

From: Swinson MPST[/O=DTI/OU=DTIHQ/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=SWINSONMPST]
Sent: Tue 09/07/2013 11:22:24 AM (UTC)
To: 'Dan York-Smith' [GRO]
Cc: 'Robin Gordon-Farleigh' [GRO]; Cable MPST [GRO]; SPAD Cable MPST [GRO]; Gibson Will (ShEx) [GRO]; Whitehead Mike (ShEx) [GRO]; Batten Peter (ShEx) [GRO]; Swinson MPST [GRO]; Fallon MPST [GRO]; Boughen Aileen (Communications) [GRO]
Subject: RE: Post Office - potential for Urgent Question

Dan

Here is the text of Jo Swinson's Oral statement, which will be sent over to the Opposition. It highlights that Royal Mail is a separate business to the Post Office.

Best

Emily

Text

Yesterday evening an interim report into alleged problems with the Post Office Horizon computer system was published. The report was commissioned by Post Office Ltd from external forensic accountants, Second Sight.

The Horizon system records all transactions conducted at every post office counter across the country. The Government welcomes the publication of this interim Report and the Post Office's statement in response.

Although Post Office Ltd is 100% owned by Government, the company operates at arm's length as an independent commercial business. The Government does not play any role in operational matters.

It is important to note that the issues in the report have no impact on Royal Mail which is an entirely separate business.

It is also important to be clear that, contrary to misleading media reports, the review explicitly confirms that *"we have so far found no evidence of system-wide problems with the Horizon software"*

The very small number of subpostmasters who have experienced issues with the Horizon system are a minute proportion of the tens of thousands of people who have been successfully using the system across the network of over 11,500 branches on a daily basis since 1995. Out of 68,000 users, only 47 cases have been put forward to the Review.

I want to emphasise that the interim report makes no comment about the safety or otherwise of any conviction of a subpostmaster for fraud, theft or false accounting.

Equally, even if it had done, the Government cannot intervene in the legal process to review or appeal past convictions. These are matters which can only properly be dealt with by the relevant judicial authorities.

The interim report published yesterday analysed 4 cases. It did find that there was scope for the Post Office to improve aspects of its support and training for subpostmasters. The Post Office has already taken steps to do so.

The Post Office has further proposed a number of measures to build on some of the points made in the Second Sight report about support and training for subpostmasters. I very much welcome these initiatives as, I understand, does my Hon Friend the Rt hon. James Arbuthnot who has played a key supporting role in

identifying cases for examination in this Review.

The Post Office statement issued yesterday welcomed the broad thrust of the report's findings and outlined three initiatives to deal with the issues raised.

Firstly, they will set up a working party to complete the review of cases started by Second Sight. This will consider all 47 cases brought forward by the Justice for Subpostmasters Alliance (JFSA) and MPs. The JFSA have been invited to join this working party.

Secondly, an independent figure will chair a review to determine how best to adjudicate disputed cases in future. Again the JFSA and other stakeholders will be invited to take part in this process.

And finally a new Branch User Forum will provide a channel for sub-postmasters and others to raise issues around business processes, training and support, at the highest level.

The company will be taking forward these proposals as an urgent priority.
I commend this statement to the House.

From: Swinson MPST
Sent: 09 July 2013 10:39
To: 'Dan York-Smith'
Cc: Robin Gordon-Farleigh; Cable MPST; SPAD Cable MPST; Swinson MPST; Gibson Will (ShEx); Whitehead Mike (ShEx); Batten Peter (ShEx)
Subject: FW: Post Office - potential for Urgent Question
Importance: High

Dan

For background, here is a short note we sent to Alistair Carmichael that provides some background for you on the issue.

Our private office will share a copy of the draft oral statement with you this morning. You noted on our call the importance of it being clear the Post Office is a separate company to Royal Mail given the RM statement tomorrow.

Thanks

Emily

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From: Swinson MPST
Sent: 09 July 2013 08:52
To: 'carmichaela@bis.gov.uk' **GRO**
Cc: Cable MPST; SPAD Cable MPST; Swinson MPST; 'crabbs@bis.gov.uk' **GRO**; 'johnj@bis.gov.uk' **GRO**
Subject: Post Office - potential for Urgent Question
Importance: High

Alistair

You and Jo Swinson spoke last night on the potential for an urgent question on the Post Office today. I understand you

will speak to the Speaker before 9.30am to help put forward the Government's arguments on why this urgent question should not be granted.

Please find attached the report, as you discussed with Jo last night. I also attach a short note, which highlights background and relevant paragraphs in the report that support the Government's arguments.

<< File: POL Interim Report Signed.pdf >> << File: POST OFFICE LTD COMPUTER SYSTEM (2).doc >>

I am also copying in Stephen Crabb for background, who has been in touch with this office on the potential for an urgent question after James Arbuthnot raised the issue with him.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch before 9.30am if you would like any further information.

Best

Emily

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