

Message

From: Tom Wechsler
on behalf of Tom Wechsler
Sent: 29/04/2016 08:13:43
To: Paula Vennells
Subject: Feedback from Tim / BNR meeting

GRO

Hi

As discussed Patrick has sent the note below on feedback from the Tim / BNR meeting based on a call with Laura who also attended:

1. Very amicable meeting, good atmospherics.
2. Tim chatted through the work being undertaken as part of his review (essentially providing a precis of the contents of his 4/3 letter to her) – his broad observations were that he felt that the non-Horizon strands of enquiry (essentially on prosecutions process and policy) would be answered shortly and that there wasn't currently any reason to think that the findings here would be problematic; on the work being undertaken by Deloitte, the work was more technically difficult and time consuming but he still hoped that he would have answers come the end of May, although (helpfully) he couldn't discount some slippage into June. He said he felt that, while it was unlikely that we would ever get to a point of 100% certainty (these exercises just can't achieve that), it will have been important work to have done to build confidence.
3. They then touched on the CCRC, agreeing that it was, frankly, anyone's guess when they might begin to report on their findings – the PO continued to co-operate fully with those undertaking the work.
4. Turning to the litigation, Tim was able to provide some limited further detail to BNR, for instance that 75% of the claimants were known to us from the Scheme and so we have some visibility around the likely basis/strengths of those individuals' cases; that a handful of claimants had, in fact, reached full and final settlements with the PO already, so it was hard to see that they could form part of any group which does, in fact, start proceedings proper etc. However, he stressed that until such time as we saw the detail of the particulars of claim, he was unable to tell her much more, which she appears to have readily accepted.
5. He hinted at the fact that the ongoing work of the CCRC and the litigation could well have an impact on what it might be prudent to say at the end of his review, and that we would need to revisit this at the appropriate juncture. After the meeting, he spoke briefly to Laura and Richard, who told him that at some point, the Minister might be accosted by Lord Arbuthnot and feel she had to give him 'something' given that he is a Lords and party colleague. We'll cross that bridge if, and when, we come to it.
6. They then spoke about non Sparrow PO issues, which we didn't discuss.

All in all it sounds as though the meeting did what it needed to in ensuring the Minister feels she is being kept informed and engaged (and, at a future date, can say she's been active on this if asked, eg in Parliament), while ensuring we preserve the necessary confidentiality to protect our legal position.

In addition, I have spoken to Laura who gave me the following additional feedback:

- Funding – in the context of the discussions we'll be having soon about funding for 2018 onwards, the Minister flagged the difficult fiscal position and the need to make sure POL was continuing to reduce its reliance on taxpayer subsidy.
- Appointments – Tim explained why NomCo are recommending Tim Franklin's reappointment. The Minister said she would consider it when it came to her. (Separately Laura gave Tim a flavour of the hoops we have to go through on appointments, so he is a bit more aware of how long the process can take)

- Supply chain – a very brief discussion about the upcoming plans. Timing wasn't mentioned.
- Royal Mail – Tim mentioned that he was meeting the RM Chair shortly. The Minister said she had met Moya Greene recently (in her role as Minister for postal affairs) and Moya had been complimentary about the Post Office. Tim noted that it would be important to negotiate a good long term agreement with RM.
- Annual Report – Tim told the Minister he had suggested some changes to the Annual Report. The Minister thought the approach he proposed seemed sensible.

Tom