

Message

From: Mark R Davies [GRO]
on behalf of Mark R Davies [GRO]
Sent: 24/10/2014 07:23:47
To: Alice Perkins [GRO]
CC: Chris Aujard [GRO]; Paula Vennells [GRO]; Belinda Crowe [GRO]; Gavin Lambert [GRO]
Subject: Re: Correspondence with James Arbuthnot's office : a quick update and next steps
Attachments: image001.png; image002.png

Dear Alice

I think this works very well.

Mark

Sent from my iPhone

On 24 Oct 2014, at 07:43, "Alice Perkins" [GRO] wrote:

Thank you Chris. It is v helpful to see this.

I don't think we should be surprised by this - you flagged up v clearly that taking the steps we are taking would at some point cause a reaction. And we have long suspected some of the behaviours you have referred to. As a small aside, this is the first time JA has ever written to my personal email address and I have no idea how he got that.

I am happy with the timeline you suggest - we must reply to JA today but it may be enough for me to do so if Paula wants to wait till Monday.

In drafting them though, we must reflect the fact that he is a senior backbench MP and we have had good conversations with him in the past, albeit that he has an axe to grind and has not always been transparent with us. The really key thing is that he hears our side of the story and in fairness, he is giving us that opportunity, albeit with very little notice. If Paula could see him on her own with no-one else in the room that might be the best we could hope for but he may well not agree to that.

I think my reply should be very brief but friendly - something like:-

"Thank you for your email (which strangely arrived in my personal inbox which I see much less regularly).

I am very sorry that you feel you may have to question the Post Office's good faith in the way the Sub-Postmasters' cases are being handled. As you know, feelings understandably run high on this issue and it is very important that you understand the facts of the matter.

I am very glad that you want to hear the Post Office's point of view before taking any action.

Paula has had a well-deserved 3 days of leave this week and as luck would have it, I understand that your letter to her arrived on the first day she was away. I know that she will be in touch with you as soon as she possibly can and that she will want to be as frank with you as I know you will be with her.

Yours ever

Alice"

Perhaps you could let me know this morning whether you are happy with that?

Thanks

Alice

From: Chris Aujard [GRO]
Sent: Thursday, October 23, 2014 09:18 PM GMT Standard Time
To: Alice Perkins; Paula Vennells [GRO]

Cc: Mark R Davies [GRO]; Belinda Crowe [GRO];
Gavin Lambert [GRO]
Subject: Correspondence with James Arbuthnot's office : a quick update and next steps

Dear Both

I thought it might be useful to drop you a short note to let you know where we got to this evening with James Arbuthnot's office. By way of background:

1. <!--[if !supportLists]--><![endif]-->On Tuesday Paula's received a letter from James Arbuthnot asking for a meeting.
2. <!--[if !supportLists]--><![endif]-->His office followed up with two subsequent emails from Janet (on Wednesday and today), the first chasing a response to the letter and the second, saying that Ron was trying to contact Paula to tell her how things were going from his perspective. In both emails Janet mentions, in a slightly menacing manner, that James is being approached by the media.
3. <!--[if !supportLists]--><![endif]-->This morning Ron contacted Belinda asking for Paula to call him. Belinda spoke to Ron who said that James (and others) had asked him to speak to Paula about his concerns with the Scheme.
4. <!--[if !supportLists]--><![endif]-->This afternoon James emailed Alice, copied to Paula expressing concern about the Scheme.

Given the above, and particularly in view of fact that this all feels rather orchestrated, I placed a call to James's office around 5:00pm tonight to offer to discuss the role and functioning of the Working Group. Janet answered - her response was curt, dismissive and quite aggressive: she declined to listen, repeatedly interrupted me in my efforts to offer a call to James. It took me several attempts to persuade her to agree to pass my message onto James, though she ultimately did. I followed up my offer up with an email confirming my willingness to speak. However, as it turns out, she had in the meantime left a message on my mobile to say that James had declined my offer of a call as he only wants to speak to Paula and no one else (I am not clear how she got hold of James so quickly as he was meant to have tied up). [By way of an aside, to start with, she thought that I was Ron (from Second Sight) when her tone was both very friendly and welcoming!]

In light of the above, Belinda has been developing a handling plan, the elements of which include a draft letter for you, Paula, to send to James, and a suggested response for you, Alice, to James' email. I am hoping that this will be finalised tomorrow morning, and that we will be able to circulate the responses then along with our more general thoughts on the way forward. In the meantime I would suggest that we hold our line that we are not prepared to discuss the Scheme as it is confidential.

Belinda – please do jump in if you think that I have missed anything of importance!

With kind regards

Chris

PS – many apologies that this brief update is so long!

Chris Aujard I General Counsel

<image001.png>

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[GRO]



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