



Ministry
of Justice

Accounting Officer Memorandum

Accelerated Houseblocks Delivery Programme

HMP Norwich Major Refurbishment Project

It is normal practice for accounting officers to scrutinise significant policy proposals or plans to start or vary major projects and then assess whether they measure up to the standards set out in Managing Public Money. From April 2017, the Government has committed to make a summary of the key points from these assessments available to Parliament when an accounting officer has agreed an assessment of projects within the Government's Major Projects Portfolio.

Background and Context

HMPPS is delivering 20k additional prison places. This includes delivery of 14k additional places by 2031, which the Government committed to on election and announced as part of the 10-year Prison Capacity Strategy published by the Lord Chancellor in December 2024. The Accelerated Houseblocks Delivery Programme was initiated to ensure HMPPS provides additional, modern prison places. HMPPS is planning to deliver an increase of over 2,600 prison places through the Accelerated Houseblocks Delivery programme, at a mixture of Category B and C sites, including at HMP Norwich.

This memo provides an update on the HMPPS accounting officer responsibilities published on 22 September 2022 in relation to the Full Business Case (FBC) for the refurbishment project at HMP Norwich, approved in 2022.

Assessment against the accounting officer standards

Regularity

The Norwich FBC update is assessed as regular. The Prison Act 1952 includes that the Secretary of State may, with the approval of the Treasury alter, enlarge, or rebuild any prison and build new prisons. I therefore consider that the department has the required spending powers to progress the project to completion. The FBC update is fully compliant with other relevant legislation and the project has obtained legal input throughout its development.

Propriety

The Norwich FBC update is assessed as proper. The FBC update has passed our internal project and departmental governance. I am satisfied that all relevant governance and assurance procedures have been completed. The FBC update is fully compliant with the relevant legislation. The project is affordable within SR24 budgets, and has been prioritised based on its cost, feasibility, strategic fit and overall value for money.

Value for Money

The investment in Norwich has been assessed as delivering value for money. This is based on meeting the demand for prison places, delivering 170 Category B places through the refurbishment of decommissioned accommodation and delivering a design and specification that meets the operational requirements. Value for money has also been assessed through the total cost per place, based on overall costs which have been assured by cost consultants (industry specialists) and assessed against key set of criteria that takes into consideration strategic viability, deliverability and the time required to deliver the places.

Feasibility

The Norwich FBC update is assessed as feasible. The project is in the final stages of its lifecycle and the project management arrangements, internal governance and assurance processes are already in place and embedded to control, oversee and manage the build.

Conclusion

I have considered this assessment of the Norwich FBC update against the four accounting officer standards of regularity, propriety, value for money, and feasibility. I am satisfied that these responsibilities are met.

I have prepared this summary to set out the key points that informed my decision. If any of these factors change materially during the lifetime of this programme, I undertake to prepare a revised summary, setting out my assessment of them.

As the accounting officer for His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service, I approved this memorandum on 8 October 2025.

Title

This summary will be published on the government's website (GOV.UK). Copies will be deposited in the Library of the House of Commons and sent to the Comptroller and Auditor General and Treasury Officer of Accounts.

A copy has also been provided to the principal accounting officer for the Ministry of Justice, who has seen my assessment and endorsed my decision on the basis of my assurance that my accounting officer responsibilities are met.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "P. Copple". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "P" and a long, sweeping underline.

Phil Copple
HMPPS Chief Executive and Accounting Officer