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Richard Leonard MSP

Convener

Public Audit Committee
The Scottish Parliament,
Edinburgh,
EH99 1SP

By email: publicaudit.committee@Parliament.Scot

Reference: **The 2022/23 audit of the Scottish Prison Service – Progress Report to Public Audit Committee**

20 June 2025

Dear Convener,

Thank you for your letter of 2 June 2025 following my letter of 31 March 2025 updating on progress on specific recommendations from the Committee's consideration of the 2022/23 audit of the Scottish Prison Service (SPS).

Your correspondence sets out a request from the Committee for:

“further information on the consideration that was given to delivering prisoner transport services via a public sector model and on the value for money assessment undertaken to determine that a new commercial model of delivery was the best approach.”

I attach a response to this request which reflects input from the SPS colleagues.

I hope that the information provided here will reassure the Committee about the process followed in considering viable delivery models for the next iteration of the prisoner transport service. I am, of course, happy to provide any further clarification or updates to the Committee.

Yours sincerely,

NEIL RENNICK

Director-General Education and Justice,
Scottish Government

Further information on the consideration that was given to delivering prisoner transport services via a public sector model and on the value for money assessment undertaken to determine that a new commercial model of delivery was the best approach.

Scottish Government Ministers' decision to retender for a new service was supported by a comprehensive options appraisal undertaken by the Scottish Prison Service (SPS), which included consideration of public sector delivery models.

The options appraisal built on previous work by Deloitte for SPS in 2016, and identified 11 possible models – including 5 delivered by the public sector. Options were scored according to a range of key criteria including: time to deliver, managing risk, management of service delivery, innovation, prisoner welfare, and value for money.

The approach was grounded in consideration of value for public money, informed by the [Public Procurement Strategy for Scotland](#). Modelling indicated that for this service public sector delivery would incur an automatic increase in staff costs – estimated to be between 40-50% greater than private sector – due to public sector pay, pensions, annual leave and reduced working hours per week, with unknown costs for fleet, vehicle bases and control centre. Furthermore, limited recent experience within the public sector of delivering and managing a contract of this nature, meant that additional consultancy costs were likely to be necessarily incurred in order to provide additional expertise around logistics and data management services.

Beyond additional costs, it was assessed that Criminal Justice Partners would require at least 24 months lead in time to support a public sector model. This would be required to establish their own individual operating model, agreed areas of responsibility, escalation, accountability, potential funding requirements and reporting, with additional time (as yet unknown) to change legislation to enable compliant and legal operation of public sector staff.

Based on this assessment the option to re-tender for a new private sector contract scored higher across the agreed criteria than alternative public sector delivery models.