

POST OFFICE MOTION

Speech proposing Cambridge City Council backs the campaign to save Cambridge's main post office – 28th Dec 2024

We have been here before. The Post Office put the Crown Office on St Andrew's Street at risk in 2019. I'm pleased to say that all parties here including Daniel Zeichner rallied to the call to prevent it. And we were successful.

The plan then was to have WH Smiths operate it from the back of the upstairs of their store.

I want to suggest that a Crown Post office is a public service platform that we continue to need in its own right our high street. Its staff have a knowledge and an authority which another corporate commercial retailer would find it hard to replicate.

We understand and value the franchised part of the post office network, where a sub-postmaster provides a local service embedded within a local shop in neighbourhoods around the city and out in the countryside. It is a model which makes eminent sense for smaller populations – despite the Post Office having grossly abused large numbers of those subpostmasters over almost 20 years. I am pleased the PO is going to have to compensate those who at their hand outrageously wrongfully lost their savings, their businesses, their reputations and even their liberty. The Post Office is justifiably an organisation in disgrace for that. But the compensation should not be funded by cannibalising the other part of their network – the Crown Offices, such as we have in St Andrew's Street.

The Crown Post Office is an important complement to the franchised network. People in Cambridge or outside it who don't live close to a franchised branch rely on the St Andrews Street crown office and use it when they come into town for other things. Even if you do live near a neighbourhood branch, there are often longer opening hours in St Andrews Street as well as more functions it can perform.

This is how city centres thrive - by meeting a multiplicity of people's needs in one area, supporting services that can't be viable in smaller communities because of the critical mass of demand they need,

combining to justify trips which enable a whole range of tasks to be accomplished – making it a social crossroads too. It is important that the St Andrew's Street office is close to public transport in and around the city.

As a tourist destination, Cambridge attracts a whole layer more of post office business too. A specialist, dedicated shop front on the high street is a visible and trusted public service presence.

As a city centre, Cambridge should be able to support a crown post office. It is a major and growing regional centre of population and a tourist magnet, where people expect to find what we have now.

The crown office we have is typically hugely busy. If Cambridge can't support a dedicated service like this – where actually can?! How Cambridge, or any of the 114 other offices elsewhere, has been selected to lose its crown office is a complete mystery.

The Post Office is a community service as much as a business. That is why it is run by the government and not a commercial organisation. Well, here is a community which wants to keep its Crown Post Office and I hope which will fight to keep it, as they have done before. I would hope that, like before, this can be a cross-party goal. Please support this motion – for the many, many people who need it and use it, for the importance of visible and accessible public service - and for the health of the high street in our city centre.

By voting for this, join me in sending this letter to the Managing Director of the Post Office plc, demanding – once again – to get his hands off our Post Office in St Andrew's Street.

Ends