

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Office of the Chief Executive & Town Clerk

Robert Tinlin Chief Executive & Town Clerk

Our ref: RT/PP

Your ref:

Contact name

Date:

6 December 2012

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Moya Greene
Chief Executive
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Dear Ms Greene

CLOSURE OF ROYAL MAIL DELIVERY OFFICES IN SOUTHEND-ON-SEA

We refer to the correspondence between you and the Council's Chief Executive on the 23rd October and 1st November regarding our concerns about your proposals for rationalisation of delivery offices in and around Southend.

In line with the offer from your colleague, Noreen Perry, we arranged to meet with your representatives to discuss your proposals. In arranging this meeting we were conscious of the advice from Ms Perry that "no decision has yet been made we are still exploring our options". We assumed that any meeting with this authority, or others, would happen before your company took its decisions.

We met with your chosen representatives, Alice Dickerson and Michelle Richardson, yesterday. We were extremely disappointed and angered to be told at the outset of the meeting that your company had already taken its decisions and that you were due to make a public announcement of the closures of the delivery offices at Leigh-on-Sea, Shoeburyness, Rochford, Great Wakering and Canewdon today (6 December). We find this approach extremely discourteous and extremely poor business practice, particularly from a publicly owned company.

We are the more frustrated in taking up your personal offer of a meeting and giving up our time in the hope of constructive dialogue to learn from your personal representatives that this closure exercise was "never dressed up as a consultation", that you are "not a public body required to consult on proposals" and that this exercise was "not a consultation to hear your views". We were advised that your consultation had mainly concentrated on staff and trade unions although your apparent feedback seems at odds to the feedback we have received from your staff and trade unions anecdotally.

We understand that this approach to consultation or liaison with local democratic representatives is being continued with a pre-arranged consultation meeting due to take place with Leigh-on-Sea Town Council on 13 December.

We continue to have serious concerns about your proposals and their effects upon the communities that your company, and this Council, serve. We remain concerned about the accessibility for those in less accessible areas of South East Essex, are less mobile, elderly (with a high and rising proportion of our community elderly) or of very limited means. We were told that you have assessed travel distances from the centres to be closed but apparently not travel distances from affected residences and businesses to Short Street in central Southend. We also understand from yesterday's meeting that you have not taken into account travel times or difficulties in travel patterns in changing your network. We consider these omissions to be serious flaws in your assessment and decision making. We understand that there may be a "handful" of staff losses but that this has not been quantified, or is not being openly shared with us. This is a serious concern for the Council and, we assume, your staff.

The Council has been designated by the Cabinet Office and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills as one of the 20 cities in the second wave of city deals. This initiative is intended to support business retention and growth and it is disappointing that your decisions have been taken without any evident consideration of business needs or wider Government goals.

Your representatives advised us that you have given consideration to arrangements at Short Street depot if these plans are implemented and that you are making arrangements in the operational yard to try to accommodate all of the vehicles that will transfer there. Some vehicles may also be held at individual staff residences. We expect that to implement these plans you will have given adequate consideration to avoiding any parking of vehicles on Short Street itself and for the safe and legal parking of vehicles if taken home by staff. We were also advised that your plans will add one additional customer point and some enhanced staffing at the public desk recognising that queuing is already a problem and will be worse with your plans and that this will reduce it to some extent. We will look forward to monitoring the impact. We remain perturbed at the information that you have not taken into account accessibility for the public to Short Street, the objections you lodged to the recent adjacent Tesco planning application, or the impact on your own customer car park of increased usage. We were advised that you have no plans to enlarge the customer car park. We find this unacceptable, for your customers, but also because of the likely impact on the adjacent road network. Short Street is currently a restricted parking street and provides access to the main bus depot and, more importantly, the town's ambulance station. Any excess demand from your customers on your car park has the risk of illegal and potentially dangerous parking on-street. We seek your risk assessment on this issue and your plans to avoid such circumstances.

As you will tell, we are extremely dissatisfied with the way in which you and your company have handled this proposal, the lack of meaningful consultation with this council and others, the lack of any evident consideration of alternative solutions, and the potential impact of the proposal. We urge you to reconsider this decision and review the full option and implications in consultation with the community and customers before implementation.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Cllr Nigel Holdcroft
Leader of the Council

Cllr Graham Longley
Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group

Cllr Martin Terry
Leader of the Independent Group

Cllr Ian Gilbert
Leader of the Labour Group

Robert Tinlin
Chief Executive

cc *Chairman, Leigh Town Council*
Leader, Rochford District Council
David Amess MP
James Duddridge MP