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Department for
Business, Energy
& Industrial Strategy

Meeting with Tim Parker and Alisdair Cameron (Post Office Limited)

16:00-17:00, Monday 24 June 2019

Location (TBC)

External Attendees:

- Tim Parker – Independent Chair, Post Office Limited
- Alisdair Cameron – Interim Chief Executive Officer, Post Office Limited

Internal Attendees:

- Carl Creswell – Director, Professional Business Services, Retail and Post
(GRO)
- Eleanor Beal - Head of Post Office Policy and Sectors Briefing Hub (GRO)

Purpose of meeting and Handling:

Tim Parker proposed this meeting in response to your letter of 29 May (Annex A) regarding POL's approach to the ongoing litigation. Tim's written response to you on 3 June (Annex B) noted that POL would prefer to share further details through discussion rather than in writing.

This meeting is an opportunity for you to: (1) gather further information on POL's planned approach to the litigation and costings; and (2) deliver Ministers' steers on POL's approach to the litigation, as agreed internally following discussion at the 4 June Industry meeting (SoS wants to pursue options 1-7; Annex C).

Alisdair Cameron also wrote to you on several topics on 4 June (Annex D) and a draft reply is with your office for signature, suggesting that those topics also be covered at this meeting (if time).

Agenda:

No	Item	Time
1.	POL's approach to ongoing litigation	16:00-16:45
2.	Issues raised in Al's letter	16:45-16:55
3.	AOB	16:55-17:00

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Points to make:

1. Intro

- Thank AI and his team for participating constructively in the recent session with the NFSP. You could also acknowledge that the pay review announced by POL has been a helpful response to pressures on the issue.
- In addition, you could thank POL for deciding to review how they consult on franchising changes (something that you could announce at the Select Committee tomorrow).

2. POL's approach to ongoing litigation

- Please express your dissatisfaction with the current status of the litigation and invite POL to present details of their strategy. You might wish to probe for further details on:
 - scenarios as to how the litigation will play out;
 - how it could be settled, including what settlement windows could exist during the trial timetable;
 - the potential costs of the litigation, in relation to possible outcomes, including assumptions and rationale for calculations;
 - the Post Office's ability to fund a settlement in the range referred to above without further taxpayer support.
- Please provide the below steers to POL, reflecting the options agreed by the SoS:
 - BEIS's preference is for POL to pursue early settlement of the case (either after the Horizon case or after the Court of Appeal);
 - POL should carry out a project on how to structure and operate a settlement – including a fund which would subsequently assess claims and award compensation according to pre-agreed criteria;
 - At the conclusion of the Horizon trial, BEIS would encourage POL to announce that it is taking on board some of the legitimate criticisms in the judgments to date and is taking action to address them;
 - You would like to add a Government legal adviser to the POL litigation sub committee as director or observer;
 - You will be inviting Nigel Boardman, chair of the BEIS Audit and Risk Committee, to engage with POL to carry out some independent due diligence on POL's litigation strategy, following a discussion with Alex Chisholm.
- More broadly, you are keen to establish clear information-sharing arrangements between BEIS and POL. The proposed Shareholder Framework Agreement would be a good place to set out these arrangements

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and you would welcome Tim and Al's support to accelerate finalising this document;

- Please let Tim and Al know that you intend to state at the Select Committee hearing on 25 June that you want to see justice resulting from litigation for claimants with valid claims.

Background:

- You asked Tim to share details of POL's proposed approach to the litigation in your letter of 29 May. He responded on 3 June, but noted that they would share further detail in a meeting.
- Separately, Ministers discussed POL's approach to the litigation at the industry meeting on 4 June and officials subsequently provided advice setting out options for BEIS's strategy in relation to the litigation. SoS has decided that BEIS should pursue options 1-7 (see Annex D).

3. Issues raised in Al's letter (if time or if pressed)

- You would welcome any update on POL's review of postmaster pay, underlining the importance that something can be announced after the six-week period that was briefed to the Daily Mail;
- Please thank Al for suggesting that you announce POL's plans to review and redesign their communications around franchising when you appear at the Select Committee tomorrow;
- As discussed at the NFSP/POL working group, you are not in a position to commit government subsidy to POL beyond 2021, but you will endeavour to offer reassurance to postmasters on this point when you appear in front of the Select Committee tomorrow;
- You and your officials are working closely with DWP to ensure that the replacement for POca meets the needs of vulnerable citizens, and that benefits of including POL in the replacement scheme are properly considered. It will be for DWP to announce next steps in due course;
- As stated at the POL/NFSP working group meeting, you have asked BEIS officials to prioritise efforts to act as a champion for POL across Government on a range of policy issues. Officials will welcome POL's support to get the 'pitch' right.

Biographies:

[If the Minister has not previously met the stakeholder please include a short biography and photograph]