

Post Office Horizon Meeting

14:30, 19 October 2015

House of Lords

Speaking notes

- Focus on Post Office's MORAL BEHAVIOUR - its CONDUCT throughout.
- This was a project to put to bed the increasing concerns:
 - to seek the truth
 - to achieve finality.
- What we have now is a FAR WORSE SITUATION:
 - the number of people who are worked up about this is now FAR GREATER than the original 150
 - it's probably TOO LATE now to avert further escalation.
- At the outset, way back in Mid-2012, both Ian Henderson and I and, vitally, the JFSA and many MPs, were convinced that the assurances given by Post Office's Chairman, its CEO and its General Counsel (that they really did want to GET TO THE TRUTH and recognise any past errors) were genuine. Indeed, we would never have accepted the assignment had we not been convinced of that. Nor would the JFSA and the MPs have signed up to it. This was 'Job 1'. Later, a narrower-scoped assignment ('Job 2') took its place.
- Post Office's initial assurance - to all parties - was that ALL CASES WERE WELCOME... INCLUDING CASES WHERE THERE HAD BEEN A CRIMINAL CONVICTION. That all changed, such that, now, Post Office has been refusing to proceed to Mediation in any case where the Applicant has been convicted (even of False Accounting). Post Office seems also to have taken advantage of the Statute of Limitations, reinforcing the cynical view, held by many parties, that its legal team has used the Mediation Process simply to waste time.
- We became familiar with 'Post Office WEASEL WORDING', i.e. seemingly compelling but incomplete denials such as on Balance Alteration; Suspense Accounts; and ATMs.
- Post Office's failure to investigate meant that it never identified systemic flaws and 'designed them out' of its Horizon systems and associated processes. Had Post

Office investigated it would have found out that Fujitsu was doing things behind its back (e.g. the 500,000 entries in one night).

- We were, however, happy with the team of 'Case Handlers' that Post Office assigned to carry out its own investigations into each of the 150 cases. While none of those twenty or so long-service employees were experienced investigators, they were knowledgeable in Counter Operations and the team leaders seemed to have a good - and sympathetic - attitude. Their investigations were, however, seriously limited because some key information, such as that included in Post Office's Legal Files, were out of bounds to them.
- We were also very happy with the appointment of Sir Anthony Hooper as Chairman of the 'Working Group'.
- There seems to us still to be a dearth of EXTERNAL DNA in Post Office's middle and senior management and, in consequence, there seems to be little or no experience of NORMAL CORPORATE BEHAVIOUR.
- Post Office's in-house and external legal teams seem to dominate and this generates legal-led, rather than legally-advised-but-management-led decisions. Absurdly, throughout the Horizon Investigation Process, Post Office's EXTERNAL Legal Advisors were the same firms that had been involved from the outset. Post Office's seemingly bottomless pocket seems to have funded punitive and retaliatory - and in some cases costly - civil and criminal actions that ordinary, commercially-driven, companies would, in our experience, never have initiated.
- Training and support inadequacies (which Post Office wrongly asserts as its principal Horizon-related failing) is a real issue but Post Office seems unable or unwilling to implement necessary solutions - such as sending to branches emails, with PDF attachments, that FULLY EXPLAIN what mistakes were made; how they should be corrected; and how their repetition can be prevented. Real time PHONE CALLS to the Helpline were - and remain - simply inadequate. SPMRs receive NO WRITTEN RECORD of what they or their staff have been advised to do.