

Statement by the Director General of the Irish Prison Service regarding the publication of the Inspector of Prisons Report on Limerick Prison.

The Director General of the Irish Prison Service, Michael Donnellan, today commented on the publication of the Inspector of Prisons Limerick Report and his first follow up Report by the Minister for Justice and Equality, Alan Shatter TD.

Speaking on the publication, the Director General said “The report highlights a number of issues in Limerick Prison which are of great concern to me. The Report is being taken very seriously by the Irish Prison Service and an action plan has been put in place to rectify the issues raised. Action has already been taken by prison management in relation to a number of issues such as cleaning and painting programmes, identification badges for prison staff, toilet patrols and library opening hours. As detailed in the Irish Prison Service Action Plan, a timeframe has been established to address the other issues identified by the Inspector in his Report.

In relation to regimes and services in the prison, including education, work/training and recreation, these issues will be addressed, inter alia, in the context of the Irish Prison Service Transformation Programme and the Task Review process which yesterday commenced in the prison. I am confident that the vast majority of the issues raised by the Inspector which have not already been remedied can be addressed in the short to medium term.”

“Many of the issues in the report stem from the joint problems of chronic overcrowding and Victorian accommodation. In relation to overcrowding I am committed to reducing the number of prisoners accommodated in Limerick from 290 to 220 once the new 179 cell accommodation block in the Midlands Prison is opened in Autumn 2012. In addition, it is also my intention to address the overcrowding issue in the female prison in the context of the development of an overall strategy for female prisoners” said the Director General.

“In relation to the older A and B Divisions of the prison, while it will not be possible to replace these overnight, all options available to the Prison Service to enhance and improve conditions there in the short term are being looked at. In the longer term the replacement of the A and B wings, including the introduction of in-cell sanitation will form a central part of the Irish Prison Service Strategic Plan 2012 – 2014 which I will be presenting to the Minister in the first week of April 2012.”

The Director General added, “It is regrettable that conditions in certain areas had deteriorated to the degree witnessed by the Inspector. However, it should be noted that enhanced cleaning and painting programmes have been established in the prison to ensure high standards of cleanliness at all times”.

The Director General further stated that the Irish Prison Service remained committed to working with the Governor of Limerick Prison and the Inspector of Prisons to address the issues contained in the Report.

Ends.