

From: The Rt. Hon. James Arbuthnot, M.P.



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

15 December 2011

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21 Dec 2011

Ms Moya Greene
Chief Executive
Royal Mail
5th Floor
148 Old Street
London
EC1V 9HQ

Dear Ms Greene,

I have been contacted by a number of constituents living in Odiham in Hampshire who are most upset at the fact that their local post office has been closed, and a long-standing employee, Paul Kemp, has been dismissed due to 'irregularities'. I would be most grateful if you would look into these related matters as a matter of urgency.

I am most concerned on a number of fronts. First, my constituents tell me that this case appears to be a continuation of the problems that Post Office employees have been having with the software system that reconciled takings. I am aware of 34 individual employees throughout the country who feel they have been wrongly accused of fraud due to faults in this particular system, and am meeting with them in the New Year to discuss what action they plan on taking. You may recall that this case was brought to my attention in 2008, when the SubPostmistress from South Warnborough in Hampshire faced the same situation. It has not been rectified, a situation which does not bring credit to the Royal Mail.

I am also writing to the Minister to make him aware of this.

Furthermore, could you address for me the reason why this particular Post Office, in Odiham, is now closed? Constituents quite rightly state that it is the worst possible time of year for it to close – in the run-up to Christmas. Odiham is a hub for a number of surrounding small villages, and the Post Office there was well patronised.

I would be grateful for your thoughts on this.

Yours sincerely

GRO

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

Our Ref: ECT 526/11

12 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 Network Director of Post Office Ltd, I wanted 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 service issues. 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. Our local field team are revisiting the area identifying parties interested in providing this service. In the meantime our temporary subpostmaster arrangements will continue, so that service in the area will be maintained.

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 national network of over 11,500 branches each week. There are a very small number of previous subpostmasters, including Mrs Hamilton who used to run South Warnborough Post Office, who allege that financial discrepancies discovered at their branches were due in some way to the system. We do not accept these allegations and we are fully confident in the integrity and robustness of the system.

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

Yours sincerely,

Kevin Gilliland
Network and Sales Director

