

County Council

14 December 2018

Item 6(f) Notice of Motion from Mrs Mullins on Post Offices

Amendment from Mrs Millson

- (a) This Council notes with concern that:

On 11 October 2018 it was announced that 74 crown post offices across the UK, including those in Crawley and Worthing will be franchised to WH Smith. Taken together, successive franchise announcements mean the loss of 60% of the crown office network since 2013.

These privatisations are financed using millions of pounds of public money, despite the fact that the public has never endorsed the closures, indeed they have only ever protested against them. Indeed, despite considerable campaigning over recent years with huge local public support (frequently with tens of thousands of local residents' signing petitions) the crown post offices in Chichester, Bognor Regis, Littlehampton, Horsham, Shoreham-by-Sea and Haywards Heath were all closed despite the overwhelming will **wish** of the public that they remain open.

~~In 2014/15 alone, £13 million of public money was used to pay compensation to get rid of post office staff, and the Communication Workers Union (CWU) estimates the staff compensation cost of the latest privatisation will be at least £30 million, affecting as it does, 800 staff.~~

Reports by Consumer Focus (2012) and Citizens Advice (2016) have identified issues with the franchising of post offices to WH Smith including poor accessibility for people with mobility impairments, longer queuing times, and inferior service and advice on products.

~~Franchising means the loss of jobs with good terms and conditions at the Post Office. WH Smith replaces experienced post office staff with new employees in typically minimum wage part time roles. This is clearly bad for jobs in West Sussex and Post Office workers, many of whom are our local residents.~~

~~The closure of our Crown post offices and relocation to a WH Smith, also means the loss of prime high street stores and this contributes to the demise of our town centres. No explanation has been given as to why the profit-making Crown post offices such as those of Crawley and Worthing are being handed to WH Smith.~~

~~All Crown post offices are under threat of closure and/or franchising in future, if the latest round of privatisations are allowed to go ahead, it could prove the tipping point for the viability of the entire post office network.~~

(b) This Council notes that on 15 November 2018 the majority of members on Crawley County Local Committee agreed to call on the Leader of this Council, in her role as the lead on Economy matters, to respond to the consultation on the relocation of Crawley Post Office on behalf of the County Council, opposing the relocation.

(c) This Council believes that:

Our post offices are a key asset for the community, and the expertise and experience of **the** staff ~~there~~ is invaluable.

The relentless franchising and closure programme of the profit-making Crown post offices, points to a lack of vision rather than the plan for growth and innovation that is needed.

~~The Government should therefore halt these closures and bring together stakeholders, including the CWU, and industry experts to develop a new strategy that safeguards the future of the Post Office.~~

This Council resolves to:

- (1) Ask the Leader of the Council to write to the Government to raise concern about the apparent managed decline of the post office network and the impact on high streets across the UK as well as the service in the franchised premises ~~and the poor quality jobs that result;~~
- (2) Ask the Leader to respond to current consultations on the Post Office in Haywards Heath and Worthing to **focus on the principles set out in this motion** ~~oppose the proposals;~~ and
- (3) To **work** ~~join local campaigning~~ to raise awareness of the value of our Post Office **local network**, and the need for it to remain **in our communities** ~~an asset of and for the people.~~