

From: David Oliver

18/03/2014

To: Paula Vennells

NOTE FOR CALL WITH JAMES ARBUTHNOT - 18 MARCH

Summary

1. You are speaking to James Arbuthnot today in advance of your meeting with MPs on 24 March. The call is scheduled for 1330. We have discussed the handling of this call with Martin and Mark and think that this call may provide an opportunity to delay or cancel the MPs meeting.
2. If you do delay the meeting we think you may want to offer two things to James:
 - An update note from Post Office on the Scheme that he could circulate to MPs.
 - Potentially a further meeting with you - ideally over dinner to both keep him in the loop and more importantly to build bridges in advance of any decision on the Linklaters work.
3. We face a number of challenges to make a success of the meeting:
 - **Second Sight** contacted James' office yesterday to raise concerns about what they can cover in the meeting. They feel they cannot, and should not, speak on behalf of the Working Group. However, they can offer their perspective on the investigations. Ian Henderson has informed James' office that he understands that it would be inappropriate to go into details given that the investigations are still works in progress, and that gesturing towards any conclusions at this stage would not be wise.
 - **Content** we are similarly constrained in what we can say at the moment given Tony Hooper's clear steer to keep Working Group matters confidential at this stage.
 - **Tony Hooper** commented at the last face to face Working Group that he felt MPs needed to be patient and he would, we feel, give short shrift to any briefing to MPs that cut across the Working Group's role.
 - **Potential changes to the Scheme** - Given this morning's meeting with Linklaters there is also a risk that Post Office any changes Post Office makes could make things more difficult if there is a challenging decision to communicate in the coming months.
4. The current agenda is set out below for your information:
 - a) Welcome and intro – JNA for 5 mins
 - b) Update on progress with mediation scheme and branch support programme – PV for 15 mins

- c) Second Sight update – 10 mins
- d) JFSA update – 10 mins
- e) Q&A – 20 mins

5. Should you wish to proceed with the MPs meeting we suggest you cover the following issues:

- Progress of the Scheme
- Attendees on 24 March
- Ground rules for 24 March
- Agenda for 24 March (at James' request)
- Second Sight and their performance
- Modification of the Scheme

Logistics

6. James' office can be reached on GRO and they will then patch you through to James.

David Oliver

18/03/2014

SPEAKING NOTE FOR JAMES ARBUTHNOT CALL

Delaying the MPs meeting

- Interested to get your thoughts on Second Sight's concerns about what they can cover in the meeting.
- Post Office faces similar constraints from Tony Hooper over what we can say.
- What is the current attendance from MPs looking like?
- Wonder whether we might be better updating parliamentarians in a different way?
- I could provide a briefing note for you to circulate to all interested parties.
- I would also be happy to provide you with a private briefing on where we are
- It would be also be good to do this on a slightly informal basis – perhaps over dinner?

Progress of Mediation Scheme

- We have received 150 applications for the Scheme.
- Overall we are progressing well but the pace is slower than was originally anticipated
- Where possible we are working with the subpostmasters to resolve issues as early as possible
- We anticipate the first case reaching mediation by the end of May 2014.

Attendees for 24th March

Post Office

- I will attend with Angela van den Bogerd to walk everyone through the Branch Support Programme and Chris Aujard to address any details raised on the Scheme

MPs

- It would be helpful if James could give any indication on the number of MP's/representatives likely to be present

Ground rules

- Useful to revisit ground rules set out in your email to MPs:

1. Individual case details not to be discussed
 2. Avoid skewing the handling of any particular case through lobbying
 3. Allow Working Group to administer the Scheme unimpeded – the Chair has asked for patience from MPs
- **Media** – understand from your office that are not doing any media. I think this is a helpful approach and I intend on following your lead

Second Sight

- I met with Second Sight on 24 February and this was helpful and productive.
- We are making good progress on their engagement letter. However they have been clear that they will not be able to finish their case load by end of October 2014 and we are jointly looking at options to address this.
- First case reports are in – I am not involved in the individual cases but I understand that it remains to be seen as happened in July they have evidence to support assertions about Horizon based on what Subpostmasters are saying.
- Still an issue around Second Sight's focus and the extent to which they are trying to deliver the Scheme as fast as possible – as they continue to discuss the unspecified "wider work" they are doing for you and MPs which is outside of the Scheme.

Modification of the scheme

- Exploring options with Second Sight to augment the Scheme's speed to deliver outcome sooner
- No decision yet made on the way forward