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Post Office Compensation Programme Board Minutes

Chair: Rob Brightwell**06 July 2023 – 10:00 – 11:00****Programme Board Members:**

Rob Brightwell (RB) – Chair (deputising for Carl Creswell) Deputy Director, DBT Post Office Policy
Ciara Lawrence (CL) – Senior Policy Advisor, DBT Post Office Policy (deputising for Beth White)
Eleri Wones (EWo) - DBT Legal (deputising for Patrick Kilgarrieff)
Kirsty Wedderspoon (KW) - Deputy Director, DBT Finance
Matt Barnes (MB) - Head of Business & Trade Spending and Strategy, HMT (deputising for Joshua Fleming)
Ellen Wasden (EWa) - Senior Economist, DBT (deputising for Monique Ebell)

Other Attendees:

Milo Kershaw (MK) - Policy Advisor, Business and Trade Spending, HMT (Observer)
Joshua Scott (JS) - Head of GLO Compensation, DBT (Observer)
Diane Wills (DW) – Head of Legal, Remediation Unit, POL (deputising for Simon Recaldin) (Observer)
Rob Mackie (RM) - Executive Director, UKGI (Observer)
James Gourlay (JG) - Assistant Director, UKGI (Observer)
Martin Gunther (MG) – Analyst, DBT (Observer)
Rachel Evans – Analyst, DBT (Observer)
Emily Snow - Senior Policy Advisor, DBT Post Office Policy (Observer)

Apologies:

Carl Creswell (CC) - Chair - Director, Business Resilience, DBT
Beth White (BW) - Deputy Director, DBT Post Office Policy
Patrick Kilgarrieff (PK) - Director, DBT Legal
Monique Ebell (ME) - Deputy Director, Business Resilience and Industry Sectors Analysis, DBT
Joshua Fleming (JF) - Deputy Director, HMT
Simon Recaldin (SR) – Remediation Unit, POL

Note:

<u>Agenda Item</u>	<u>Discussion, Actions and Decisions</u>
1. Scheme Data	RB presented the scheme data, noting it was slightly out-of-date. The slide should be updated to include date at which data is accurate (RB action). EWa updated that the plan is still to publish scheme data online but had been de-prioritised. Action: EWa and RB to discuss when to publish.
2. Upcoming events	Subsumed into strategic communications item.
3. Cross-cutting issues	RB noted the issue on family members will be covered in the meeting; IHT issue had been resolved. RM raised the issue of GLO <i>de minimis</i> . RB updated the Board on the advice and stated there needs to be decisions on whether to continue making offers where there may be a change in policy. Action: JS to confirm GLO DM is included in the issues list.

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	EWo raised there are some tentative issues in the list which need to be looked at closely. RB agreed this was the function of the Board.
4. Strategic communications plan	<p>CL presented the slides.</p> <p><u>Objectives, key messages, stakeholder groups</u></p> <p>EWo suggested unrepresented claimants should be a stakeholder to engage, RB agreed but not necessarily strategically.</p> <p>RM suggested amending the objective on encouraging claims should be updated to capture 'claims and appeals'. Action: James Lovesey to update.</p> <p>RM asked to include measures to track success/that behaviours are changing. Action: James Lovesey to add a measure to each objective, one may be to gather feedback from stakeholder groups.</p> <p>MK asked about the HMT funding condition attached to the HSS tax approval on reviewing all issues raised by Inquiry or Advisory Board. CL explained it is closely linked to the issues list, which could be amended to add the tracking of where the criticism was raised and the rationale. Action: JS to pick up with PB WG; RB to add closer look at the issues list as agenda item for next meeting.</p> <p><u>Milestones/comms moments</u></p> <p>CL spoke through and explained both micro and macro are covered as the Minister would like to keep updating on progress. RB made clear the slide is live and has changed.</p> <p>JG suggested to add Postmaster Detriment. Action: CL/Harry Fallowfield to add.</p> <p>CL explained comms moments are often pitched at a scheme level (e.g. milestone) but refer back to the wider strategic purpose (i.e. the Minister's commitment to full and fair compensation).</p> <p><u>Areas of criticism</u></p> <p>CL presented. JG suggested adding the longer-term Inquiry timetable and at a lower level what the expected criticisms and how to response. Action: to review through the issues list as the 'lower level' - JS and PB WG to review areas of criticism against the issues list to align/enable working towards a response.</p> <p><u>Stakeholders</u></p> <p>RB noted a further group, claimant advisers. The Board agreed that DBT and POL should align their communications, especially to claimant advisers. Examples include approach to policy issues such as GLO deductions or LoE calculations – there should be a clear and consistent message for POL schemes and DBT schemes.</p>
5. Family members	<p>CL presented the slides, covering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Objectives

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Risks- Options:<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Do nothing2. Small scale option (personal injury)3. Medium scale option (personal injury and/or financial losses unrelated to personal injury)4. Large scale option (personal injury or financial losses unrelated to personal injury or non-financial losses) <p>RB noted there is one high profile case in the GLO and that the Minister may not wish to 'do nothing'. CL explained the views of CC and BW (not in attendance), that there is a low likelihood that there is legal liability and the focus is on the policy objective to compensate <u>postmasters</u>.</p> <p>CL explained that there are difficulties aligning with Windrush as the scheme generally has lower thresholds for both primary claimants and family members. RM and DW raised there will be severe family members cases within POL Horizon and there would need to be analysis to decide what is proportionate.</p> <p>The Board generally agreed that if the intervention was pursued, option 2 feels the most viable, as options 3 and 4 are too wide. RM raised that VfM and costs are different and that VfM should be captured as pursuing benefits (such as addressing potential criticism and closing off claims). EWo noted that VfM is not an objective but an aim in all projects.</p> <p>Members noted that, regardless of the option chosen, it would be difficult to maintain the position. 'Do nothing' may be unsustainable; and the other options present difficulties in where to draw thresholds for compensation. JS raised there would be a risk of needing to backtrack in the 'small scale' option (option 2) and EWo noted the issue of retro-fitting according to the Windrush approach.</p> <p>EWo commented that legal advisers will be aware of the legal principle but may be pushing the policy point.</p> <p>Action: the group to give Ciara Lawrence any further feedback.</p>
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