

Open Report on behalf of Peter Wright, Governor, HM Prison Lincoln

Report to:	Community and Public Safety Scrutiny Committee
Date:	10 December 2014
Subject:	Lincoln Prison Update

Summary:

This report provides an update for the Committee on the progress made in HMP Lincoln.

Actions Required:

The Committee is invited to consider and comment on the contents of this report.

1. Background

HMP Lincoln is a 19th century local prison holding adult males. This means it takes prisoners direct from court and also holds sentenced prisoners awaiting transfer to training prisons or who are serving short sentences.

Its uncrowded capacity is 408 prisoners but it is one of the five most overcrowded prisons in England and Wales. Its operational capacity is now 739.

Inspections

In August 2012, HM Inspectorate of Prisons conducted an unannounced inspection. It found:

- The prison was not safe.
- It was dirty with low decency standards.
- The number of complaints was almost double that of comparable prisons.
- Work on diversity was poor.
- The saving grace for the prison was good staff-prisoner relationships
- Offender management was weak but Lincolnshire Action Trust's resettlement service was very good.

There was a follow up full inspection in November 2013. This found:

- Lincoln was now a safer place.
- The first night wing, however, remained in a poor condition.
- Overall levels of violence were now comparable with similar prisons and levels of self-harm were lower.
- The prison's approach to resettlement, reasonable at the last inspection, continued to improve, but progress had been slow.
- The prison's continuing partnership with the Lincolnshire Action Trust ensured an impressive case management approach to resettlement.
- The prison was much cleaner but there were still decency problems (e.g. access to clean clothing).
- Relationships between staff and prisoners, something we had previously identified as a strength, appeared supportive, but prisoners expressed more negative perceptions.
- Good work was being done to promote equality and diversity.
- Overall Lincoln was a much improved prison.

The Prison Development Group

Local prisons, like Lincoln, have been the responsibility of central government since 1877. But Lincolnshire County Council has a ground breaking partnership relationship with HMP Lincoln under the auspices of the Prison Development Group, chaired by the Leader. This collaboration has resulted in:

- The introduction of adult safeguarding to the prison. The Governor is a member of the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Adults Board.
- Facilitation of assessment in adult social care in preparation for the introduction of the Care Act 2014 in April 2015.
- The introduction of children safeguarding to the prison and the first steps to making the prison compliant with section 11 of the Children Act 2004. The Governor is a member of the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Board.
- A healthy prison initiative supported by Public Health England.
- A much improved Library service to prisoners.

Current performance

HMP Lincoln had been literally at bottom of the prison performance table but now has achieved a mid-table position. In some respects e.g. in the results of random drug testing it is ahead of many in its comparator group. But improvement stalled in 2014 because of a combination of reduced (“benchmarked”) staffing levels and vacancies in front line staff. Compared to a 2010 baseline, staffing has been reduced by 42%. The vacancies arose because the national system for prison officer recruitment developed significant problems. The coincidence of these factors exacerbated sickness absence and the prison faced significant order and control challenges in the Spring and Summer. The Prison Service mutual aid system called Tornado was activated three times in response to intelligence and was used to transfer to other establishments prisoners who were planning disruption. But HMP Lincoln also had to take prisoners involved in disorder and violent behaviour elsewhere.

Sickness absence is now coming back under control and the establishment should be fully staffed (albeit with new staff in training) by February.

Vision for 2015

The prison now has many areas of good, even excellent, practice and much innovation. Its staff should feel proud of the way they have kept a humane and predictable regime running this year under pressure. But it is let down by significant basic problems such as the quality of prisoners’ clothing and cell facilities. Put bluntly, the treatment of prisoners is not sufficiently decent.

I believe that it is likely that another, this time unannounced inspection by HMIP will take place in late 2015. In my Full Staff Briefing on 14 January I will be setting out a vision for achieving excellence in 2015. This will get across to managers and staff that I have fulfilled my side of the bargain in respect of delivering the staff resources they need. I will now be looking for excellence in every aspect of the prison. It will be our joint expectation that when the Inspectorate returns we should be able proudly to point to the achievement of everything they would wish to see in a 21st Century local prison.

2. Conclusion

The Committee is invited to endorse the above vision for 2015 as the basis for the Council’s continuing collaboration with the prison.

3. Consultation

a) Policy Proofing Actions Required

n/a

4. Background Papers

The following background papers as defined in the Local Government Act 1972 were relied upon in the writing of this report.

Document title	Where the document can be viewed
Report on a full unannounced inspection of HMP Lincoln 20–24 August 2012 by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons	http://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprisons/
Report on an announced inspection of HMP Lincoln by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons 11–22 November 2013	http://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprisons/

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