
From: John Doe [GRO]
Sent: Tue 27/06/2023 9:30:53 PM (UTC)
To: henry.staunton; [GRO]
Subject: Whistleblowing

Henry

I'm writing to you directly because I don't trust the post office whistleblowing process and escalations into Nick Read have not been dealt with. This email will also be sent to Sir Wyn Williams and Darren Jones.

The disaster of NBIT is well known across different levels within the business. Recently a number of people have raised concerns to Nick Read that have been ignored. More than one individual is aware and has told Nick the Board have been told untruths by the NBIT team and CIO about the extent of defects and timescales for R2 roll out that now won't be delivered until August, if then. The defects are not under control and it's common knowledge that there wasn't the capability in the project to deliver the build to the right standard that means what has been built so far is sub par and has caused the issues that they don't know how to fix. A lot of people are saying we are repeating the mistakes of the past and I'm not the only one who feels the need to take an ethical stance to call this out in the public interest. The CIO has only just started to understand what is really happening in the detail and started to question why there is so much waste in the programme and why it's set up the way it is but surely should have been fully aware throughout.

There has been no governance in place for NBIT for a long time and what has been in place hasn't done what it is supposed to. Even the new steering group operates on mis-information because no one really has a clue what's going on, how long it will take to fix it and can't be open about how broken the programme is because it's already gone too far. External assurance has been recommended to Nick repeatedly and has still not been arranged even though he knows that NBIT is out of control and his CIO himself has called NBIT a mess in front of lots of witnesses. The governance failings that led to the bonus problems are the tip of the iceberg in comparison to NBIT.

The NBIT project team and RTP teams work in silo. NBIT are secretive and told not to share updates or information with anyone from the wider business. The RTP team are being stood up to understand gaps in the NBIT plan that should have been managed under the CIO and NBIT Director but hasn't and the costs are astronomical because such a poor job was done initially and now a more realistic plan has been proposed by RTP and KPMG with a better understanding of retail requirements and current state, it is unaffordable. Had it been properly planned and assessed upfront the internal build would never have been a real option. How the CIO and NBIT programme director still have jobs is beyond me. The NBIT Programme Director refused to share an offsite office with RTP and Horizon colleagues and called members of the team thieves and said a lock needed putting on the door to keep anyone from outside the NBIT team out.

Anyone who questions the CIO or programme director are badged as difficult and trouble makers when in reality its a case of having the experience to see the mistakes being made and wanting to do the right thing. These people are bullied either into staying quiet or there are campaigns to undermine them. This is exactly what happened in the past with people too scared to speak up and say what is really going on because of the repercussions even from Nick.

Setting up two separate projects under different leaders has been a colossal mistake from Nick which he did despite being warned against it by the CFO and others. It has led to in fighting and openly combative and negative behaviours from some of his GE and other senior leaders that he hasn't sorted out. No clear guidance from Nick and his unwillingness to deal with any sort of conflict or make a difficult decision has meant critical questions about ownership of activity hasn't been answered and again led to duplication and unnecessary delays and cost like in management of back office, training and postmaster engagement. Back office requirements still aren't properly understood by the programme and so there is very little chance that the recent budget request is accurate or sufficient if NBIT continues. The treatment of some of the people that have tried to step up to resolve the situation is also nothing short of disgraceful, most of whom are looking to leave because they don't want to be part of history repeating itself and Nick is doing nothing to stop it.

There is inefficiency across the business but especially in the Transformation, Retail, CIO and NBIT teams. There has been no sufficient financial control over NBIT because there is no real plan to approve anything against. Roles are duplicated and money is wasted on contractors some of them have no interest in anything other than keeping a day rate coming in and others that don't perform just left unmanaged. The technology functions operate in isolation of each other causing duplication and inefficiency and the behaviour and comments of the CIO are ill considered and damaging, even in public forums with the whole IT function present.

The CIO is the worst leader I have experienced in a long and successful career. He is open about misleading the Board with inaccurate dates and costs for NBIT and is incapable of making a decision or having a difficult conversation. He has no previous delivery experience and has openly said to members of his team that he is doing this job to get the experience because he's never done any delivery before. How is this acceptable for someone managing such a critical business transformation programme? He manages his team in silos leading to regular disagreements and mistrust and has no clear plan either for the CIO or NBIT programme which is why dates move right every week and costs are out of control. He is openly disparaging about other senior leaders in front of junior members of the team and then denies ever saying anything despite reports from people into other managers. He operates his function like the wild west not following processes and trying to create support functions within his own team by stealth with no regard for the waste of public funds, how it undermines the roles of other colleagues across the broader function and business and the lack of real experience or capability to do some of the tasks being asked of people.

Retail path clearing is an expensive and time consuming activity that needs to be delivered before a new system can roll out but this is the day job of the retail team and nobody with the ability to fix it seems to be questioning why they've not been doing what they should be or why the retail director isn't owning fixing it now.

Nick Read has openly acknowledged and accepted the failings of some of his GE team to more than one employee that's been to him to express concerns, but has taken no action to deal with it. He is also aware of toxic behaviour from senior leaders and again does nothing to address it even when he's witnessed it directly. He refuses to make the difficult decisions and nods along when people raise concerns, saying everything they want to hear, but then does nothing to resolve it. He is aware he has senior people in role not doing what they should like Jeff Smith and again does nothing to manage or deal with it even though its a waste of public money.

The culture in the business is disgusting and this starts at the top with Nick and the GE. More than one person has heard comments from Nick Read about public school education and there is a class, race and gender divide at the top. We have another CPO suddenly disappeared from the business who happened to be the only female on his team. This is the third in three years and raises serious questions about how Nick manages his team and why senior people leaders and female leaders don't seem to last. The way some senior leaders talk to female and more junior employees is not at all in line with the post office ways of working and there are still concerns about racism and people being too scared to report. The CFO and Transformation Director are both examples of inappropriate behaviour that is then replicated across there teams and not dealt with. There is a joke in the Retail team about what the Retail Director will be sacked for because of how he behaves with female employees and external partner female employees and more than one female supplier representatives have made comments generally about the sexism rife within senior levels of post office during forums they've attended.

Nick made comments last week to the senior team about the horrific behaviours of the people who were part of the Horizon debacle especially if they are still in the business. He doesn't seem to see how much of this is still going on and it feels like he's doing exactly what those people did before saying if you were here in the past you need to go regardless of the situation. A lot of people are also saying this is hypocritical when he doesn't manage his own team or there behaviour. He has lost the respect and support of a lot of the senior leaders in the business by failing to address known issues, allowing unacceptable behaviours and backing poor performing and inappropriate members of his own team. There is a common perception that his priority is clinging onto his job by his fingertips rather than actually leading the business in any way, facing into and fixing the problems and putting the interests of the business and the public purse first. Hopefully me and others raising this to you will finally lead to a closer look at what is happening at post office because right now we're on course for public inquiry 2.0.

Warmest Regards

Anonymous