

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

27 NOVEMBER 2003

NOTICE OF MOTION

POST OFFICE CLOSURES

This council notes with concern the recent review of Post Office branches in Brighton and Hove which has resulted in 19 sub-post offices being recommended for closure. We are particularly sorry to have only first read of these proposals in the local newspaper, rather than to have been notified in advance in writing.

Whilst understanding the need for regular reviews to ensure that Post Office services keep pace with the times and continue to operate efficiently, we are concerned that the Post Office has concluded that it would be in the public interest to reduce the number of local outlets, estimated at about 50 in 2002, by such a large number.

The Post Office states that it has considered aspects such as availability of public transport, parking facilities, topography and ease of pedestrian access to the branches in question and has identified viable alternative branches for customers to visit in each case. Regrettably, the council has not been approached about supplying information to help form a judgment about such issues.

The Post Office further states that the list of proposed branch closures only represents an outline proposal at this stage but that planned improvements have been discussed and agreed with the sub postmasters in question. However, it seems that as a part of that process, some retailers currently operating branch facilities have already been offered a considerable sum of money in return for agreeing to cease to trade as a sub-post office and indeed some branches have already closed as a consequence. Payments of up to £20,000 to persuade sub postmasters to withdraw from operations before a public consultation period seem highly inappropriate.

This council deplores the fact that the review to date has not been transparent and that certain of these proposals appear irreversible. We trust that Post Office Ltd will now go some way towards redressing the balance during the current consultation period by actively seeking views and information before reaching any final conclusions about how best to provide access to modern postal services across the city in an equitable way.

Proposer: Councillor Sue John

Seconder: Councillor Ken Bodfish

Signed by:

Councillor Joyce Edmond-Smith
Councillor Les Hamilton
Councillor Pat Hawkes

Councillor Gill Mitchell
Councillor Simon Burgess