
Report To:	The Inverclyde Council	Date: 20 September 2013
Report By:	Corporate Director Environment, Regeneration & Resources	Report No: FJ/LA/1087/13
Contact Officer:	Fraser Jarvie	Contact No: 01475 712121
Subject:	Appointment of Member to the Visiting Committee of Greenock Prison	

1.0 PURPOSE

1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise the Council of the vacancy which exists on Greenock Prison Visiting Committee (PVC) arising from the resignation of Councillor Brooks and to seek approval of the appointment of a replacement member to this position.

2.0 SUMMARY

2.1 Greenock Prison requires a Visiting Committee (VC). This is a statutory requirement for Councils of the Prison's catchment area as detailed in the Prisons (Scotland) Act 1989. The principal duty of the Visiting Committee is to satisfy itself as to the state and administration of the prison and in particular the treatment of prisoners.

2.3 The relevant Local Authorities, including Inverclyde Council, are required to provide representation, based upon the likely prisoner demographic and subsequent percentage of the population of each Council.

2.3 Councillor Brooks who has served on the Committee for 6 years has intimated his intention to resign from the Committee as at 30 September 2013. Councillor Jones has expressed an interest in filling the position and has recently attended a meeting of the Greenock PVC to familiarise herself with the procedures. In addition she has secured a place on a national training course for prospective Prison Visiting Committee Members.

2.4 Prison Visiting Committees have been subject of review by the Scottish Government and are to be replaced by a system of independent monitoring under the auspices of HMCIP. In the meantime Prison Visiting Committees will still be required. Although a specific date has not yet been given for the introduction of the new system, it is expected that PVCs will require to operate for at least another year.

3.0 RECOMMENDATION

3.1 It is recommended that the Council appoint a new member to replace the vacancy on Greenock Prison Visiting Committee created by the resignation of Councillor Brooks.

**Fraser Jarvie
Depute Clerk**

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 There has been some uncertainty regarding the future of Prison Visiting Committees in Scotland, however it is thought that PVC's will be required for at least another year. The Cabinet Secretary for Justice announced in December 2011 that Prison Visiting Committees should be abolished and replaced with a Prisoner Advocacy Service. This announcement was followed by a debate in the Scottish Parliament on 2 February 2012. Following the debate, the Cabinet Secretary for Justice agreed to look again at independent monitoring. The Scottish Government then put forward proposals to abolish the Committees and replace them with independent monitoring under the auspices of HMCIP. Consultation was then carried out with key stakeholders during 2012 and finally Professor Andrew Coyle, an acknowledged expert in this field, was asked to review the Scottish Government proposals. Arising from the review by Professor Coyle, which recommended that Prison Visiting Committees should be abolished and replaced with independent Prison Monitors, made up of lay people, the Cabinet Secretary for Justice has taken the decision that HM Chief Inspector of Prisons is best placed to provide oversight and support of independent monitoring of prisons. It is intended that HMCIP will oversee four part time Prison Monitors for Scotland who will be supported by Lay Monitors at the local level. The Prison Monitors will in turn be further supported by an advisory group made up of key stakeholders from the Justice Sector who will be responsible for monitoring, appointments and training.

5.0 CONSULTATIONS

- 5.1 The Chief Financial Officer has not been consulted as there are no financial implications arising from the report.

6.0 EQUALITY

- 6.1 The post has to be filled by an elected Member of the Council. There are no equality issues arising.