

HSS Quarterly Review
MINUTES – WEDNESDAY 07 JULY 2021 10:15 – 11:00

Attendees

HMG:

Carl Creswell – BEIS Post Office Policy Director and HSS SRO (Chair) (CC)
Tom Taylor – BEIS Finance Director
Tom Cooper – UKGI Director (TC)
Eleri Wones – BEIS
Eleanor Brooks – BEIS
Dyana Banton – BEIS
Simon Morgan – UKGI
Ramona Jones – UKGI
Robert Mackie - UKGI
Gurdeep Singh – UKGI
Ross Gray – HMT
Georgia Taggart – HMT
Joshua Scott – UKGI (Secretariat)
Ed Baird – BEIS (Secretariat)

Post Office:

Nick Read
Declan Slater
Al Cameron
Ben Foat
Graham Hemingway
Chris Manamley
Rodric Williams
Jacki Adams

HSF:

Alan Watts (AW)

Apologies:

Joshua Fleming – HMT
Patrick Kilgariff - BEIS

Minutes

CC introduced the meeting and welcomed everyone to the second Quarterly Review.

DS gave a short verbal update on the progress to date as set out in the pack circulated to attendees. DS highlighted the speed of offers as a key risk. DS also noted the risk of negative publicity and the increased frustration from claimants who had not had their claims resolved. He also mentioned that the team are looking at ways to speed up delivery.

1. Outcome of Board discussion on 24 June regarding HSS timetable accelerators: update on progress, potential milestones and mitigations to timetable slippage

- CC asked why shortfall-only test case offer letters could only be issued on 3 September, rather than in August. UKGI added that there appeared to be a lag

based on the current understanding of principles being agreed on 26 July. POL clarified that there was likely to be a short delay with principles likely agreed in the following week. September was considered more realistic to reflect the different levels of governance needed for approval. CC noted that Sir Wyn's Inquiry would be producing a progress report and Sir Wyn might choose to note the progress of the Scheme.

- POL spoke about three ways of accelerating the Scheme which were being considered: speeding up the investigation process, increasing the *de minimis* level and streamlining the governance processes.
- On the investigation approach, POL updated that they are looking at a tailored investigation approach which would reduce the average time taken to investigate a claim. TC asked about streamlining the pre-2005 cases and asked how many claims this could affect. **Action: POL to confirm the number of pre-2005 shortfall-only cases.**
- On raising the *de minimis* level, the POL Board was being asked to revisit the existing level. The *de minimis* cohort had a good level of acceptance rate and could be seen as a quick way to get positive outcomes from claimants.
- On governance processes, POL was looking into creating parallel forums instead of the existing sequential governance processes. CC emphasised that he did not see the BEIS Steering Committee as a barrier to progress and said he would be open to consider reviewing proposals in parallel with the POL Board, but would have more concern over a situation with doing so in parallel to the Independent Panel. POL clarified the option being looked at was only related to POL/BEIS/UKGI governance rather than the Independent Panel.
- CC concluded by noting that BEIS shared POL's aims to accelerate the Scheme and was supportive of looking at options for achieving this.

2. Update on control of HSS legal and programme costs

- POL updated that a legal costs control paper would be going to the POL Board. The outcome of this discussion would be communicated back to BEIS and UKGI in due course.
- To address the legal costs, POL was looking at implementing a single point of contact system. This would help POL to control what HSF were being asked to do and allow better categorisation of cases to assess whether there were alternative options for the work.
- POL also noted that it was important to consider the legal costs compared to the likely costs of alternatives to the HSS.
- CC recognised that BEIS and UKGI had been the source of some of the requests to HSF and would need to be disciplined too.

3. Update on legal analysis regarding additional shortfalls and surpluses

- CC updated that SteerCo had reviewed HSF's note and were content with it going to the Panel.
- AW noted that Elliot Jacobs, one of the newly appointed postmaster Non-Executive Directors on the POL Board, had recently appeared before the Panel to answer questions on shortfalls, surpluses and the Horizon system which had helped to provide useful context to the Panel.
- POL updated on the issue of large volumes of cash transaction corrections affecting the business.
- CC questioned why the pack referred to HSF Belfast not being able to use POL's analysis. POL clarified that this was being addressed but still being tracked as a risk.

CC thanked everyone for their time and noted the next meeting date would be agreed in due course.