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Message

From: Mark R Davies GRO
on behalf of GRO
Sent: 07/07/2013 07:27:56
To: Martin Edwards GRO
CC: Paula Vennells GRO; Mark R Davies GRO; Alwen Lyons GRO; Lesley J Sewell GRO; Susan Crichton GRO
Subject: Re: Proposed way forward

Agreed.

Sent from my iPad

On 7 Jul 2013, at 08:15, "Martin Edwards" GRO wrote:

> Mark is going to draft this into a statement to share with AB as clearly it needs to be closely aligned with (if not the same as) our core media statement.
>
> I'll defer to Susan's views, but my instinct would be to keep the review by external lawyers as a parallel workstream which we don't refer to in proactive written statements, and which doesn't report to the working party. Otherwise we risk raising expectations and also making this the media story tomorrow.
>
> Martin Edwards
> Chief of Staff to the Chief Executive
> Post Office
> GRO
>
> On 6 Jul 2013, at 22:46, "Paula Vennells" GRO wrote:
>
> > Hi, thank you for the inputs today. Susan I need your thoughts on the note below especially 1) and 2) please and the questions at the end of the mail.
> >
> > I think we have the following which is a variant:
> >
> > 1) a working party over the next three/four months. This comprises PO working collaboratively with the JFSA and does three things:
> > •. Firstly explores the SS (8) themes for improvement (can we get less than 8?) and agrees how they can be implemented.
> > • Secondly, looks at the remaining past cases with JFSA (and MPs if they wish) to see if either further themes or new evidence emerge.
> > •. Thirdly, our external lawyers review all prosecutions in the past 12/18 months since PO has been independent of RM, in the light of the SS findings. The JFSA/PO working group reviews the findings.
> > [Why would they not review all cases of false accounting, eg., over the last 5-10 years, especially where the amounts have been 'small'? I assume 'large' amounts would be less likely to get away with saying they were muddle-headed and not helped? But could we review all? It is the false accounting charge JA was most concerned about.]
> > • Does the working party update JA in the autumn?
> >
> > 2) setting up of a review (chaired by PB/MO'C type) again via joint working between PO and JFSA, to determine how an independent safety net might be introduced ie., a commitment to an independent adjudicator or (non-statutory) ombudsman and the clear intention to agree scope and ToR.

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3) the future introduction of an ongoing branch user group, once the working party has completed it's task. This will ensure ongoing independent involvement of Spmrs/(inc JFSA if they would like) to ensure the business listens to and acts upon issues as they arise; and as importantly, consults users on future systems planning and changes.

[4) a statement that although the system has been proved to have no systemic issues, and our training, support processes and helplines have worked for most of the 50-60000 colleagues over the past decade, we are nonetheless genuinely sorry that some of our Spmrs, who were struggling did not feel we offered them sufficient help and support when they needed it. And that we are grateful to JFSA and JA for highlighting the issues. Many are historic and already improved but we are always open to new ways to improve how we do business to ensure the PO stays as trusted and effective in its communities as it ever was.]

Last thought: if we can draft this into something I could send to Alan Bates 'in confidence', it would get us to a better place in agreeing the press statement and way through with JA on Monday. Could Martin try and corral views into a draft by Sunday early pm? The more I speak with him the better I feel it will be.

Susan, would we ever ask the lawyers to consider reviewing past prosecutions? Is that what we are talking about in 1) above but simply not using the terms? If not, why would it be different? Of our 500 prosecutions, how many are false accounting? (For clarity these are open questions - just want to know the answers, not an indication that I want us to do so.)

Thanks, Paula

Sent from my iPad

On 6 Jul 2013, at 21:08, "Martin Edwards" <GRO> wrote:

> Hmm, the boundaries between these groups are getting quite blurred and confusing (at least in my mind!).
>
> I thought the focus of the working group involving the JFSA would be primarily thematic (i.e. the 8 or so themes which emerged from the SS process) - rather than focussing on resolving specific cases, which we would pick up through the seperate 1:1 briefings with MPs. The description below appears to shift it more towards the latter. Perhaps this is an academic distinction which we can't sustain in practice, but it certainly feels like safer territory to have the JFSA focussing on themes to do with training and support (which would then morph into the branch user forum) rather than individual cases...
>
> Or have I misunderstood?
>
> We also need to think about how the review of past cases by our external lawyers plays into the messaging (if at all). Certainly not something we would put in our proactive media statement I would have thought, but would we refer to this in meetings as an avenue if pushed by MPs or the JFSA?

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Martin

Martin Edwards
Chief of Staff to the Chief Executive
Post Office
GRO

On 6 Jul 2013, at 18:18, "Mark R Davies"
GRO wrote:

> I think that is the working group (number 2 below).
>
> Sent from my iPad
>
> On 6 Jul 2013, at 17:53, "Alwen Lyons"
> GRO > wrote:
>
> > I think the only thing that is missing from James' agenda maybe not Alan's is what we do about past cases to scorch the suggestion os unfair convictions
> >
> > Thanks
> > Alwen
> >
> > Alwen Lyons
> > Company Secretary
> > GRO
> >
> > Sent from Blackberry
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> > ---
> >
> > **From**: Mark R Davies
> > **Sent**: Saturday, July 06, 2013 04:46 PM
> > **To**: Paula Vennells
> > **Cc**: Martin Edwards; Mark R Davies; Lesley J Sewell; Susan Crichton; Alwen Lyons; Theresa Iles
> > **Subject**: Re: Proposed way forward
> >
> > Hi Paula
> >
> > I think this points to the need for our package of measures to include two and possibly three new initiatives:
> >
> > 1. A Branch User Forum - for existing users to share views, discuss issues, examine processes etc.. Chaired by Exco and reporting to Exco. But this doesn't cover historic issues (ie the JFSA and MP cases) so we could also have (2)
> >
> > 2. A working party, to use Alan's phrase, to complete the MP and JFSA

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cases. This could "take over" the Second Sight review (perhaps involving them but perhaps not as they have effectively "cleared" Horizon, the remit of their inquiry).This would involve the JFSA and us working collaboratively on the remaining cases. We might wish to include an external party in this too (a PWC?). This is the area of greatest risk - looking back at historic cases which have gone through the courts. But it is also completing the job we asked SS to do.

3. A review by a Mike o Connor or Patrick Burns figure to consider potential independent levers which could be developed to give SPMRs a means of independent adjudication or (non statutory) ombudsman.

This package, it feels to me, covers all bases. It looks ahead to fix internal issues and create independent balancing view, but it also completes the review and has the potential for doing so with SS playing a different, or no, role.

It is also a compelling package for media, which handled carefully, could contain the story.

Grateful for views.

Mark

Sent from my iPad

On 6 Jul 2013, at 10:35, "Paula Vennells"
GRO
wrote:

> FYI and for any thoughts pls
> Paula
> Sent from my iPad
>
> Begin forwarded message:

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From: Paula Vennells

GRO

Date: 6 July 2013 10:35:03 BST

To: Alan Bates

GRO

Subject: Re: Proposed way forward

Alan, thank you for the note. Yes, I thought the meeting with James was positive too. My main concern is still how we manage the publicity, to avoid - as you said - it

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'going ballistic '.

We had a useful conversation re a statement from James with quotes from you and me, or possible joint statement. And agreed we would pick up again on Monday.

Ours is now bring re-worked in the light of that and as we liaise with SS over the weekend on some changes to the report where

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it is factually inaccurate. I am hopeful these will be addressed.

Once I have a final draft, I would be happy to send across to you.

It would be good to meet on Monday. And as I haven't met Kay, then I would be happy to extend the meeting to include her and I would bring Alwen Lyons, who is our Compa

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ny Secreta ry - Alwen has been the key lead on the liaison with James' office.

In the meanti me, I hope you enjoy the glorious weathe r - at last!

Paula

Ps. You were on my list to call today but I imagine this email exchan ge is sufficie nt now? Howev er, if you would like to speak at any time, don't hesitat

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me.

Sent
from
my iPad

On 6 Jul
2013,
at
09:51,
"Alan
Bates"


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