



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Public Audit Committee

Neil Rennick
Director-General Education and Justice
Scottish Government

By email

23 September 2024

Dear Mr Rennick

The 2022/23 audit of the Scottish Prison Service

Thank you for your letter of 20 August 2024, providing a response, on behalf of the Scottish Government, to the Public Audit Committee's recent report on [The 2022/23 audit of the Scottish Prison Service](#).

The Committee considered the response at its meeting on 12 September 2024 and agreed to write to you to request that a progress report on the implementation of some of the recommendations made in its report is provided in six months' time. This request is made in line with paragraph 31 of the Scottish Parliament Public Audit Committee section within [the Scottish Public Finance Manual](#).

The Committee requests that a progress report is provided on the following recommendations—

- **Performance of the current Scottish Courts Custody Prisoner Escorting Services (SCCPES) contract** (linked to recommendations 44, 73, 76, 77, 78, 102). The Scottish Government's response states that a number of different meetings are in place to monitor GeoAmey's performance against the SCCPES contract. The Committee requests that the progress report provides an update on performance in the following areas—
 - prisoner access to healthcare
 - bed watch activity
 - VIPER appointments
 - the recruitment and retention of staff.

- **The development of the new prisoner transport contract** (linked to recommendations 140, 154 and 155). The Committee requests that the progress report provides an update on the development of the new prisoner transport contract, including—
 - ensuring Scotland specific financial information will be available to help inform any future funding decisions
 - that pay and conditions will reflect the demands and requirements of the role
 - that the findings of the HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland’s thematic review of prisoner transport, once published, will be used to inform options for the new contract.

- **Separate financial reports for the SCCPES contract** (linked to recommendation 139). The Committee requests that the progress report sets out the status of the negotiations that are due to take place between the Scottish Prison Service and GEOAmev to provide separate financial reports for the SCCPES contract.

- **Lessons learned review** (recommendation 151). The Committee notes from your response that a lessons learned review has commenced on the current SCCPES contract in line with one of the report recommendations. It therefore requests that the progress report includes an update on the outcome of this review, and how it will inform the tender for the next prisoner transport contract.

- **Impact of overcrowding and double cell occupancy** (recommendation 192). The Scottish Government’s response states that it recognises the need for more systematic and reliable healthcare data for prisoners and that it is supporting the development of a Prison Healthcare Surveillance programme, led by Public Health Scotland. As part of the progress report, the Committee requests an update on this programme, including whether it is providing a better understanding of the mental health of prisoners.

- **Prison population** (linked to recommendations 190 and 193). The Committee requests that the progress report includes an update on the status of the independent review of sentencing and penal policy, which it notes is expected to report to Parliament by May 2026 at the latest. The Committee also requests that the progress report provides an update of the assessment and where appropriate consultation on the “wide range of medium and long term measures, including specialist secure health and social care provision, and alternative bail and remand accommodation” suggested by “academics, civil society and parliamentarians”.

The Committee asks that the progress report is provided by **Monday 31 March 2025**.

If you have any questions regarding this request, please do not hesitate to contact the Clerks to the Committee at publicaudit.committee@parliament.scot.

Yours sincerely,

Richard Leonard MSP
Convener

Contact: Public Audit Committee, The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP. Email [email publicaudit.committee@parliament.scot](mailto:publicaudit.committee@parliament.scot). We welcome calls through Relay UK and in BSL through Contact Scotland BSL.