

Benefits Agency Post Office Counters Automation Project

Proposed terms of reference for independent adviser

The Government wishes to appoint an independent adviser to facilitate discussions between the parties to the Benefits Agency/Post Office Counters automation project (Benefits Agency (BA), Post Office Counters Limited (POCL) and ICL Pathway (ICL)).

The adviser will report to Ministers via the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Stephen Byers.

The immediate objective will be to report to Ministers within one month on:

- * whether there is a commercial basis for proceeding with the project which is acceptable to the parties;
- * whether there is in place a satisfactory implementation plan with a detailed timetable for completing the project;
- * any further action which would need to be taken to ensure successful delivery of the project

The role of the adviser will be to:

- * convene and chair discussions between the parties;
- * commission papers and proposals from the parties;
- * independently appraise the parties' claims and contributions;
- * produce compromise proposals to assist the parties to identify common ground;
- * take such other action as he thinks fit to establish an acceptable basis for continuation;
- * ensure the parties provide information necessary for the analysis of alternative options.

HM Treasury

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The adviser will have no power to bind the parties, who will retain full authority to agree or not agree any proposals made by the adviser or any other party.

If the project continues there is likely to be a continuing role for the adviser in facilitating progress.