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HM Courts and Tribunals Service: Civilian Enforcement Provision

Thank you for contacting me about civilian enforcement officers.

Government Whips, of whom I am one, do not, by convention, sign Early Day Motions as doing so is likely to breach the Ministerial Code's rules on collective responsibility. I can comment, however, on the issues you raise.

The Government takes the recovery and enforcement of court fines extremely seriously. It is committed to ensuring that offenders with outstanding fines either pay or are brought back before the court.

It is encouraging therefore that a record £440.5 million was recovered in 2016/17. However, it is also important that the Government continues to look at how it can improve this service and provide the best value for the taxpayer in the years to come.

It is for this reason that the Government has been considering a range of options about how best to deliver this service. Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunal Service (HMCTS) currently uses private contractors known as Approved Enforcement Agencies (AEA) to undertake some of its enforcement functions. The work that HMCTS civilian enforcement officers do is already undertaken by these Agencies in many areas of England and Wales, where there are established links with the police.

The tender process will allow the Government to make informed decisions about which steps to take. As part of this process, discussions are also being had with providers to consider extending the current use of Approved Enforcement Agencies. However no decision has been made at this time. Ministers will engage with the National Police Chiefs' Council and local Police Forces once the details of the contracts to be awarded are known.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Kind regards,

Craig Whittaker MP