

Briefing for Paula / James Arbuthnot meeting

INTRODUCTION

- **Thank** you for agreeing to the call, especially so soon after you return from Defence Committee business
- I thought it would be good for us to **touch base** about the review and ensure we have the same opinion on how to **bring it to a conclusion**. I know we share the same aims and I want to **reiterate the Post Office's commitment to this process**. I am grateful to you for the way you have supported it, and for making this clear
- As you know Alice and I are very keen to ensure that this **independent review gets to the truth about** the allegations raised against Horizon. If there are systemic issues with the system then we will of course take steps to address them
- We, like you, want this review be **finished in such a way that we can quickly respond to any findings**.
- It has taken longer than either of us thought and we always have to have a regard to the best use of public money

WHERE HAVE WE GOT TO SO FAR

- **I will set out the position as I see it. There are two issues and I believe we should separate them. One is whether there are systemic failures in Horizon. The second is whether e can improve the way we train subpostmasters or improve processes.**
- Second sight currently have **29 MP cases and 20 cases leading to 27 spot reviews (themes from JFSA) (CONFUSING - DO WE MEAN 29 MP cases and 20 cases received from the JFSA. From these cases 27 themes have emerged?)**
- **Some of these themes are, we believe, not issues relating to systemic issues with horizon. This is potentially confusing the picture. Where issues such as training are emerging we will of course address them. But the breadth of issues ranged seems to be stretching beyond the original scope of the inquiry.**
- We understand that you have suggested Second Sight focus on **3 of these MP cases to bring them to conclusion including a report before the summer recess. This would enable us and you to consider whether there are commons themes relating to systemic defects in the horizon system.**
- Excellent idea. We believe this step makes sense in that it will clarify the question at the heart of this - whether there are systemic issues in horizon.
- From the reviews 2nd Sight are highlighting process improvements for us and **let me assure you we are already implementing these as they arise through the review. I will ask my team to communicate with you on this separately - there will be a package of meAsures we wish to take to improve training and processes.**
- On the 2nd Sight work, we have asked them to give us **an end date** by when they will have completed **all** the MP cases and the spot reviews.
- Unfortunately we are being told that half of the MP cases submitted do not enough evidence for 2nd Sight to investigate.

- New cases are being submitted, 2 more this week. We need to **stop new cases coming into the review or we will never finish**. I would suggest we need a different process for new cases coming forward.
- We already have a review process in the Business and I think we need to **incorporate the new cases into this process but with my personal assurance James that there will be a new Senior Management oversight**. I would suggest cases come into our Company Secretary who will give them this rigorous oversight. We would communicate with MPs as we assess each case.
- 2nd Sight are saying they could complete all the MP cases for which they have enough evidence to review, and the spot review, and have their report written **by the end of October**
- This would mean that we would get (a) findings on the three selected MP cases by recess and (b) a full report on those cases it is possible to consider by the end of October (IS THIS WHAT WE ARE SAYING? ITS NOT CLEAR.)
- This seems to me to be a good way forward. You will appreciate that we do need a cut off. With a business as complex as that of the post office there will always be cases, whether caused by systems or processes, where questions are raised.
- This is right, particularly for a responsible company such as ours, and it is right that we take steps to investigate. We do so thoroughly and I can assure you that we would continue to do so as business as usual. These issues are very important to us.
- It is also worth stressing that this is a vast business dealing with almost 20 million transactions/customers every week.
- What are James' view

GOING FORWARD

- **So to reiterate, i suggest that we** Agree that 2nd Sight focus initially on the 3 MP cases and the spot review relevant to those cases
- Agree that no more cases can go into the review and how we will deal with them
- Suggest that James goes back to 2nd Sight about the 15 MP cases which they cannot take forward, as they are currently not in the review
- Would James be willing to write to 2nd Sight to clarify that this is what how they should bring the review to a close
- The most difficult issue is how to deal with JFSA after the review is complete. I am of course hoping that the review will find no systemic problems with Horizon but I know we need to a build relationship with JFSA and Alan Bates. My thoughts are James that he would be good person to have on a **Horizon User Forum which might meet quarterly and help raise issues to the business**.
- You may want to offer this **Can I suggest that I ask Alwen to contact Janet to organise a meeting after recess so that we could discuss this point further. It would also be good to consider the stakeholders for the review and how they are likely to respond to any report.**

DISCUSSION

BACKGROUND NOT FOR JAMES

I do not suggest you discuss specific cases

Stakeholders

Stakeholder	Response	Recommended Approach
MPs	May not be satisfied that their cases were not included in the review	Meeting with each MP, 2 nd Sight/ or 2 nd Sight and Post Office to take them through the details of their case. Note: not all cases have provided enough detail to enable a thorough review, however we could talk about findings in similar cases
JFSA	JFSA may respond negatively and could withdraw support. They could take their views to the media.	Maybe we have to accept that no matter what we do they will not be happy unless systemic issues are found, nonetheless I would like to see if we can positively engage with JFSA: Post Office could invite JFSA to become part of a Horizon user group. We could ask JFSA on an on-going basis to help us identify which new cases warrant further investigation as sub postmasters report issues in the future., although this would not be through 2 nd Sight.
Media	Any findings will generate media interest, we have to be prepared with our proactive messages before the report is published	We should work together to ensure our communication messages are aligned and reflect the good work that has gone into this investigation.