

MEDIA RELEASE

HOWELL SUCCESS OVER HUNTERCOMBE

7 June 2010

A senior official from the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) will be meeting local residents this Thursday evening 10 June to discuss the future of Huntercombe Young Offenders Institution (HMYOI).

NOMS agreed to attend the meeting arranged by the Henley MP, John Howell, following a discussion between the MP and the prisons Minister, Crispin Blunt MP, and intensive lobbying.

The MP had criticised NOMS for the lack of communication with local residents who live around and near Huntercombe YOI and for a lack of clarity and transparency over plans to change the youth offending institution into an adult prison.

This had left residents in the dark about what the change might mean. Huntercombe YOI and local residents share common services such as sewage, for example.

John said:

"This is an important change to the use of the Huntercombe site. We simply do not know what sort of effect, if any, this might have on the immediate area. I was, therefore, pleased that the Chief Executive of NOMS, Michael Spurr, rang to apologise for the lack of communication with me and local residents over this issue.

"He agreed willingly to my request that a senior NOMS official come to Huntercombe to discuss the reasons for the change and any implications which might arise. This will allow local residents to ask questions about a change happening in their own backyard."

Notes to Editors

In a letter to the MP dated 28 May, the Youth Justice Board (YJB) confirmed its intention to stop placing young people at HM Youth Offending Institution (YOI), Huntercombe, from 28 May 2010 and that the establishment will be returned to NOMS for use within the adult estate.

The YJB explained that it purchased 270 places at HMYOI Huntercombe as part of its responsibility for commissioning and purchasing places for children and young people under 18 sentenced or remanded to custody by the courts. It went on that due to a welcome and consistent reduction in demand for custodial places of approximately 20% over the past 18 months, it is no longer necessary, nor an efficient use of public funds, for the YJB to continue to maintain this capacity at Huntercombe.

It said that the YJB, in co-operation with NOMS, has created a robust process to ensure decommissioning exercises such as this are completed with the minimum disruption. On current planning, the exercise is scheduled to be completed in the next 8 to 12 weeks.