

1st Floor, Bunhill Row Wing
148 Old Street
LONDON
EC1V 9HQ

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The Rt Hon James Arbuthnot MP
MP for North East Hampshire
House of Commons
LONDON
SW1A 0AA

Our Ref: ECT 526/11

9 January 2012

Dear Mr Arbuthnot

Thank you for your letter of 15 December addressed to Moya Greene, Chief Executive, Royal Mail Group Ltd about Odiham Post Office[®]. As Managing Director of Post Office Ltd, Moya has asked me to reply to you direct.

I fully recognise how important having continued access to Post Office services is for our customers and I do understand your constituents' concerns about their local branch.

I am sure you will understand that I cannot go into specific detail about Mr Kemp's position as this is a contractual matter between us. However I can confirm that Mr Kemp is not a Post Office employee but has been operating Odiham Post Office on a temporary subpostmaster contract since 2009. Prior to that I understand that he worked in the branch as an employee of the former subpostmaster, so I do realise that Mr Kemp is well known in the local community.

Following the cessation of Mr Kemp's contract, the branch closed temporarily from 9-12 December whilst we found a replacement temporary subpostmaster to run the service. Unfortunately due to unforeseen circumstances, the branch closed again between 16-21 December but reopened on 22 December, since which time there have been no further problems. I know how important the Post Office is to our customers, especially at Christmas, and I am very sorry for the inconvenience caused on this occasion.

Moving forward it remains our intention to retain Post Office services in Odiham and appoint a permanent subpostmaster, which will also help us to stabilise the service for our customers. The vacancy has been advertised and our local field team will also be revisiting the area in the next few weeks to see if there are any parties interested in operating a service in Odiham.

Turning to/.....

Turning to your more general comments about the Horizon computer system, we handle large sums of public money, as well as the money entrusted to us by the 20 million people who visit our 11,500 branches each week. There are a small number of previous and existing subpostmasters, including Mrs Hamilton who used to run South Warnborough Post Office, who allege that financial discrepancies at their branch are due to a fault with the system. We are also aware of the activities of a group called Justice For Subpostmasters Alliance, JFSA. There has been no evidence to support any of the allegations and we have no reason to doubt the integrity of the system, which we remain confident, is robust and fit for purpose.

I do hope that the above information has clarified our position but if you do have any further concerns, then please do let me know.

Yours sincerely,

Paula Vennells
Managing Director