of the programme, you have relied heavily on qualitative benefits assessments. However, you have not provided sufficient transparency to Parliament on the precise assessments and scores you have arrived at, nor have you explained how HMPPS will measure future progress. Could you please write back to the Committee setting out this information, including the relative qualitative benefits scores across your delivery options.
- b) **Absence of quantifiable benefits.** Given the £1.2 billion forecast cost of the programme to taxpayers, it is striking that HMPPS has not developed a suite of quantifiable benefits with clear baselines against which to measure future progress. Could you please write back to the Committee explaining what has prevented HMPPS from developing quantifiable benefits. In addition, please explain whether HMPPS has plans underway to introduce quantifiable benefits and, if so, over what time period.
- c) **Clarity on contingency options.** In forming your view on the feasibility of the programme, your assessment alludes to 'contingency options' in the event of a failure to integrate both HMPPS's and its future suppliers' work. Given that HMPPS must procure new contracts and transition to the new service by January 2024, please write to the Committee spelling out what contingency options HMPPS can pursue in the event that achieve technical integration becomes unachievable in this timeframe.

#### **2. Oasis Restore (Medway) Secure School**

- a) **Wider benefits and evaluation plans.** The assessment mentions that MoJ estimates that wider benefits of the project will make a significant contribution to both the costs of the project and outcomes for children despite the approach being new and innovative. Could you please provide the Committee with: i) a list of benefits and improved outcomes for children and how any financial benefits were calculated; and ii) a progress update on its plans to evaluate the project.