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Minutes - Special Horizon Meeting
Tuesday 10th August 1999 at Kingston Park Rugby Club, Newcastle

The Meeting, chaired by the National President Jean Kendall opened at 7.35pm. She welcomed the 150+ subpostmasters who attended.

Mr Dave Miller, POCL Network Director gave a short address, followed by Colin Baker, General Secretary, NFSP. Mr Miller told the meeting that Horizon was formally accepted 2 weeks ago - two trigger points were important.

18/08/1999 - Decision to accept contract

20/08/1999 - Decision to Rollout or not.

By mid November 2000 offices were to be automated, then held for a period of assessment up to New Year.

Colin Baker said that both he and Dave Miller looked on Automation as the future for subpostmasters and that they were both there to make note of and act on the findings of the Horizon Trial subpostmasters to whom all other subpostmasters owed a debt of gratitude.

The meeting was then opened for subpostmasters to comment on the Horizon Programme and for questions to be asked of POCL and requests made for future actions.

To enable all points to be covered and good order to be kept an agenda was adhered to. In an attempt to cover all points in these minutes, I list them in agenda order.

1 General Point

Agreed by all on the trial of: -

- A the stress on the workforce
- B the strain on peoples lives and marriages
- C lost holidays by some subpostmasters
- D the miserly amounts paid by POCL to subpostmasters on trial.
(Colin Baker explained that the amounts paid were not negotiated by the Federation but on the Federations representatives the amounts had been doubled from the cash to be paid. Subpostmasters told of costs up to £780 in extra wages.
- E Of the 44 Horizon offices present in a vote 30 offices said that they Suffered stress and only 4 thought payment was sufficient, and t they had been in first phase.



- F All offices agreed that a checking system without information having to be removed is essential to the successful use of the system.

2 Surveys

All offices dissatisfied with surveys for the following reasons:

- 1 Number of surveys undertaken
- 2 Different Teams turned up to do survey
- 3 Amount of persons required to do survey and to check up on survey
- 4 Surveys not been correct after 4/5 surveys having taken place
- 5 Problems with placing equipment, "get it in don't worry about working space" (printers on the floor)
- 6 Why does it need a special man to drill holes
- 7 One SPM (a computer expert) gave information on length of, and types of cables used.
- 8 Question: Why was survey sheet A4? Why were findings written in stone? Why were card cut outs of machines, not used, to give subpostmasters an idea of the space taken up?
- 9 One office had 6 visits on repeat Surveys, on each occasion out of date paperwork was brought by the surveyor
- 10 Subpostmaster (Olympia) asked why we were having this meeting as he had been through the same, and heard the same comments 18-month before in a meeting with Regional Manager. He told of 7 people turning up at his office to move 2 sheets of glass and printers placed in wrong position.
- 11 Why, asked one office, did they set everything for left handed people when all were right-handed?
- 12 SPM at Haltwhistle told of 4 surveys to get things nearly right, with problems of shelf in wrong position - veiled threats to future from RMN in plans not agreed.

3. Installation

- 1 30 of 44 offices present thought installation went well.

2 Problems

- a. Mr Evans, Olympia TSO thought the whole process of installation lacked management at every stage. His hardware was installed but could not be connected to meter due to work not being carried out. After hardware installed it took a further 2 weeks to be connected to meter. Tynemouth TSO complained about electrical surveys.
- b. Saltwell Road TSO and Klem Park both complained of Teams not sticking to arranged timescales and turning up at offices at wrong time.

4. Training

Ashington TSO complained of mix of offices at training sessions - offices that used ECCO (i.e. Branch and MSPO) at distinct advantage. Despite all promises training rushed, with training on Balance almost non-existent. It was felt that Support Officers after going live were inexperienced and knew less than subpostmaster.

Of all offices present:

34 were satisfied on training on Counter Transactions but only on training for Balance and Cash Account. At seminars they had been told many times what would happen - but did not. Postmaster at Cowgate TSO admitted he had little idea and without help of POCL staff would not have coped.

One office went for 2 days training 3 weeks ago - 2 days came to be barely 1 1/2 days.

5. Migration

20 offices were happy with system.

Complaints were made about: -

- a) stock migrated onto wrong place in C/A
- b) Migrating staff - got on with job, subpostmaster just there to sign - no real idea of what signing for.

6. Customer Transaction

Problems told:

- a) no eye contact with customer
- b) trouble hearing over noise of computer

No problems with subpostmasters and staff wearing spectacles.
SPMs would like facility to customise screen.

7. Pension Books

Problems with unreadable bar codes - bad effect on customers, BA should improve before Roll out.

Slow response from BA on giving information after scanning.

Problem with Foreign encashment, and books for other offices.

Walker TSO suggested scanning Docket rather than book.

BA not consistent with Stop Notices.

8. Balancing

Every office complained of System Failure, every balance day need to reboot. POCL have system to know how many reboot without offices informing POCL - but no action taken by POCL to improve situation. Waiting time at Helpline for rebooting instructions makes SPMs act on their own

9 End of Day Procedure - Cut Off Time.

The blocking of the system when small counter printer (daily) is in use stops customer service (no inputting on system can take place).

Questions Asked

- What is happening to migration shortages and those for first few horrendous weeks of Trial - many offices carry shortages / surpluses in cashbook which need clearing.
- Why can't all offices have laser printer? Laser printer must faster than Dot Matrix. Printing time for C/A - laser printer - 15 minutes
Dot Matrix - 30 minutes plus.
- Problems with printing on Thursday morning, as one position taken out of use, while printer is in operation - especially hard on one-position offices that devise own system to get around the problem.
- Helpline.
POCL Helpline improving (cannot give permission to reboot)

ICL - 1st Helpline - no use
2nd Helpline - for difficult issues - OK, but can be 2 hours before response on rebooting.

At the end of the questions Dave Miller summed up the evening and asked one question - should he authorise national roll out?

All offices agreed that there was nothing fundamentally wrong with the system, however they did not want roll out until further improvements had been made.

Colin Baker thanked Northumberland and Tyneside for inviting him to the meeting saying that he would take all points away.

John Peberdy backed up Colin's statement and promised that the items brought up would be worked on.

Malcolm Rodger in his vote of thanks thanked the President and the top table for their efforts. He presented the President with flowers, and presented Roy Edmondson with the same for his daughter **GRO** thanking her for her efforts in the arrangements for the meeting.

The meeting ended at 10.08pm.

Problems and Comments Notified on the Questionnaires completed after Meeting.

- **Training - Urgent.**

From: Peter Finlay - Bradford Secretary, John Naylor, Leeds Secretary, Maureen Dargue, Newcastle Honorary Member.

URGENT PROVISION MUST be made for training Reliefs- so that they can honour their commitments.

They should be able to be trained without being linked to an office. Without TRAINED RELIEFS many subpostmasters will be unable to take a holiday - this will be after a period of stress.

- **New Business**

From: Otterburn Post Office

Why can't we take Lloyds & TSB Business Accounts? Village banks are closing and customers are asking for this service.

- **Costs**

All trial offices have either put their own extra time in, or paid staff extra.

Increases are shown in both Telephone and Electric accounts.