

Message

From: Rwarming [GRO]
Sent: 26/11/2014 21:43:40
To: <mediation [GRO]>
Subject: Fwd: Post Office cases - update

All FYI.

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: "ARBUTHNOT, James" [GRO]
Date: 26 November 2014 08:50:16 GMT
Subject: Post Office cases - update

Dear Colleague

On Monday 17 November Oliver Letwin, Andrew Bridgen, Mike Wood and I met Paula Vennells, the CEO of Post Office Ltd, and some of her staff to discuss progress of the mediation scheme. Also present at the meeting was Alan Bates of the Justice for Sub-Postmasters Association. I think it would be fair to say that it was not an easy meeting from anyone's point of view.

The MPs expressed concerns about the Post Office's challenging too many issues before cases even went to mediation, and we suggested that where the independent investigators, Second Sight, recommended that a case should go to mediation, there should be a presumption that that would then happen.

The Post Office said that they had done exactly what they had said they would do, and that in challenging cases within the Working Party they were doing what had always been set down as the process of the Working Party (though this point was questioned by Alan Bates).

In relation to our suggestion about a presumption in favour of Second Sight's recommendation, Paula Vennells said she would consider it and would take the matter to the Post Office Board. I believe we should give her the opportunity to do that. The media are wanting to talk, but I intend at the moment not myself to give interviews until the Post Office has had a reasonable time – not open-ended - to consider it.

I am sorry to relay this disappointing news, but I do believe that there still is a chance to bring this very unhappy saga to a conclusion which will not satisfy everybody but which will be better for most than before we embarked on it.

On a different point, it does seem unlikely that resolution will have been reached by the General Election, at which, as you may know, I shall not be standing. I have (with the agreement of the MPs mentioned in this letter) discussed the matter with Kevan Jones, who would in due course be happy to take over from me the leadership of the matter. I am sure he will have your full support, as he will mine.

As soon as I have more news I will be in touch.

Yours ever,

James

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