

Briefing for Paula / James Arbuthnot meeting

23rd May 2013

1. Key Message

- 1.1. We are concerned that the investigation is overrunning, that the findings will not be definitive, and there will be no satisfactory outcome to the "Horizon question" - for MPs or Post Office.
- 1.2. We would like to discuss ways to more clearly define the scope so we get a definitive outcome within reasonable timescales.

2. Background

- 2.1. When Post Office commissioned Second Sight the expectation was that the investigation would review a small number of MPs cases (6 to 12 cases).
- 2.2. MPs have now submitted 29 cases and JFSA have submitted about 20 cases.
- 2.3. It is unlikely that the investigation, no matter how long it runs, will conclude anything definitive; as the remit has become blurred, different stakeholders have different expectations, and the evidence is open to interpretation.
- 2.4. There is currently no defined point at which the investigative process will end.
- 2.5. To date the investigation has cost £180k. At the current rate of spend, by December 2013 the cost will be £500k, by next July the cost will be £750K. This is public money.
- 2.6. The investigation has been running for a year and to date no evidence of systemic failures has been found.

3. Proposal

- 3.1. James Arbuthnot to request Second Sight to complete the investigations on **two to three MP cases** – selecting the ones that they feel best indicate systemic problems.
- 3.2. Define the scope: Second Sight to focus on answering the question: **have systemic defects in the Horizon system resulted in the wrongful conviction of sub postmasters** (in either civil or criminal court).
- 3.3. Hold a meeting in July, before summer recess, for Second Sight to provide a preliminary report.
- 3.4. Post Office will commit to address the wider areas for improvement that have come to light during the investigation (eg training, help desk, sub postmaster support).

4. Other areas to discuss (time permitting)

- 4.1. If in July, the preliminary report shows that there was a no miscarriage of justice due to Horizon how do we best conclude the investigation.
- 4.2. Other MPs with cases – how best to engage with them?
- 4.3. JFSA – how best to engage with them?

5. Other things Paula needs to know:

- 5.1. Second Sight are focussing the investigation on **Automated Reversals** ie, does the system automatically reverse, or change transactions without sub postmaster knowledge.
- 5.2. Spot reviews:
 - 5.2.1. Second Sight put allegations to Post Office in the form of "Spot Reviews". Post Office has responded to the first four spot reviews (received in March) and is responding to the next batch of spot reviews (five, received in early May).
 - 5.2.2. We have received positive feedback from Second Sight on the quality of our responses to the spot reviews (we can make them available to James if he wishes).
 - 5.2.3. JFSA have responded negatively to our responses. We are organising a meeting with JFSA to discuss this.
 - 5.2.4. Second Sight would prefer Post Office to adopt an iterative approach to spot reviews. Post Office has adopted a methodical approach to ensure are our facts are correct and we clearly articulate them.
- 5.3. Defects/bugs/glitches in Horizon. Post Office is **not** saying Horizon is free from defects. All large systems of this nature occasionally encounter problems. We are confident though that no sub postmaster has been wrongly convicted or suspended due to Horizon defects.