

Minutes of Special Meeting with Post Office Ltd

Monday May 21st 2012, 6.30pm in the War Memorial Institute

Present - Cllrs Newman, Prichard, Lambkin, Haines, Gilchrist, Thomas, Rowlands, Price and Van-Rees. Non Tudur Williams, Senior Stakeholder Manager and Nigel Parry, Field Change Advisor from Post Office Ltd. Charlotte Christie from Post Office local hosted by the Garage.

Apologies – Cllr Jones

In attendance - Pat Dryden

Cllr Newman began by introducing the guests and saying how delighted members are to have the PO Local service in Llanwrtyd. The opening hours are tremendous and the only negative thing is the inability to accept cheque transactions. The community is a traditional one with many older residents and they prefer to pay by cheque.

Ms Williams thanked members for the invitation and the kind words, and said she realised that cheque transactions are the focus. She gave a short presentation and overview of the different services provided and how there are new developments ahead. The government have just given 1.34 billion pounds to modernise the service and provide some new style branches, either Post Office Local or Post Office Main, over the next three years.

Ms Williams confirmed that PO Ltd wants to work with Ms Christie, and that the questionnaires, verbal feedback and petition all help PO Ltd to understand what customers want and need.

Ms Williams continued that it is essential that PO Ltd secure new business, and will be visiting local authorities in the hope of providing services on their behalf, community charges as a for instance. Ms Williams confirmed that PO local in Llanwrtyd is a success story and is down to the hard work and goodwill of Ms Christie, and support from the TC and members of the public, borne out by the increase in footfall.

Ms Williams said the idea of the PO local service is that it is quick and snappy and all transactions completed within 3 minutes with no queues. Whilst she appreciated there were no queuing issues in Llanwrtyd, there might be at other PO locals where the opening hours are more restricted, and all PO locals should follow the same model. Also, in cheque transactions there is an amount of work to be done at the end of the day, and the operator would not be paid for this time, so it would rely on goodwill.

Cllr Newman said some trade is being lost however due to the cheque issue, and that whilst members had been made aware that there would be fewer services with PO local, e.g. car tax, but there had been no previous mention of cheque transactions, and this is a very important issue. Whilst members understand the need for a 'model', could it not be more flexible?

Mr Parry said he felt this was a valid point; however there was a need for the model to be identifiable throughout the country. It was noted that Ms Christie takes giros and this would be similar to accepting a cheque.

Cllr Thomas said the service needs more flexibility meet customer needs. Ms Williams said the service was still in the pilot stage and she did not want to raise expectations. Cllr Van-Rees said this

is a farming community and as such they deal in cheques. Cllr Lambkin said she understood that at one time there was a plan to phase out cheques but that seems to have fallen through. Members agreed the importance of providing a good service not only for PO local, but the garage also.

The clerk commented that whilst she had not had to queue at the PO local service, she had queued for over 3 minutes at Builth Wells, Llangammarch Wells, the outreach vehicle and in the PO when Mrs Dyer had it. Also when paying income tax to HMRC via the PO, that has to be a cheque transaction as neither the Town Council nor the History Resource Group had debit cards, plus there needs to be an audit trail.

Cllr Van-Rees said that during his recent election campaign residents had commented on what a major advantage it was in having the PO local service. Cllr Price said that if PO Ltd wants to collaborate with local authorities, residents paying their community charge would most likely want to do this by cheque.

Mr Parry admitted that the DVLA insist on cheque payment, and if more clients insist on this that would add weight to our case. PO Ltd was trying to win the DVLA contract and has recently won seven other contracts. He continued that no other PO local has complained about cheque transactions; however they might have similar issues.

It was agreed that Ms Williams and Mr Parry would take back two suggestions, that either PO Ltd make an exception in our case, or that they make cheque acceptance an option (remembering it would need goodwill on the part of the operator) for all PO local services. If the latter were the case, operators could have a sticker in the window clearly stating whether they accepted cheques or not.

Cllr Rowlands said he would like to see cheque acceptance on a trial basis for 6 months.

Cllr Newman thanked the guests for coming and there was an agreement to keep in touch. Ms Williams, Ms Christie and Mr Parry left the meeting.

Signed

Dated

Pat Dryden

23/05/2012