Receipts and Payments Mismatch

Ref: c:\gij\pathway\miscdata\1209.discrepancies\receipts&payments.doc
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1.   Introduction

The purpose of this note is to document a request that we have had from Post Office in terms of presenting details of what happened as a result of a bug in HNG-X in September 2010 which caused a Receipts and Payments mismatch and also resulted in Discrepancies being lost.

The background to this is the fact that there was a BBC documentary broadcast on Monday 7th February 2011 reporting on postmasters being unhappy about being pursued for losses by Postmasters on Horizon.

It should be noted that the issues described here relates to HNG-X (Horizon Online) and that the implementation of the accounting mechanisms in the two systems is totally different (but they do produce the same reports and support the same business process).

This version of the note reflects my current understanding of Post Office Ltd's requirements.

The next step is to pass this to Post Office Ltd for them to confirm that my understanding is correct and that this is what they want and also to respond to the boxed questions in section 3.

2.   The Original Problem

> *This is extracted from a note I produced at the time and shared with Post Office Ltd called 'Correcting Accounts for "lost" Discrepancies' in document* Lost Discrepancies.doc.

PC0204263 describes a problem with SU Balancing that will result in a Receipts and Payments mismatch. This Peak has been fixed and was released in October 2010 with release 2.12.

> *The fix has subsequently been fully deployed.*

However any branch encountering the problem will have corrupted accounts and Peak PC0204765 is a Master Peak to record all affected branches and also to define the process for correcting the accounts.

The problem occurs as part of the process of moving discrepancies into Local Suspense.

When Discrepancies are found when rolling a SU over into a new TP, then the User is asked if they should be moved to Local Suspense (MSG31316). Should they Cancel at this point the Discrepancy is zeroised in the Local Cache (but nothing is written to the

BRDB). Note that there is no corresponding Balancing Transaction generated in the Local Cache and so the Local Cache is in an Unbalanced state.

If at the next screen (where the options are to: print or preview the trial balance again; to re-attempt the rollover; or to cancel the rollover) the rollover is Cancelled, then no harm is done. However if the Rollover is re-attempted at this point, the rollover will continue with the corrupted Local Cache. This has the following consequences:

- There will be a Receipts and Payment mismatch corresponding to the value of Discrepancies that were "lost"

Note that if the User doesn't check their Final Balance Report carefully they may be unaware of the issue since there is no explicit message when a Receipts and Payment mismatch is found on the Final balance (the User is only prompted when one is detected during a Trial balance)

- The Local Suspense will have no knowledge of this specific Discrepancy

- The Opening Figures for Discrepancies in the new Period will be zero rather than the actual value of the Discrepancy

- The data used for the BTS will also have a zero value for Discrepancies at the end of the period. When the BTS is produced this will result in a similar Receipts and Payment mismatch

Note that if the bug was not present, then the Discrepancy would have been transferred to Local Suspense and that would have been cleared, so there are a number of things wrong with the BTS. However the impact of the bug is that the discrepancy is lost and so the simplest way to correct it is to re-introduce the lost discrepancy in a subsequent period and allow the normal rollover process to correct it.

> *Note that if more than one SU has the issue then the value will be the total value of all errors.*

- The level of Discrepancies when viewed at the Branch will no longer match the level as seen in POL SAP or POL MIS

The problem appears to have affected 62 Branches and details have been provided to Post Office Ltd of all the BTS and SU Rollover Reports for these Branches until they were clear of the issue.

3.   What Post Office want now

Post Office are now looking to put together a "storyboard" showing the precise steps all the way through the problem, consisting of screen shots and snapshot reports from the system. This will assist in the explanation of the issue to senior management and, if necessary, the Press.

They are seeking help from Fujitsu in doing this.

Fujitsu are proposing the following to meet that requirement:

1. Select one of the affected Branches

> *POL should be able to select a branch from the information they have. If they want us to pick the Branch then we can do so.*

2. For this Branch, then we need to describe exactly what happened in terms of screens that were displayed and reports that were actually produced. The reports that were produced are already available in the information we have provided to Post Office Ltd. We should be able to put together screenshots from a test or development system.

3. In addition, we can identify at key points in the sequence what the state of the Branch's accounts actually were, by mocking up what a SU Balance Snapshot would have looked like at that point of time. This can be done by taking the version of the report we have provided to POL and editing it to reflect the changed figures at that point in time.

4. This information can then be presented to POL either as a document or a PowerPoint slide show.

> *POL need to let us know which they want.*