

Report into the behaviour of the security investigation regarding the alleged fraud committed by Michael Mann, Post Office Manager, Turnstone Road Post Office

Report by: Colin Stretch

Date: 9 December 2013

Introduction and Terms of Reference

This report details the findings from the series of fact finding interviews I completed at the request of Fay Healey Chief HR Officer following the suicide of Michael Mann. The precise terms of reference were as follows;-

The Head of Fraud letter contains direct allegations around the conduct of Mr Bradshaw and Mrs Rose. These would appear proper to commit to an internal fact finding that should, to offer maximum transparency, be conducted outside the line

Methodology

With the agreement of Angela Van Den Bogerd and Dave Pardoe the approach I adopted was to interview the individuals employed by Post Office Ltd who attended Turnstone Road Post Office on 16 August 2013. These individuals were;

Helen Rose and Steve Bradshaw – Security Managers

Janet Holding – Field Support Officer – Lead Auditor on 16 August 2013

Tina Clune and Stephen McNally – Field Support Officer- Support Auditors on 16 August 2013

I also interviewed Mick Wilkinson, SubPostmaster at St Anne’s Post Office Blackpool where Mann had previously been employed as Post Office Manager and where an initial fraud had been discovered. I also interviewed MK Vaish, the brother of Pardeep Vaish the SubPostmaster at Turnstone Road, who was present on the morning on 16 August as store manager .

Summary of Findings

There are no grounds to support the allegations made by Mann

- All seven people interviewed were consistent in their responses that Bradshaw and Rose had behaved professionally. This includes the views of Bradshaw and Rose commenting upon their own and each other’s behaviour. During my interview with Bradshaw he stated he would not have done anything any differently and that he considered Helen Rose and himself to have conducted themselves professionally. Bradshaw also added Mann’s partner Mr Edwards had been in contact with him since Mr Mann’s death and in his opinion Mr Edwards did not appear to have any problems with Mr Bradshaw.
- There was no evidence from any of the interviews that Bradshaw or Rose behaved in a manner inconsistent with their role. Extract from interview with MK Vaish “all Post Office employees had behaved totally professionally and in an appropriate manner. Given the circumstances regarding the fraud and the need for the audit team to attend and for the Post Office Investigation Team to call the Police and conduct enquiries MK felt that all of the individuals handled the situation as well as they could have done”. I considered this to be

a key statement and give great weight as Vaish was effectively the witness who saw most on 16th August 2013 and as the brother of a SubPostmaster was independent.

All Post Office personnel involved in the audit and investigation behaved professionally

- Clune , Holding and McNally all stated that normal procedures had been followed
- Extract from interview with MK Vaish “ Vaish added there could be no criticism of the audit or investigation team for how they’d handled things from his perspective”
- Wilkinson had seen no interaction between Bradshaw and Rose and Mann because Mann had departed from St Anne’s Post Office in November 2012 prior to the fraud being raised with Wilkinson in December 2012.
- All seven interviewees were consistent in their views of the investigation and the behaviour of the investigators.
- Wilkinson had previously been employed by Post Office Ltd having taken redundancy in 2002 and he had known Bradshaw in a professional capacity but did not associate with him outside of work.
- Wilkinson had not seen Bradshaw or Rose interact with Mann but he felt that “Steve called a spade a spade and didn’t mess about with small talk” and that he was a very good investigator. Wilkinson added that until December 2012 he had not met Rose and had no previous knowledge of her but like Bradshaw he found her to be very professional”

Mann’s behaviour was aggressive and confrontational at Turnstone Road towards the Security Investigators

- Clune stated Mann had become more agitated and anxious when Bradshaw and Rose arrived at the office. I believe this was because he realised that the audit was part of a bigger investigation and that “he’d been found out”
- Holding observed Mann shouting to Vaish that he hadn’t done anything wrong.
- Wilkinson had not seen Bradshaw or Rose interact with Mann
- It is also clear from Wilkinson and Vaish’s interviews that Mann was well liked by customers and popular with colleagues although he could

Conclusion

From the seven interviews conducted and from my own observations I believe that the content and the consistency of replies from the three Post Office Auditors, the two Security Managers, Mick Wilkinson and MK Vaish show that there are no grounds to support the allegations made by Mann. I do not believe that Bradshaw and Rose acted inappropriately.

Recommendations

- Investigate the reasons for Mann’s departure from WH Smith at Blackpool circa 2008 /9
- Investigate the reasons for Mann’s departure from Elswick Post Office circa 2007

The interview notes are attached at appendix A

Colin Stretch
9 December 2013

