

Dear XXXX

I promised to write regarding the events at Odiham Post Office before Christmas, sending on copies of answers I have received from the Minister and the Post Office about this situation. I enclose these here.

I must begin by letting you know that the entire situation sounds extremely puzzling. I gather that the Post Office was closed at very short notice twice in the run-up to Christmas, and that no-one was warned of this. Having dealt with Post Office closures before, I know only too well how people depend on them for more than simply posting a letter, and their closure disrupts daily life to an extremely large degree. It seems as though the Post Office has re-opened the branch, and that they are looking for permanent staff. This is good news as I know Odiham serves a much wider community than the village alone.

With regard to the reason for Mr Kemp's dismissal, I am afraid that I simply do not, and cannot, take a view on this. Mr Kemp himself has not approached me, and it must be left entirely to him as to whether he wishes to do so or not. Without his doing so I cannot comment on his specific case and the justice or otherwise of the situation in which he now finds himself. I assure you, though, that should he decide to contact me, I will be happy to listen to him and to help if I can.

I am wary of commenting further, other than to say that as a similar situation occurred at South Warnborough in recent years, I am suspicious of what the Post Office says about the software system it uses: Horizon. As I mentioned in my initial message to you, a company of solicitors in Basingstoke has gathered over 30 individuals from around the country all of whom allege that using the Horizon system has resulted in accusations of fraud by the Post Office, something they all deny. I am meeting with solicitors in late February, to discuss their findings and how they propose to take these cases on.

I am happy to let you know how I get on, so please let me know if you would like to be kept informed although I must stress that unless Mr Kemp decides to get in touch with me, developments will focus on other individuals and their cases. I trust you will understand.

Finally, please be assured that I am keeping an eye on post office closures throughout the constituency. I would be pleased if you kept in touch and let me know of developments as you see them.