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**MINUTES OF AN EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE CITY OF ELY COUNCIL HELD IN THE  
COUNCIL CHAMBER AT 5.30 PM ON MONDAY 27TH JANUARY 2014**

**PRESENT:**

Mayor, Cllr E Griffin-Singh	Cllr J Yates	Cllr J Outen	
Cllr A Arnold	Cllr E Every	Cllr G Barber	
Cllr C Phillips	Cllr N Clarke	Cllr M Rouse	
Cllr R Hobbs	Cllr J Tyrrell (arrived 5.40 pm)		
<i>District Cllr J Friend-Smith</i>	<i>District Cllr A Bailey</i>	<i>Mrs M Haynes</i>	<i>Mr D Mansfield (Ely Standard)</i>
<i>1 member of the public</i>	<i>Mr G Herbert, Post Office Ltd</i>	<i>Mr H Davies, CWU</i>	
<i>Mr T Pavlin, CWU</i>	<i>Mr D Smith, CWU</i>		

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Cllrs Ashton and Pearson.

**2. COUNCILLOR REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS AND DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

There were no Councillor requests for dispensations and no declarations of interests.

**3. REQUEST INTENTION OF THOSE IN ATTENDANCE WHO WISH TO SPEAK ON AN AGENDA  
ITEM – as per standing order 83 b**

Mrs Haynes and Mr Smith declared their intentions that they may wish to speak on agenda item 4.

**4. ELY POST OFFICE**

**TO RECEIVE PRESENTATIONS FROM MR GARY HERBERT, SENIOR EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDER  
MANAGER – EAST ON BEHALF OF THE POST OFFICE AND MR HUW DAVIES, TERRITORIAL  
REPRESENTATIVE OF THE COMMUNICATIONS WORKER UNION AND MR TIM PAVLIN,  
COMMUNICATIONS WORKERS UNION AREA REPRESENTATIVE**

Mr Herbert of Post Office Ltd gave information on the current situation with regard to the Ely Post Office. Post Office Ltd operates 373 crown branches and 11,500 agency network branches. The crown branches lost £37 million last year, but they are now looking to make them break even next year. A further 70 will be franchised in the near future, with the reduction of their head count voluntarily.

Lloyds ended their partnership with Post Office Ltd and did not want to renew the lease for the building. Notice was only given in August and a commercial transfer agreement was entered into with Premier Stores. These were looked at as a possible applicant to run the post office. They were taken through the recruitment process and consultation was undertaken. Unfortunately, it was evident from this consultation that it was not the right premises for a post office. He said that Post Office Ltd always listens to and acts on consultation. Post Office Ltd did not walk away and worked with ECDC and maintained the service by providing a portakabin, which is now sited on the Paradise car park. The only thing that has changed with the service is the location.

Post Office Ltd remains committed to providing a service in Ely. They have planning permission for 5 months from December 2013. They are currently talking to some retailers in the town who are interested in providing this service. They will also be advertising in the local paper to attract other possible retailers. The provision will be for a 5 position branch and they would consider splitting this in 2 shops. He felt it was an opportunity for retailers to take a post office in their store, which they will get paid for. It will also give them another 3000 feet going through their door each week.

The difficulty might come when the 5 months permission has expired and if this needs to be extended. He asked Councillors to spread the word to retailers to generate interest in taking over this service.

Mr Davies of CWU informed members that the post office in Ely had been franchised in the 1990s. In 2013 the provision had been lost and was now in a portakabin. This was only the second occasion for the use of a portakabin that he was aware of, with the other one being used for 2 years. He suggested that a feasibility study should be undertaken to see if there should be a crown service in Ely. The service would need 197 hours in total, which would equate to 6 staff members, which would include a manager. Self service kiosks could also be installed to speed up the service. He said that income has proved to be higher in crown services, with them undertaking 20% of all business and 40% of financial services.

He felt that as the population in Ely increases considerably over the next 20 years, with the proposed new housing developments, if the post office had crown status this situation would not be able to arise again. He felt a crown office would be sustainable in Ely, as these are in Newmarket and Diss, which have less population than Ely.

*Following both presentations the Mayor took questions from Councillors.*

The Mayor asked who would undertake this feasibility study. Mr Davies confirmed this would be the Local Authority, in conjunction with the Post Office.

Mr Herbert informed members that the crown programme has been receding for the past 30 years. The current crown transformation programme is only in place for 12 months. He personally felt that undertaking a feasibility study would be a wasted exercise.

Cllr Hobbs asked if Post Office Ltd would walk away or have an obligation to be here.

Mr Herbert confirmed that Post Office Ltd was committed to providing a service where there is one.

Cllr Rouse said he did not know how to help as they cannot know who has expressed an interest.

Mr Herbert said that if any of the councillors know any retailers personally, they should ask if they have spoken to Post Office Ltd about having a post office in their store.

Cllr Every said the Council would look for an assurance that a franchise in Ely would provide the same level of service as a crown. Would this be monitored to ensure the level of service?

Mr Herbert assured members this would be of the same standard.

*None of those in attendance wished to ask any questions.*

The Mayor thanked Mr Herbert, Mr Davies and Mr Pavlin for updating and informing the Council on this matter.