

DAVID MOWAT MP

Jeremy Wright MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State
Ministry of Justice
102 Petty France
London
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Our ref: WS3436

19 May 2014

Dear Jeremy,

Many thanks for your letter of 13th May relating to Thorn Cross. I have also had a useful and detailed conversation with the Governor, Pia Sinha.

I have been contacted by numerous residents of Appleton Thorn who have concerns. These people fully understand the need for open prisons and the requirement to facilitate the release of prisoners to the community.

However, they are concerned about the following:

1) The changes in the status of the prison were not communicated well. As far as I am aware neither the local council or the local MP were informed in either 2008 or 2012. The consequence is that an unfortunate impression is left of the prison service trying to hide the impact of changes rather than being fully open with local stakeholders.

I would therefore request that you review the modus operandi of your officials and ensure that communication is better handled in future.

2) The level of absconders at the prison is about one a fortnight. This seems really high even for an open prison. I would ask you to review what measures can be put into place to reduce this.

Sensible options are enhanced physical security and more care as to the type and readiness of prisoners transferred to Appleton Thorn in the first instance.

3) Although not a specific issue at Appleton Thorn I would request that you also consider better controls on prisoners released on licence, from category D establishments. My understanding that these are not currently being "tagged" which seems surprising.

Member of Parliament for Warrington South

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A pervasive comment is that my constituents would welcome a general stiffening of the rules by which inmates are considered suitable for entry into category D prisons and also the conditions under which they are released on licence. There must be more accountability where decisions taken are subsequently shown to be wrong.

I look forward to your response.

Best Wishes

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