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*Minister Brian Lenihan,  
Department of Justice, Equality  
& Law Reform,  
94 St Stephen's Green,  
Dublin 2.*

*13<sup>th</sup> December 2007.*

*Dear Minister,*

*The Midlands Prison Visiting Committee is pleased to present  
its Annual Report for the year 2007.*

## **Midlands Prison Annual Report 2007.**

### **Medical Services.**

*The committee welcomes the completion of the New Surgery Area. This new area has been up and running since February and has greatly enhanced the day to day administration of the Medical services here at the Midlands Prison.*

*The 2 resident Doctors remain in place and provide a full medical service to inmates. They are assisted by 15 nurses who provide 24 hour cover on a 7 day basis. The assignment of a full time Nurse Manager to this area in 2007 is seen as a very positive move for the medical area as a whole and will contribute greatly to future development here and lead to better communication between Doctors, Nursing Staff and management.*

- *The Dentist continues to provide a twice weekly service.*
- *An optician is available on request.*
- *A chiropodist is available on request.*

### **Psychiatric & Psychology Services.**

*Ms. Sarah Hume is our resident psychologist here at the Midlands Prison. Mr. Joseph Duffy who left in 2006 was replaced by Mr. Tim O'Higgins in February 2007 on a part time basis. He attended the Midlands 2 days per week but this arrangement ceased in November. The Governor was informed by the Senior Psychologist Mr. Paul Murphy that a psychologist would not be available to the Midlands for the foreseeable future. This leaves just one psychologist catering for the needs of 450+ prisoners. In view of the large number of life sentences and sex offenders at the Midlands Prison the committee considers this to be wholly inadequate and urges the need for two appointments to bring the service to an appropriate level. The committee feels that the psychological services should be improved to rehabilitate drug and alcohol dependant offenders as these prisoners may seek **compensation** in the future if this is not achieved while in prison, prior to release. A visiting psychiatrist conducts a clinic on a weekly basis. This service is augmented by two community psychiatric nurses who visit twice weekly ensuring that prisoners seeking the services of a psychiatrist can be seen within days. The committee feels that this service needs ongoing monitoring. A psychiatrist Dr O Connell attends the prison just once per week on an outreach basis.*

*The number of prisoners who are seriously psychiatrically disturbed is a cause for concern in all prisons. It is inappropriate to have such seriously ill patients incarcerated in prisons which are not equipped to cater to their special needs. The chronic shortage of beds at the Central Mental Hospital has resulted in prisoners who are not fit to be in prison remaining indefinitely without suitable facilities or treatment. The committee continue to be concerned about services in this area and are again asking for improvement.*

### **Probation & Welfare Services.**

*At last after 6 years the Midlands Prison has its full compliment of staff in this area. There is a total of 5 full time Officers along with a Senior Officer and 1 Clerical Officer. This greatly improves the service provided to prisoners in this area.*

### **Prisoner's Requests.**

*The committee saw a total of 34 prisoners during the year. Generally prisoners were seeking transfers and temporary release. No major complaints were received and in general prisoners seem satisfied with the regimes and conditions here at the Midlands.*

*Sex Offenders in general are requesting greater access to school and work facilities. The committee appreciates that in the case of this category of prisoner serious security issues have to be taken into consideration. Management are in constant liaison with the School endeavouring to broaden the services available to this particular group.*

### **Positive Sentence Management.**

*Monthly reviews continued to be held at the prison with the attendance of an official from the Operations Directorate. These meetings were also attended by the relevant Governor Grade, Chief Officer, Assistant Chief Officer, Chaplain and Probation & Welfare Officer for each individual wing along with the Head Teacher from the Educational Unit. Applications for transfer or temporary release were considered and sentences were managed positively by way of*

- *Programmes of education and/or work training suited to each prisoner's ability.*

- *Transfers to a less secure regime for prisoners coming towards the end of their sentences.*
- *Engagement with probation and welfare services i.e. Linkage to assist with accommodation and employment on release.*

### **Developments.**

#### ***Introduction of Passive Search Dog and New Security Measures.***

*The Search Dog has been working well all year. The committee welcomes the introduction of the New Canine and proposed New Security Unit. This is seen as a very positive move towards eradicating contra band from our prisons. Building work in the new search area in the prison is now complete and is expected to be fully operational as and from January 2008.*

*When this new system is fully operational it will be of benefit to the management and overall security of the prison. We fully support this development.*

#### ***Phone Blocking System.***

*The committee are pleased that the Midlands Prison was selected for the Pilot scheme for the operation of this. This is seen by the committee as a huge step forward in improving our overall security and combating crime in general. Work is ongoing and the system should be up and running before the end of the year.*

#### ***New Medical Area Building.***

*As previously mentioned this area was completed during the year. It consists of a new pharmacy, consulting areas for doctors & specialised services and a new area for the dispensing of methadone. There is also a new boardroom and staff facilities.*

#### ***Main Gate Area.***

*The above area has had to undergo refurbishment in line with our recent committal status here at the Midlands. There are now 2 holding cell areas here along with storage areas. Upstairs there is now a much needed staff training facility.*

### **Work/ Training/Educational Overview.**

*The wide range of activities available to occupy offenders during unlock hours continues to be fully utilised. The committee would again recommend that this area be extended to meet the demands of the prison population.*

*Throughout the course of the year the committee visited various areas throughout the prison including the Kitchen, Horticultural Area, Tuck Shop and Educational facilities. The committee are delighted to report a huge level of commitment and enthusiasm from both staff and prisoners in these areas.*

*The fully equipped kitchen is spotless with a full 28 day menu in existence. Averages of 17 Prisoners are employed here on a daily basis.*

*The Horticultural area speaks for itself from the minute you enter the prison grounds massive displays of flower beds and baskets are very noticeable. There are 20 prisoners working there on a daily basis increasing to 25 in the summer months. The prisoners employed here are all sex offenders.*

*The tuck shop is fully stocked and provides an excellent facility for prisoners. The committee notes the excellent scanning system in operation here whereby prisoners receive an itemised priced list of all their purchases which must be signed by them on receipt. This practice along with giving prisoners a sense of responsibility eliminates any future disputes or discrepancies from arising.*

*The Educational facilities are second to none. There are 39 teachers employed here on both a full time and part time basis. They have a daily average of 80 pupils. Courses vary from junior & leaving certificate to yoga, cookery and arts and crafts. The committee would like to compliment the teaching staff here for the enthusiasm and dedication that they display.*

*The committee would also like to mention here that overall the prison is spotless. This is a very positive reflection on both Management & Staff here at the Midlands.*

## **Conclusions.**

*2007 has been a good year for the Midlands Prison. The introduction of the New Security Units and the New Canine Unit can only enhance the security within the prison service as a whole. The committee acknowledges the number of Life sentences, Sex Offenders and prisoners serving sentences for serious gang land crimes that are housed in the Midlands which makes it increasing difficult to maintain safe custody.*

*It is with regret that we mention here the two unexplained deaths while in custody of Michael John Dineen and Gerard Cullen Brady during the year. To date post mortem results are not available. We extend the deepest sympathy to their families.*

*The fact that there has been no major incident throughout 2007 taking into account the introduction of the new security features, phone blocking systems etc. is in itself a great compliment to the Governor & Staff of the prison.*

*Finally we would like to thank the Governor, Mr. John O' Sullivan and his secretary Mary Rowan who we would like to welcome to the Midlands. We thank former secretary Yvonne O' Donoghue for her help over the years and wish her well. We would like to welcome you Minister Brian Lenihan and congratulate you on your appointment. We thank former Minister Michael McDowell for his positive contribution. Finally we commend all staff here at the Midlands Prison which is working well. We are proud to be on the Visiting Committee of this well run prison.*

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**Brigid Teefy (Chairperson)**

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**Colm Wylie**

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**Colette Fennelly**

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**John Sheehy**

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**Paddy Boland**

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**Jim Casey**

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**Michael Mc Keever**

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**Jack Bourke**

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**John Cronin**

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**Mary King.**

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**Nuala Halpin.**