



## Joint CWU/RM National Agreed Framework for Dealing with Delivery Office Mergers / Closures



### Introduction

This document sets out the framework of activity involving both Royal Mail and the CWU in relation to dealing with Delivery Office Mergers / Closures. It is recognised by both parties that the Delivery Office estate is under continual review for a variety of different reasons and that there will continue to be a need to consult on any proposed Delivery Office Mergers / Closures. Any changes to the delivery estate will be undertaken with the aim of maintaining or improving quality of service to the customer in line with service specification. Safety and the maintenance or, where possible, enhancement of the working environment will be a key consideration. All mergers / closures will require an appropriate solution for the management of red fleet upon deployment.

### Strategic Involvement

Many of the proposed Delivery Office Mergers / Closures are initially considered in response to a known issue. Examples of these are the requirement for capital receipts, the end of a lease, a CPO threat or the realisation that a building is no longer fit for purpose. In order to raise and discuss these issues in advance of any formal merger / closure proposals, there will be specific confidential Strategic Involvement meetings at both a national and local geographic level. These meetings will follow the format outlined in Annex 1. Wherever possible potential mergers / closures will have been raised within these Strategic Involvement Forums prior to any formal proposals being communicated, allowing for initial discussions on ideas and options from both Royal Mail and the CWU. It is accepted that in some force majeure situations it may not be possible to discuss the schemes in these Strategic Involvement forums first, but Royal Mail will notify and involve the CWU at the earliest opportunity.

### Consultation

Consultation between Royal Mail and the CWU will start at the earliest opportunity following a force majeure situation becoming known or once Royal Mail has a viable proposition to share for further discussion. Consultation will take place prior to final business case submission in order to ensure the CWU has had appropriate opportunity to input into the final proposal and present any alternative options before the investment envelope is frozen. CWU Divisional Representatives will be notified of the proposal or force majeure situation and invited to nominate the appropriate number of CWU representatives to be involved in consultation. Where any proposal involves several offices or covers more than one CWU area, a CWU sub-group may be established to ensure the consultation group is not too large for effective decision-making. Any proposal to close / merge a delivery unit will set out the reason for closure, the affected locations and the potential number of employees affected.

Sufficient time will be built into the process to allow the CWU to consider the initial proposition and to submit any alternative options. These views will be taken into account and a formal response made before Royal Mail concludes consultation and makes any decision to proceed with a business case for a particular merger / closure. Any Formal response will include full reasons as to why any alternative options submitted by the CWU have been rejected.

Consultation on Royal Mail's propositions will usually take place prior to any external communications to MPs / media outlets or internal communications to the units involved because at this point in the process there is no guarantee a business case will actually be submitted or receive authority / funding to deploy. It is therefore agreed that where necessary all consultation group members from all parties sign the appropriate non-disclosure agreements. Requirements for force majeure situations where the information may already be public knowledge will be agreed on a case by case basis and all parties undertake to sign whatever non-disclosure agreements are necessary for each situation.

The full content, material and governance process for consultation is outlined in Annex 2.

At the end of the consultation period, Royal Mail will formally notify the CWU Divisional Rep of the outcome, which will be one of the following: -

- Decision to proceed to business case on a jointly supported closure / merger scheme
- Decision to proceed to business case on an opposed closure / merger scheme
- Decision to proceed to business case presenting a range of supported & opposed schemes
- Decision not to proceed any further with the proposed DO closure / merger proposal

Following the outcome of the business case authority boards, RM Operations will confirm to the CWU Divisional Rep whether the scheme has authority to progress or not. Once a Delivery Office merger / closure has authority, allocated funding and is cleared for announcement, the scheme will be considered in deployment.

## **Deployment**

Once Royal Mail has decided to announce and commence deployment of a scheme, CWU Divisional Representatives will be notified of the decision, followed by area and unit level communications and briefings. Following this, employees at the affected offices will be advised, wherever possible, by joint communications and briefings.

When a decision to merge or close a delivery office is announced a local joint working group (JWG) will be established to initiate the process of engagement. The core membership of the JWG and the frequency of these meetings will be determined locally by the JWG and they may invite subject matter experts to participate or attend sub-groups as required. In line with the provisions set out in the IR Framework appropriate facilities and time will be provided to CWU reps to allow them to carry out their role.

The full content, materials and governance process relating to the deployment phase is detailed in Annex 3.

The JWG will be responsible for ensuring that the people and operational issues have been resolved in line with national agreements prior to any merger / closure taking place, except where circumstances outside the control of Royal Mail dictate otherwise.

The JWG will be responsible for determining the necessity / requirements for office revisions as a consequence of any merger or closure. Where the JWG has determined that a merger/closure requires a full office revision then this will follow the nationally agreed revision process. Where a consensus cannot be reached as to whether there is a necessity or appetite for an office revision this will be resolved, following engagement with the affected employees and utilising the IR Framework.

All health and safety requirements, appropriate welfare facilities, required fittings and designated equipment will be in place before any relocation takes place. Any pouching off arrangements and facilities for non-delivered / returned items must be specified and in place before the move takes place.

Any issues relating to potential employee surpluses, excess travel costs, preference exercises and pay protection will be managed in line with the terms set out in the MTSF agreement. If there is no suitable public transport available consideration will be given to providing transport between sites. Any duty selection criteria or resourcing issues will be dealt with in line with the national Way Forward Agreement and MTSF.

It is accepted that in all mergers / closures people issues will be a key priority with equal status to other priorities. The joint aim of the JWG will be to develop an agreed approach to dealing with people issues which meet this objective.

Where Royal Mail decides to proceed with a delivery office merger / closure then the discussions and negotiations on the employee impact will be carried out in line with current national agreements and the IR framework.

**Review**

Following any merger/closure, a joint review of all aspects will take place no later than 12 weeks following the move, paying particular attention to ensuring any travelling, employee resourcing, quality and operational issues are resolved. The review participants will be the members of the JWG and any findings/actions will be reported back to the overall National JWG in order for these to be logged or referenced for further action if necessary.

In addition to this there will also be a joint National review carried out by the National JWG after 6 months and 12 months from the date of the new National Framework introduction. This will also include joint monitoring of the Framework and Agreement and how it is being applied, whilst also ensuring that the spirit and integrity of earlier involvement and share of available information, along with any matters of mutual trust, are being carried out and maintained by all parties. The outputs of this review will be presented to the signatories of this National Framework in order to resolve or action as necessary.

Any issues regarding the application and/or interpretation of this Agreement will be forwarded to the signatories of this Agreement for urgent resolution.



Signed.....  
Rob Jenson  
Royal Mail

Signed .....  
Mark Baulch  
CWU

Date: September 2020