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From: Mark R Davies [GRO]
Sent: Thur 22/01/2015 10:51:10 PM (UTC)
Subject: Sparrow update

All

I thought it might be helpful to send you an update on Sparrow. I don't propose to do so every day but given the various elements to the issue I will do so on a regular basis for the next few weeks.

Our key focus is on preparing for the BIS select committee hearing on February 3. The committee has called for evidence in two sessions over two hours.

The first hour will be with the JFSA, CWU and NFSP. The second will be with Post Office and Second Sight. At present we will be giving evidence alongside Second Sight but are pushing against this and asking for a separate session. At present this is not finding favour. We are considering all options in light of this.

A working team has been set up and is meeting every day at 5pm, led by myself and Chris. Jane Hill is leading on bringing briefing together and preparing our submission to the committee.

There are four further strands of work:

- media handling which I am leading. We are engaged with the BBC at senior levels to push back on their reporting of the issue. While the reporting will undoubtedly continue, we are registering our concerns effectively (most obviously demonstrated by the decision by BBC Breakfast to drop the item on Monday).
- an options workstream is being led by Patrick Bourke in Belinda's team. A small group of us will meet next week to discuss in a challenge session with Alastair Marnoch, with a view to considering potential next steps (with input from my team on media and other handling). There are unfortunately no options which are pain free but we are developing approaches to mitigate.
- we are continuing to engage with Second Sight as they seek to widen the scope of their work. This includes plans for Alisdair Cameron to meet with them to discuss finance issues in relation to Horizon.
- Rodric is leading work to respond to a request for information from the Criminal Cases Review Commission

In other developments our minister has written in strong terms to the JFSA in response to their letter following the Westminster Hall debate. This will go down badly with JFSA and MPs and we will monitor reactions.

I hope this is helpful. Happy of course to discuss any points.

Mark

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Sent from my iPhone