**HOLLESLEY PARISH COUNCIL**

**Mrs Judi Hallett, *Clerk to the Council***

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3rd December 2018

Mr Rory Stewart OBE MP

Houses of Parliament

LONDON

SW1A 0AA

Dear Mr Stewart,

**Re: Changes to permitted residents at HMP & YOI Hollesley Bay**

Hollesley Parish Council met for its latest monthly meeting on 15th November 2018. One of the items on the agenda was a discussion regarding the correspondence sent and received in connection with the changes at HMP and YOI Hollesley Bay. Councillors had read a number of letters on this subject and it was felt that there was still some confusion over the current situation.

I have been asked to write to you seeking clarification over one key point – **has the decision been made to change the role at HMP & YOI Hollesley Bay to include sex offenders?** It was felt that this should be a simple ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answer. Councillors had hoped to establish this for themselves from the letters received but following discussions did not feel they could answer this with any certainty.

I have attached copies of the letters received and have underlined in red those parts to which I refer.

The first is a letter from the ex-governor of the prison, Declan Moore, dated 27th July 2018. It opens with the statement “*I am writing to inform you of a population change at HMP & YOI Hollesley Bay, which has been authorised at Ministerial level*.”

In the third paragraph, Mr Moore goes on to say that men convicted of sexual offences are held in open prisons at Leyhill and North Sea Camp and that, “*two additional open establishments have been identified as being suitable*...”. This was taken by councillors to mean that HMP & YOI Hollesley Bay **is** one of the two prisons that have been chosen.

Councillors felt that Mr Moore’s letter was quite clear and unambiguous; the decision to house sex offenders at the prison is one that had already been made at the highest level. He maintained this position when he addressed local people at a public meeting in Hollesley on 14th September 2018.

At our last meeting, Councillors commented that they were struggling to reconcile what Mr Moore had written, and said, with statements made in subsequent letters received.

Your letter to our Dr Therese Coffey MP, dated 6th September 2018, opens with a line regarding, “*the Ministry of Justice’s (MoJ) plans to hold category D men of sexual offences at HM Prison Hollesley Bay*.”

Councillors felt that, taken at face value, this statement indicated that this change was more than merely a proposal, or something being considered. This would appear to mirror Mr Moore’s position.

Similarly, councillors also noted that in the third from last paragraph of your letter HMP Thorn Cross is mentioned. Your letter states that having recognised the concerns of local people there (which apparently included the prison’s proximity to a primary school) “*we have reviewed the decision and will not progress with this change*”. Your letter goes on to say that, “*However, in relation to Hollesley Bay and its proximity to Hollesley Primary School, I am satisfied that subject to appropriate safeguards being put in place during implementation planning, we will be able to implement these changes safely*”. Councillors concluded that this could only mean that a decision has been made regarding HMP & YOI Hollesley Bay i.e. to proceed with the changes.

It was felt, however, that these statements were contradicted by your statement, (paragraph 3 of your letter) which states,

“*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*.”

The exact same statement appears in two letters we have received from Ms Stacey Tasker OBE. I have highlighted the paragraphs in her letters dated 29th August 2018 and 2nd November 2018.

It is this statement, in particular, which is causing some confusion. The first sentence could be interpreted as meaning that a decision has not actually been made at this time. Clearly, concerns have been raised regarding HMP & YOI Hollesley Bay, such as its proximity to our primary school. You have stated, however, that this has been taken into consideration and is not reason to halt the MoJ’s plans here.

In Ms Tasker’s 2nd November letter I have also highlighted the statement, “*HMP Hollesley Bay has been chosen*.....”.

I hope that you will understand why Hollesley’s councillors remain unclear as to the situation and why I have been asked to write to you seeking clarification. Should it be the case that a decision has not actually been made at this time could you please also let us know when this decision will be made?

As you will know, there was no engagement with the local community, or Parish Council, prior to Mr Moore’s announcement in the summer. As such, it is understandable that local people contacted the Parish Council seeking answers and representation. This is a decision that will, undoubtedly, have some impact on the people of Hollesley and the surrounding area. Whilst it would be fair to say that the majority of people, who have expressed their views, are opposed to the changes, the Parish Council has strived to remain impartial whilst trying to establish the facts and keep people informed. We very much hope that you agree that the local community deserves a straight answer to the question we have asked.

Kind regards,

Judi Hallett

Judi Hallett (Clerk to Hollesley Parish Council)