

VALUE FOR MONEY

PUBLIC FINANCE INITIATIVE (PFI) CUSTODIAL SERVICES CONTRACT

Background

At the turn of the Millennium the Authority recognised that its custody estate was not meeting the demand and unable to adapt to changing requirements for the safe detention of people.

The combination of an ageing custody estate, with increasing demand and limited capital funding, drove the Authority to look at alternatives to deal with this challenging area of policing.

The Authority adding value

At this time, the Authority had limited capital options, so the exploration of a Public Finance Initiative (PFI) was an innovative but necessary consideration.

A 30 year PFI contract (known as the Project Agreement) was signed by Sussex Custodial Services Ltd (SCSL) and the Authority in August 2001. This contract provided for new facilities at Worthing, Chichester and Brighton, and for custodial services in those sites and at existing facilities in Crawley, Eastbourne and Hastings. A further contract (known as the Amending Agreement) was signed in March 2004 for a facility in Eastbourne and a secure pedestrian access to the Centre in Brighton, and included other changes to reflect evolving operational priorities.

The new Investigation Detainee Handling Centres (IDHCs) in Worthing, Chichester, Brighton and Eastbourne were opened between 2002 and 2005.

The PFI project and the PFI contract have been overseen by the PFI Board, which includes the Authority's Lead Member for Criminal Justice and the Authority's Treasurer, and is chaired by an Assistant Chief Constable.

Outcome

Overall performance has continued to be good, with penalty payments for contractual service failures continuing to fall which is a reflection of the continuous improvement approach adopted by the Authority and the Force.

Increased detainee throughput has inevitably led to more identification procedures being held, which have trebled since the commencement of PFI Services in 2002. More efficient filming in custody arrangements utilising video briefs are being piloted for the coming year to ensure continued improvement in this area of service delivery.

Over the last 12 months, Reliance Secure Task Management have used their own division, Reliance Medical Services, for the delivery of the forensic medical service to the Authority. Reliance Medical Services are still evolving from a service delivery perspective and have recently introduced a new performance monitoring system in order to more accurately measure contractual delivery and value for money.

The Authority and the Force have empathised with the PFI provider the need to continue to be innovative in its service delivery, assisting Sussex Police in liberating year-on-year efficiency savings.

The PFI financial arrangements have been scrutinised by the Authority's Management Audit Service and the highest rating of Full Assurance was awarded in the effectiveness of the overall controlled environment. The Audit Commission's Use of Resources Assessment has also identified the PFI Custodial Arrangements in Sussex to be of notable practice.

The contract also attracts attention from other police forces across the country who are keen to improve their facilities and service to the standard in Sussex. The Authority and the Force continue to push for continuous improvements in custody services in Sussex.

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