JOINT STATEMENT REGARDING THE DEPLOYMENT OF STANDARD 64 BOX LETTER SORTATION FITTINGS AND STANDARD SORT SELECTIONS FOR LETTERS AND LARGE LETTERS ACROSS THE MAIL CENTRE NETWORK

Royal Mail (RM) and the Communication Workers Union (CWU) are working together in developing key business policies, mutual interest solutions and a new culture, which is at the core of the commitments contained in our National agreements, including the Guiding Principles of Employment Security and Mutual Interest Approach to Future Challenges and Opportunities.

Background - Optimised Sort Selection (OSS)

Royal Mail and the CWU agreed trial activity on an initiative known as Optimised Sort Selection (OSS) in May 2016. Trial activity commenced at Nottingham and Warrington Mail Centres and Delivery Offices in those catchment areas. The objective of the trial was to jointly assess the potential benefits from reviewing the manual sortation of letters and large letters (not parcels/packets) in Mail Centres and any consequential realignment of the manual sortation requirements in Delivery Offices.

In November 2016 Royal Mail informed the CWU that following analysis of the trial outputs to that point, it was considered that the anticipated benefits in Delivery Offices would not be achieved and that the trial activity in Delivery would cease. The CWU confirmed that any further activity on Mail Centre specific analysis would require further Terms of Reference and although the revised sort arrangements within the two Mail Centres remained in place, the agreed joint trial activity ceased at that point without any National review taking place.

In January 2018 Royal Mail proposed revised standard sort arrangements within Mail Centres based on analysis of the OSS data.

Removal of Secondary Sorting of Letters and Large Letters

Within the Mail Centre estate there are a variety of box sorting frames currently utilised, i.e. 24, 48 and 56 fittings. In order to standardise the approach to sorting letters and large letters a sortation/circulation change is now being proposed for deployment across all Mail Centres, which will entail the utilisation of 64 box letter fittings and the introduction of 55 revised, Standard Inward Primary Sort Selections for intra Mail Centre sortation.

It is anticipated that this change will reduce the requirement for secondary handling by reducing the number of available Inward selections, which in turn will enable the Outward selections to fit in a 64 box sorting frame, so improving the efficiency of the operation. These changes are able to be deployed without compromising service to any plant and it is believed that they will improve quality.

The proposal for this sortation change will utilise the current standard 64 box letter fittings, with no impact therefore on Health & Safety.

It is anticipated that the proposed new sortation arrangements may reduce the number of hours required to perform secondary sorting tasks. The proposed changes apply to Mail Centre to Mail Centre sortation only and do not include reductions or alterations to current mail service level arrangements or sort selections from the Mail Centre to Delivery Offices.
The current level of manual mail planned for each dispatch will be unaffected and this change in process would not impact or change any current workload arrival times into Delivery Offices.

**OSS Review**

The Guiding Principles of Employment Security and a Mutual Interest Approach to Future Challenges and Opportunities Agreement committed both parties to review the status of recent trial activity.

It was recognised that rationale used to support the proposals in relation to the deployment of 64 box letter fittings as a standard method was based on the outputs of the abandoned OSS trial.

Therefore it was agreed to undertake an immediate joint review of the previous OSS activity. This review was conducted by the Joint Trials Coordination Working Group and included a full joint analysis of the projected benefits of the deployment of the standard method along with an impact assessment for each Mail Centre. This impact assessment included:

- Joint analysis on any adverse impact that the introduction of 64 box fittings would have on current employees covered by the Equality Act.
- Joint assessment of the potential impact on current duty structures and redeployment opportunities for affected employees at each site.
- Consistency with our joint commitments to reduce the levels of agency resource within the operation.
- Mitigation of the impact of change on individuals by fully recognising current attendance patterns and earnings packages.

The above activity was supported by respective Industrial Engineering expertise and the Joint Trials Coordination Working Group have now recommended that consultation on the deployment of this initiative should commence at each Mail Centre.

**Joint Governance Process**

The deployment of the new standard sortation arrangements will be introduced on a phased basis. The installation of 64 box fittings will take place in Mail Centres not currently using this specification and the schedule for each Mail Centre will be shared with the CWU at each site in advance.

Where 64 box fittings are installed prior to the deployment schedule or the conclusion of local discussions on revised resourcing arrangements, the existing sort selections will remain in place on an interim basis.

It is agreed that local discussions will be progressed on the operational change required at each affected site in line with the following guidelines:

- Using our existing agreed tools and agreements, the realignment of hours associated with the introduction of the 64 box letter fittings should be discussed and agreed, in line with current agreements.
- It is anticipated that the reduction in workload can be fully met through reducing the use of Agency/Casual resource and discussions will prioritise this aspect.
Both parties recognise the impact of change on individuals and reaffirm our joint commitments to minimise employee disruption as much as possible. In all change due consideration will be given to current attendance patterns, earnings packages, Family Friendly and Equality Act arrangements, and movement of employees between shifts will be avoided.

In particular both parties recognise the historic impacts of workload and traffic changes on early shifts in Mail Centres and discussions will ensure that any potential impact on early shift duty patterns can be mitigated in line with the principles established in the 2017 Joint Statement on Traffic Smoothing in the Processing Function and Mail Centre Workplan. This may include the realignment of workload where necessary.

Consideration will be given to ensuring effective alignment to workload that will avoid stranded costs.

Full analysis will take place locally on any potential effect on sortation staff covered by the Equality Act and reasonable adjustments to layout or work area will be considered where this will mitigate any adverse impact.

All detailed discussions on any duty changes or people issues will be progressed in line with the IR Framework and other relevant agreements.

The above information now provides the required clarification to enable local discussions to commence in relation to the deployment of Standard 64 Box Fittings and Standard Sort Selections and the relevant local engagement should now take place.

Any questions of interpretation, implementation or application of this Joint Statement shall be referred to the respective Headquarters for resolution.

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