

PH18 + PH18A



John Whittingdale OBE MP
Culture, Media and Sport Committee
House of Commons
7 Millbank
London
SW1P 3JA

10 August 2011

Dear Mr Whittingdale

I refer to your letter of 29 July 2011. In your letter, you invite me to:

- (A) Reconsider the evidence I provided to the Culture, Media and Sport Committee ("the Committee") on 21 July 2009 at Q1384 and Q1394; and
- (B) Submit written evidence, providing more details about the areas in which I dispute the evidence provided by James Murdoch to the Committee on 19 July 2011, in particular covering when and how I informed Mr Murdoch of the "for Neville" email and what significance I attached to this.

I will address each of these points in turn below.

My evidence of 21 July 2009

You have asked me to consider my comments "that the external investigation News International had commissioned had been "completely hands-off" (Q1384) and "very thorough" (Q1394)". I would like to thank the Committee for allowing me the opportunity to review my comments.

I confirm that my comments to the Committee remain an accurate reflection of my understanding. It may, however, be helpful to the Committee for me to provide some further explanation on these points.

Q1384

The context for the evidence provided by me at Q1384 relates to the following question put to me by Mr Farrelly at Q1383:

"...I wanted to explore the basis for the evidence you gave the PCC, I believe, in February 2007 just after you arrived at the News of the World. At that stage what stage had investigations reached at the News of the World to your knowledge...?"

My use of the phrase "completely hands-off" concerned the appointment by News International of a firm of solicitors, BCL Burton Copeland, and that firm's role in cooperating with the police investigation.

My knowledge of the police investigation and BCL Burton Copeland's role was based on discussions that I had following my arrival at the News of the World on 27 January 2007. My arrival post-dated the police investigation, and BCL Burton Copeland's work. However, as I understand the position, the firm's role was to facilitate News International's cooperation with the

police investigation, and to assist in providing the police with any evidence that they requested from the company.

Q1394

It may assist the Committee's understanding if I set out the various investigations and reviews of which I am aware which took place prior to the evidence I gave on 21 July 2009. The first investigation was the police investigation, which resulted in the convictions of Glenn Mulcaire and Clive Goodman. As set out above, my understanding is that News International appointed BCL Burton Copeland to cooperate with the police and to respond to any requests for evidence from the police.

On joining the newspaper in January 2007, following the conclusion of the police investigation, I instigated a detailed review of the newspaper's internal systems and controls. This included a review of the protocols on cash payments, the amendment of staff contracts, and the implementation of a programme of seminars by the Press Complaints Commission ("PCC") on the PCC Code of Practice. Further details on this review and the changes made are set out in my opening statement to the Committee on 21 July 2009.

In the summer of 2007, after Mr Goodman had been released from prison, he appealed the disciplinary action taken against him by News International. During the course of that appeal, Mr Goodman made allegations that other employees were aware of phone hacking. While he provided no evidence to substantiate his assertions, the company commenced an internal investigation to determine whether there was any evidence to support those allegations. The investigation included the questioning of key executives (which I conducted, together with Daniel Cloke, the company's Director of Human Resources) and the review of 2,500 emails (in relation to which the Legal Department instructed outside lawyers, Harbottle & Lewis). Once the email review was complete, I was informed that the emails did not suggest wider issues in relation to phone hacking as had been alleged by Mr Goodman. I believe the phrase used by Mr Cloke was that there was "good news; there is no smoking gun or silver bullet in the emails".

When the "for Neville" email came to light in April 2008, Mr Crone conducted an investigation into the background to that email. This included questioning a number of reporters and tasking the company's IT department to carry out checks on the email.

James Murdoch's evidence of 19 July 2011

I have had an opportunity to review Tom Crone's letter to you in which he responds to the same points as those raised in your letter to me. I agree with Mr Crone's explanation of the meeting we had with Mr Murdoch to discuss the Gordon Taylor settlement and the significance of the "for Neville" email, and cannot add any additional points to his explanation.

Yours sincerely


Colin Mayer