**Prison Estate Transformation Programme**

**HM Prison and Probation Service**

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Dear Judi

Thank you for your letter of 26 September to the Prisons Minister, Rory Stewart OBE MP, about the allocation of men convicted of sexual offences to HM Prison Hollesley Bay. I have been asked to reply.

I understand that Helen Lewis and James Mallinder, respectively Chair and Vice Chair of Hollesley Parish Council, together with Thérèse Coffey MP, met the Minister on 30 October to discuss the Council‘s concerns. I hope this was a useful meeting and went some way to allaying Council members’ concerns.

May I begin by reiterating the comments I made in my letter to you of 29 August that the legitimate concerns of local residents over this change are recognised. It is right that the benefits of testing low risk prisoners in open prisons as they approach release are weighed carefully against the overriding need to protect the public from harm.

The Prison Service has already integrated men convicted of sexual offences into the populations of open prisons at HM Prisons Leyhill (Gloucestershire), North Sea Camp (Lincolnshire) and in low numbers at Prescoed (Monmouthshire). HMP Hollesley Bay has been chosen as this establishment offers the opportunity to improve options for the staged rehabilitation of offenders in supervised conditions and provides a better geographic distribution of rehabilitation options for these men as they prepare to re-enter society.

The prisoners will be subject to a robust risk assessment in line with all prisoners held at this prison. Some prisoners may be allowed out of the prison on licence for resettlement purposes. These are strictly controlled and approved by prison staff. All prisoners will be required to comply with individual licence conditions.

Robust risk assessment of prisoners’ suitability for open prison conditions has seen abscond rates fall to consistently low levels over the last 10 years; in the year to March 2018 there were 139 absconds across the whole open prison estate and 8 from Hollesley Bay. The vast majority of these are quickly recaptured and returned to custody.

There is no intention to proceed with this population change without full consideration of any concerns raised. We expect that it will take several months to plan implementation, and we will only proceed with introducing the new offender group when we are satisfied that this can be delivered safely without putting the public at risk.

I know that Jeff Orr, Governor, will continue to listen and work with Hollesley Parish Council and local residents over the coming months.

Yours sincerely

Stacey Tasker

**Copy**: Jeff Orr