

**MINUTES of the EXTRAORDINARY FULL COUNCIL MEETING of FAKENHAM TOWN COUNCIL**

**held at St Peters and St Pauls Parish Church, Fakenham**

**on TUESDAY 28<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2020 at 7:00pm**

**PRESENT:**

Councillor G Foortse (Chairman, presiding)

Town Cllrs: M Coates, P Hannon, J Holdom, D Andrews, J Griffiths, M Dutton, M Campbell, G Acheson, J Rockett, S Mears

Town Clerk: L Jennings

Deputy Town Clerk: A Kerrison

District Councillors: J Rest

County Councillor: T Fitzpatrick

Owain Mumford – External Affairs Manager for the Post Office and Wendy Hamilton-Change Manager for the Post Office

Press: J Harding (Lynn News) A McMillan (EDP) A Robinson (Fakenham Sun)

Public: 70 Members of the public

		<b>Action (initials)</b>
<b>AGENDA</b>		
<b>226</b>	<b>TO CONSIDER FOR ACCEPTANCE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.</b> Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Jerome Mayhew MP, Cllrs Thorpe, Glynn and Bucknell, District Cllrs Cushing and Punchard	
<b>227</b>	<b>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b> There were none.	
<b>228</b>	<b>TO SUSPEND STANDING ORDERS</b> On the proposition of Cllr Hannon, Seconded by Cllr Acheson, resolved that standing orders should be suspended.	
<b>229</b>	<b>TO ALLOW A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE POST OFFICE TO GIVE AN UPDATE ON THE POSITION OF THE FAKENHAM POST OFFICE</b> Cllr Foortse explained the format of the meeting and the background to the local Post Office being closed. The Clerk read out a copy of a letter send from Jerome Mayhew MP to the Chief executive of the Post Office demanding this situation is sorted out quickly. Owain Mumford, External Affairs Manager from the Post Office thanked the Council for the opportunity to address the meeting and said he understood the importance of the Post Office to the Town and the upset its closure has caused the residents. He explained the background to the closure of the branch in Millers Walk. The Post Office is looking to replace this branch with another offering the same services but with longer opening times. However, they have hit insurmountable legal problems which has prevented them opening on another site or keeping the current site open. Once they have solved these problems they would quickly	

open a “pop-up” mobile service temporarily until permanent premises could be found. Until then the post office van will be calling at the Town from 1pm to 4pm on a Thursday afternoon.

Questions were then invited from Councillors;

**Cllr Fitzpatrick-** Many local businesses and residents depend on the Post Office and its closure will have a detrimental effect on the local economy. How temporary is temporary when referring to the Post Office van. Mr Mumford was unable to give any assurances as to time frame as this is dependent on the legal problems being solved.

**Cllr Rest –** He understood that the Post Office would be talking to the District Council this coming Thursday regarding the possibility of having a temporary branch in the Connect building. He also asked why this situation has taken so long to sort out when the Post Office has had 2 years notice that McColls were going to close the shop. Mr Mumford said that this was due to the change of model for the Post Office, going through due diligence and complex legal issues.

**Cllr Mears –** stated that 3hrs per week from the Post Office van was not fit for purpose as it is replacing a 5.5 day a week service. This is impacting on local businesses that are not being able to meet despatch deadlines. How long will this take to fix. Mr Mumford said it would be sorted as soon as possible but could not give any assurances on time.

**Cllr Holdom –** We need an immediate solution to increase the service provided from 3 hours per week. Could we have the van for more than 3 hours per week? Mr Mumford stated that there is currently no other option available.

**Cllr Dutton -** Why could the Post Office not take over the current site from the franchisee and continue the service until new premises/providers can be found, or move in to the old post office building on Queens Road. Mr Mumford explained that the legal difficulties meant that a service could not be continued in the building in Millers Walk or the old post office.

**Cllr Hannon –** Matt Hatfull, change manager for the post office, attended a Council meeting in October and assured us that the Town would not be left without a post office as a number of options were being explored. What has happened since? Mr Mumford explained that all options have been explored without resolution.

**Cllr Acheson –** Why could a temporary Crown Post Office not be set up? Mr Mumford explained that a Post Office “on wheels” would be in place very quickly once the legal hurdles have been crossed.

**Cllr Campbell –** Asked for clarification as to why the Old Post office building could not be used temporarily. This was again about the legal matters regarding moving premises. It is hoped this can be solved as quickly as possible.

**Cllr Andrews-** Fakenham Town Council had assurances from the Post Office in October that we would not be left without a Post Office. Mr Mumford said that the assurance was that some sort of service would be provided, if temporarily, not necessarily a fixed service.

Members of the public were then given time to ask questions.

1. We understand that there are legal ramifications of changing the franchise partners, premises etc., have similar problems occurred before in other areas, and if so how were they resolved? Mr Mumford could not recall any other incidences recently.

2. The mobile van is currently visiting on a Thursday 1pm to 4pm. Could these hours be increased? Mr Mumford said there is currently no additional capacity in the system, but he will speak to the area team to see if anything can be done.

	<p>3. The van is here on a Thursday afternoon but there is no notice in the shop in Millers walk advertising this fact. The resident only became aware of the van when she read about it in the local newspaper. Also people came to the Post Office on a Thursday morning and then stayed and spent money in the Town and at the Market. The closure of the Post Office will have huge financial implications for the Town. Mr Mumford apologised for the lack of advertising and promised to let the Town Council have any information that comes to light. This can then be disseminated to the Town.</p> <p>4. Referring to the possibility of a pop-up post office in the Councils Connect Building is there space in the building to do this and will the legal problems prevent this from happening. Mr Mumford could not give any assurances or time frames. The resident asked who the decision maker at the Post Office is. It was noted that the Chief Executive is Nick Read Esq.</p> <p>5. The Post Office vans operated by local Post masters only run Monday to Friday. Is there any possibility that one of them could be persuaded to come to Fakenham on a Saturday? This and the timings of the visit to Fakenham will be looked at.</p> <p>6. Ex-employees of the recently closed Post Office said that they had no support from the Post Office organisation and felt let down. Mr Mumford apologised that this had happened.</p> <p>7. What were the insurmountable legal problems that have been encountered? Mr Mumford said he could not elaborate as this was commercially sensitive information. On further questioning it was noted that the problems were with the former franchise partner. As he was not able to give any assurances or time frames as to when /how this situation will be resolved, Mr Mumford was asked to let the Council now as soon as any information comes to hand.</p> <p>Cllr Foortse thanked everyone for coming.</p>	
<p><b>230</b></p>	<p><b>TO RE-INSTATE STANDING ORDERS</b>  On the proposition of Cllr Hannon, seconded by Cllr Griffiths, resolved that standing orders should be re-instated.</p>	
	<p>There being no further business the meeting closed at 20:10</p> <p>Confirmed this                      day of    2020</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b><u>CHAIRMAN</u></b></p>	