

Alwen Lyons

From: WALKER, Janet <[GRO]>
Sent: 05 June 2013 17:35
To: Alwen Lyons
Subject: FW: Post Office update

Alwen,

As discussed. We're driving Second Sight to a conclusion in both the short and medium term, and will continue to do so. JSFA does not have power to veto what James decides, but we'll try to bring them with us.

When we hear back from Second Sight, we'll let you know.

Please feel free to circulate this amongst your colleagues at the Post office, but I'd be very grateful if you did not let it out of the business. I would be particularly concerned if Alan Bates had sight of this BEFORE Second Sight came back to James, as James wants to use their response as a springboard to write to Alan.

OK. Let me know what you think,

Janet

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From: ARBUTHNOT, James
Sent: 04 June 2013 16:49
To: 'Ron Warmington'; 'Ian Henderson'
Subject: Post Office update

Dear Ron and Ian,

Thank you for your emails in response to Alan Bates' letter to me of 1 April 2013. I am also grateful for sight of his reply to you.

My belief is that we need to begin moving towards some form of closure, and I wondered if you might consider the following and let me know your thoughts please as soon as possible?

1. Interim report - we need an interim report to be presented to MPs before 18 July, when the summer Recess begins. This has been promised them, and they will remember and begin to ask very awkward questions if it is not delivered. May I suggest Monday 8 July, at 6pm here at Portcullis House? We are going to have enormous difficulty getting this elsewhere in the diary at this notice. The media are also beginning to contact my office, and I would like to be able to offer some comment before summer. At the moment, I have them in a holding pattern, but this will not last. In my opinion, it is preferable that news about this issue originates from me rather than an unattributed source, rumour, or speculation, which runs the risk of derailing a good outcome for everyone involved.
2. The report should concentrate on a few (two? three?) strongest complaints against the Post Office.
3. The report should consider whether there are:
 - a. any flaws in Horizon,
 - b. any flaws in processes currently followed by the Post Office, or training offered to staff.
4. If the interim report finds flaws in Horizon and/or processes and training, we will need to agree how this is communicated to:
 - a. the Post Office, who will need to consider how it will respond,
 - b. individuals, who have faced or are currently facing prosecution, and who will demand information so they can decide how to react,
 - c. Tadge Channer at Shoosmiths Solicitors.

This needs extremely careful consideration, as I am sure you will know, and ahead of the meeting on 8 July.
5. The report should be absolutely clear as to whether there are problems with Horizon or not.
6. Further case investigation - I have had a discussion with Paula Vennells, who would like to see any further cases submitted for investigation by the Company Secretary rather than by you. I understand her point of view. She is concerned about the cost, and the fact that at least some of the cases submitted simply do not contain the level of information that a genuine investigation requires. She accepts that the procedures currently in place at the Post Office to investigate such cases would not be appropriate in this instance, hence her suggestion that they be considered by the Company Secretary. This is something I should particularly like you to consider.
7. Final report - we need to consider what happens after you produce the interim report, what a final report from you might comprise, when it will be produced (September? October?), and what the potential consequences of such a report might be.

I would like to hear what Alan Bates has to say about all this as well. It is, to my mind, absolutely essential that we keep the JSFA positively engaged, but it does not have a power of veto over any aspect of this proposal, and this is a point I should like you both to bear in mind. I think what I shall do is wait to hear from you before I get in touch with Alan, but I would be very grateful if you would let me have your thoughts by Monday 10 June. I will also want to talk to the Post Office about all this.

I would like to send out invitations to MPs next week, so if 8 July presents real difficulties, I would be grateful if you could liaise with Janet as soon as possible.

I look forward to hearing from you next Monday.

Yours ever
James