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eaPost Office Compensation Programme Board Minutes**Chair: Carl Creswell****08 June 2023 – 13:00-14:00****Programme Board Members:**

Carl Creswell (CC) - Chair - Director, Business Resilience, DBT
Rob Brightwell (RB) - Deputy Director, DBT Post Office Policy
Beth White (BW) - Deputy Director, DBT Post Office Policy
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:

Joshua Scott (JS) - Head of GLO Compensation, DBT
Ciara Lawrence (CL) - Senior Policy Advisor - Post Office Compensation, DBT
Milo Kershaw (MK) - Policy Advisor, Business and Trade Spending, HMT
Simon Recaldin (SR) - Historical Matters Director, POL (Observer)
Lorna Gratton (LG) - Director, UKGI (Observer)
Rob Mackie (RM) - Executive Director, UKGI (Observer)
James Gourlay (JG) - Assistant Director, UKGI (Observer)

Apologies:

Patrick Kilgarrieff (PK) - Director, DBT Legal
Monique Ebell (ME) - Deputy Director, Business Resilience and Industry Sectors Analysis, DBT
Joshua Fleming (JF) - Deputy Director, HMT

Note:

<u>Agenda Item</u>	<u>Discussion, Actions and Decisions</u>
1. Introduction	CC opened the meeting and informed the group that Caroline Lawless of the Home Office's Windrush Policy team would be joining the board as a "NED", starting from the next meeting.
2. Scheme Data	<p>RB invited the group to note the data and format for publication and offer any comments.</p> <p>CC noted the importance of using integrated statistics for proactive comms and the need for consistency across schemes and POL/DBT data. EWa explained this data would likely be released as MI (rather than official statistics) and would need clear commentary explaining how the figures have been derived.</p> <p>Board members felt the statistics around overturned convictions were somewhat unclear. The approach to recording the treatment of public interest cases needed to be thought through carefully. Action: DBT leads to revise OC data to make public interest cases and full and final settlements clearer, add narrative to further explain data and clear through Dan McMillan in POL for consistency with POL data.</p>

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<p>3. Review of media coverage</p>	<p>The Board felt a forward-look of upcoming issues to get ahead of media coverage would be necessary, including on areas where we had a less positive story. This would involve both understanding weaknesses to anticipate of negative coverage and be on the front foot with good news stories e.g., tweets about the benefits disregard.</p> <p>BW suggested a full comms strategy should be undertaken by DBT, informed by POL's strategy, to fill the current gap. This should start from the overall objectives of the programme and an assessment of the areas of greatest criticism. A meeting to discuss this work was due to take place on 09 June.</p> <p>Action: DBT Policy to work with the Strategic Comms team to bring strategic comms update on this work to next Board meeting.</p> <p>Attendees suggested there could be more positive publicity to come around the HSS Panel presenting to the Advisory Board. SR confirmed he had signed off a letter to the Times rebutting Dan Neidle's recent article. He explained POL had published an FAQ responding to his specific points on their website and had included this in Select Committee briefing for Nick Read.</p>
<p>4. Upcoming events</p>	<p>RB suggested it may be beneficial to plan to secure engagement with key stakeholders such as claimant representatives and journalists.</p> <p>CC said the key events to consider would be any progress report published by Sir Wyn Williams in the Horizon Inquiry, the upcoming HSS tax announcement, claimant representatives' feedback on OC principles and GLO disclosure, which he said was a difficult issue. Other suggestions included Advisory Board meetings and the regular letter to the Select Committee and their forthcoming hearing.</p> <p>RM asked to see a GLO workplan, including both key milestones and smaller operational/policy decision points, to understand the read across to other schemes and mitigate risk of inconsistency.</p> <p>CC suggested creating a visual forward look to capture all upcoming events.</p> <p>Action: DBT Policy to bring visual forward look to the next Programme Board. Respective compensation leads to population forward look plan.</p>
<p>5. Cross-cutting issues</p>	<p>RB assured the Board that since the last meeting, an internal group had been set up in DBT to develop actions and defensive lines for cross-cutting issues.</p> <p>EWa suggested a deep dive into evaluation of any/all schemes i.e., assessing what was set out in business cases. Action: Analysts to return to Board with this issue once plans have been drawn up.</p> <p>LG asked which principles are guiding evaluation of cross-cutting issues on a macro level. RB confirmed that similar claims receiving similar outcomes is a key principle. Action: RB to check this is captured in the Board's ToR. <i>[Post-meeting note: the TOR begin: "The Board will aim to assure appropriate consistency between compensation arrangements relating to the Post Office Horizon scandal..."]</i></p>

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	<p>MB raised the issue of consistency across application processes with differing levels of support at the beginning creating a challenge to ensuring fair treatment across the schemes. The Board agreed that some policy decisions would have been made differently with the benefit of hindsight, but that colleagues should learn lessons from past actions and always strive for fairness as a guiding principle, but acknowledged consistency is not always possible as the cohorts (and individual claims) are so different and bespoke fixes will be needed to reflect these differences and constraints schemes must operate within. However, the Board agreed decisions should consider Ministerial objectives and risk appetite.</p> <p>SR asked that the HSS assurance review and the closure of the HSS should be added to the cross-cutting issues list. Action: JS.</p> <p>CC said the Programme Board made a start in responding to HMT's request for a framework to Ministers for HSS tax, but that more top-down work would need to be done.</p>
6. Assurance of consistency across schemes	<p>RB informed the Board that procurement for a GLO assurance provider, covering consistency between schemes, would go to early market engagement next week and that he would share a draft spec when it had been prepared. MK said this would need to cover the same points as PMD assurance i.e., end-to-end assurance and application of principles and the consistency issue.</p> <p>Action: SR agreed to share contact details of colleagues who carried out PMD assurance with RB offline.</p>
7. Advisory Board	<p>RB asked the Board to consider how best to use the Advisory Board (AB), which he said had been very useful so far, given their limited capacity.</p> <p>EWo suggested asking them to reflect on the claimant representatives' speed of engagement. RB said the AB has requested an update on overturned convictions, and having claimant representatives and POL in the room could create a different dynamic. CC said this should be explored, but not forced.</p> <p>RB suggested the AB feels far more buy-in when consulted early. CC said the AB should be asked to consider policy issues and process challenges e.g. issues HMG is having with Freeths, to emphasise that issues with delivery are not always due to HMG actions. MK said the AB could also consider policy issues in relation to the cross-cutting framework that DBT are devising.</p>
8. AOB	<p>CC summarised the key points of the meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DBT will work with POL to respond to the useful feedback on data. • Further work will be taken forward on strategic comms and milestones. • There was a good debate on cross-cutting issues, how to engage with Ministers, assurance and ideas to bring to the AB. <p>RB confirmed that at the next meeting, which is due to take place on 03 July, in addition to standing items the Board would discuss strategic comms and family members compensation.</p>