
From: Swinson MPST[/O=DTI/OU=DTIHQ/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=SWINSONMPST]
Sent: Tue 02/07/2013 6:23:56 PM (UTC)
To: Gibson Will (ShEx) [REDACTED] GRO [REDACTED] Batten Peter
(ShEx) [REDACTED] GRO [REDACTED]
Cc: Whitehead Mike (ShEx) [REDACTED] GRO [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Potential Arbuthnot encounter this evening

thanks will do

Claire Rannard | Private Secretary to Jo Swinson - Minister for Employment Relations and Consumer Affairs |
Department for Business, Innovation & Skills | [REDACTED] GRO [REDACTED]
www.bis.gov.uk

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From: Gibson Will (ShEx)
Sent: 02 July 2013 19:07
To: Batten Peter (ShEx); Swinson MPST
Cc: Whitehead Mike (ShEx)
Subject: Re: Potential Arbuthnot encounter this evening

Thanks Peter,

This is a great note. My only additional comment would be that POL understands JA may also have floated with the Speakers office the idea of his making a statement. This is just a rumour at this stage.

Claire, I'd suggest you liaise directly with Martin Edwards at POL to set up the update call with Paula tomorrow AM. As I mentioned, one of us at least would also be keen to listen in.

Will.

From: Batten Peter (ShEx)
Sent: Tuesday, July 02, 2013 04:37 PM
To: Swinson MPST; Gibson Will (ShEx)
Cc: Whitehead Mike (ShEx)
Subject: Potential Arbuthnot encounter this evening

Hi Claire

I understand that you spoke to Will earlier about James Arbuthnot's request for a phone call about the Second Sight review into ex-subpostmasters complaints about the integrity of POL's Horizon accounting system. We spoke a short while ago and you flagged that there are a number of votes this

evening and James Arbuthnot may seek to speak to Jo in the lobby and requested a short note.

In June 2012, POL appointed Second Sight (forensic accountants) to undertake an independent review of POL's Horizon accounting system. As the review has been conducted independently, neither POL or BIS has seen a draft of the report. We believe that James Arbuthnot has not (or certainly should not have!) seen a draft either. ShEx and POL are expecting to receive a draft copy of the report on Friday. Second Sight are preparing to publish their report on Monday 8 July.

James Arbuthnot has been informally championing ex-subpostmasters who have expressed concerns about the integrity of the Horizon system. He led calls for a review of the system, and acted as a conduit for passing cases to Second Sight (thereby preserving BIS and POL independence). POL has suggested to BIS that the review has not found issues with the accounting integrity of the system, but could be critical of the training and support provided by POL to subpostmasters with respect of certain operating procedures - however we are not in a position to definitively confirm this.

James Arbuthnot is meeting Paula Vennells tomorrow (Wednesday) and we strongly recommend that Jo try to avoid speaking to James Arbuthnot until he has spoken to Paula, and Paula has had an opportunity to brief Jo from the POL perspective. In any respect, owing to the fact that neither Paula, nor James Arbuthnot, nor Jo will have seen (or should have seen) a draft by tomorrow, it is likely that any views expressed by James Arbuthnot this evening will be speculative. Given his role as champion, we suspect that Arbuthnot is seeking to brief this report, and understand that he is trying to arrange broadcast interviews for the end of the week.

Should Arbuthnot raise the issue with Jo directly this evening, the following lines would be appropriate:

"Matters relating to the operation of the Horizon accounting system are the responsibility of Post Office Ltd. The Government does not play a role in operational matters."

"As you know, POL commissioned an independent report of the Horizon system. As this is an independent review I have not seen its findings, and it would not be appropriate for me to comment or speculate at this stage."

If she is pushed:

"I understand that you are speaking to Paula Vennells, CEO of Post Office Ltd tomorrow. Given the operational nature of this issue, it makes sense for you to speak to Paula in the first instance."

As explained, Will is currently out of the office and has not had an opportunity to clear the above. I have copied him in so that he can make any comments before the voting starts this evening!

Best wishes
Peter

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