POL00057661

FACT SUMMARY Josephine Hamilton (JH)
On 9th march 2006 Auditors identified £36,644.89p missing concerns following on 6th march 2006 to return excess £25k cash holding. Instead on 7th march 2006 JH went off sick.
JH interviewed in presence of her solicitor she only supplied a prepared statement stated Inadequate training and staff use same horizon password.JH denied theft or dishonesty.
JH refused to answer questions. Requested many times in interview to advise who else worked in the post office, otherwise everyone who worked in the shop was potential suspects and would be asked whether they have stolen the money.
Discrepancies identified, JH had produced the Branch trading statements, cash accounts Cash in hand declared as true. JH only person who worked at the post office.
Statement from Ms Partridge ---not responsible for fraud. She stated she never assisted JH in post office balancing, never completed cash declarations or branch trading and never accessed safe. Ms Partridge given training by JH.
Statement from Fujitsu – Discrepancies not due to system errors.
JH lack of training? JH already knew system and worked to good standard as worked at Warm borough SPOB since 24th December2001 as officer in charge until appointed suppostmister in October 2003.When interviewed for sub postmaster training not deemed necessary. However if JH felt needed assistance she could request this at any time appears no such request was made.
Assessment of evidence by principle Lawyer advised there is sufficient evidence to prosecute for theft of £36644.89p (audit shortage) date of on or before 7th march 2006.

On 7th march 2006 on serving committal bundle on defence and court; committed for trial to Winchester crown court.(this consist of witness statements and exhibits District judge considers the evidence and decides whether there is primary facie case for the defendant to answer)

Prosecution counsel advices there is sufficient evidence to extend the period of theft and add additional 14 counts of false accounting to see whether JH accepts falsification or whether she contends that she completed documents accurately.
Prosecution counsel advised there is clearly strong evidence of theft to go to trial.
JH with advice from her counsel offers to plead guilty to 14 counts of false accounting and also undertake to pay full amount of loss of £36444.89p.The of charge of theft not to be dropped until full amount is paid by JH and if need be to recovery losses prosecution will proceed by confiscation (POCA2002).JH guilty plea accepted on JH recognition that JH had the Money (short of theft) and plea on the basis that loss was due to computer not working properly will not be accepted.

On 19th November 2007 at Winchester crown court, JH enters guilty pleas to 14 counts of false accounting (2-15).and sentenced in January /February 2008.
Prosecution received cheque from JH solicitors in the sum of £37644.89p which included £1000 costs ordered by Winchester crown court.