



Initial Complaint Review and Mediation Scheme

ExCo Sub-Committee

Response to JFSA Letter

23 April 2014



Background

- Alan Bates has written to Jo Swinson (dated 16 April).
- His letter raises concerns about the Scheme operation and breaches the confidentiality of the Working Group discussions.
- This meeting is to discuss the handling and response to the letter both strategically (what it means for the Scheme and Post Office's relationship with JFSA) and more tactically (how do we handle the correspondence, who do we share it with and who replies and in what terms).



Consideration

Strategic

- Provides opportunity to change the terms of engagement between Post Office and the Working Group.
- Need to consider whether the trust between Post Office and JFSA has irretrievably broken down.
- Give a clear reason to make large scale and sweeping changes to the way that Post Office handles the Scheme (should it wish to do so).
- Options:
 1. End the Scheme immediately.
 2. Suspend the Working Group pending consideration of Post Office response.
 3. Remove JFSA access to Post Office material.
 4. Remove JFSA from the process (in the knowledge that this will probably cause the fracture of the WG).
 5. Refer to Tony and leave to him to handle.
 6. Refer to Tony with a strong Post Office position.
 7. Ignore for now and feed this into sub Board process.
 8. Ignore and rise above it.

Tactical

- Need to agree handling of the letter
 1. Subject to BIS agreement it is suggested that:
 2. BIS pass the letter to Paula Vennells for response
 3. Due to the seriousness of the breach of confidence Paula passes the letter to Tony Hooper for his information.
 4. Chris Aujard to follow up with a call to Tony. NB we do not expect Tony to respond this side of the weekend.

An early draft letter for consideration follows but whether to send any letter and the exact content and tone is one of the issues to discuss.



Draft Letter from Paula to Alan Bates

Dear Alan,

Your letter of 16 April to the Minister for Postal and Regulatory Affairs has been passed to me for reply as the matters it raises are operational concerns which are my responsibility.

I was very concerned at the content of your letter and the manner in which you have chosen to raise your concerns. As a member of the Working Group and a signatory to the Terms of Reference you are well aware of the confidentiality that surrounds the process, indeed you are one of the architects of the process.

The Scheme documentation (which you agreed) and the Terms of Reference make clear that it is the role of the Working Group to oversee the administration of the Scheme under the Chairmanship of Sir Anthony Hooper. I was therefore very disappointed that you had not only broken confidence but done so in a way which excluded the Chair and other members of the Working Group.

Post Office has up to this point worked collaboratively with JFSA to co-design the Scheme. Post Office has committed significant resource and public money to fulfil our role and responsibilities in relation to the Scheme. Such an arrangement must be based on mutual trust and respect. In my view that trust has been damaged not only by the fact that you sent the letter but by the content as well. I will reflect on Post Office's next steps over the coming days.

As I have done with similar correspondence passed to me about the Scheme I have passed your letter on to Sir Anthony Hooper for his consideration.

Yours etc

PV