

Statement to parliament: Prison operator services framework competition

At the Justice Select Committee on 26 June, I reaffirmed the Government's commitment to building up to 10,000 modern and decent prison places to replace old, expensive and unsuitable accommodation, modernising parts of our prison estate.

Also at the Committee, I confirmed the intention to launch a competition to appoint a framework of prison operators from which we could select the operator for the new prisons including further prisons following expiry of current private sector contracts.

Today I can announce the launch of the Prison Operator Services framework competition through a notice which will be published in the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU) within the coming days.

Securing a framework of operators should reinvigorate the prison market by encouraging new providers to enter the custodial arena. It will also enable MoJ to more effectively and efficiently manage a pipeline of competition over the next decade. Once part of the framework, operators can choose to compete in shorter 'call off' competitions for the operation of individual prisons.

The first of these call-off competitions will be for the operation of the new build resettlement prisons at Wellingborough and then Glen Parva. These are being built using public capital, with construction expected to begin in late 2018 and late 2019 respectively.

HMPPS will not bid in the competition but will provide a 'public sector benchmark' against which operators' bids will be rigorously assessed. If bids do not meet our expectations in terms of quality and cost, HMPPS will act as the provider.

This competition is not about the difference between the public and private sector. It is about driving quality and innovation across the system. I am clear that through this competition we expect bidders to provide high quality, value for money bids that deliver effective regimes to meet the specific needs of prisoners. Our aim being to help them turn their lives around to prevent reoffending.

This Government remains committed to a role for the private sector in operating custodial services. The competition launched today will seek to build on the innovation and different ways of working that the private sector has previously introduced to the system. The sector has an important role to play, and currently runs some high-performing prisons, as part of a decent and secure prison estate.

We will ensure, through the procurement and contract management processes, that we have sufficient measures in place to have confidence in the delivery and maintenance of the contracted prisons over their lifetime.

A balanced approach to custodial services provision, which includes a mix of public, voluntary and private sector involvement has been shown to introduce improvements and deliver value for money for taxpayers.

The launch of the Prison Operator Services Framework underlines this Government's commitment to reform the prison estate, build much-needed prison places, improve standards of decency across the estate, and reduce reoffending.