

No. 180/2020

3rd April 2020

Dear Colleagues

POST OFFICE: POLICY DECISION & CORONAVIRUS “FORUM”

Further to LTB 163/20 dated 27th March. Branches will wish to know we were holding daily calls with the Post Office with regards to the health, safety and well-being of our members during the Coronavirus crisis. However, despite the collaborate working (which resulted in the Joint Statement in relation to a change to opening hours published last Friday) there were many issues on which our members did not believe the Post Office was moving fast enough to resolve, such as the supply of much needed Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to all sections of the business. As a reminder, with regards to opening hours, we secured a change in Crown Office opening times as follows:

Mon – Fri: 9am – 3pm (previously 9am – 5.30pm or 6pm)

Due to the similar circumstances between what was happening in the Post Office and those being experienced by our Royal Mail members, in conjunction with Dave Ward, GS and Terry Pullinger, DGS (P), the Union’s Senior Leadership made a policy decision on behalf of all of our members working across the Postal industry. We agreed to write to the CEOs of both Post Office and Royal Mail to urge them do the right thing and support and protect the well-being of our members in these extreme circumstances.

My letter to Nick Read, Post Office CEO, which is attached for your information, outlined the key components of our policy decision as follows:

- All PPE must be in place in each and every workplace (including the Supply Chain operation and vehicles) or the operation will be suspended where this isn’t happening
- Transactions & services performed across the entire Post Office network

should be reduced to absolute essential items only which support communities and the vulnerable/disadvantaged, together with the revised Royal Mail operation. The essential items should be jointly determined between Post Office and CWU

- All Post Offices should close at 1pm Monday to Friday and 12.30pm on Saturday
- Anyone over 65 should be attending work only if they are comfortable and confident to do so
- Employees should only have to work alternative days to enable strict social distancing and total equipment/workstation cleansing prior to each day. This means no more than three attendances per week by any person
- Social Distancing must operate in each and every Post Office without exception. Where this is not undertaken, the service will be closed until this operation can be put in place in order to protect those providing essential Post Office services including Crew and Royal Mail Collection Drivers.

It should be noted that PPE is belatedly starting to arrive in workplaces (in the last day or so) which includes self-assembly Perspex screens, gloves, sanitiser etc. This has not been received everywhere as yet; however, we are hopeful that this will be fully resolved today.

Disappointingly, Nick Read chose not to respond personally to my letter and delegated the reply to Lee Kelly, Employee Relations and Policy Director. This correspondence, which we received late on Wednesday night, is also attached.

Whilst some elements of the Post Office's letter are clearly unsatisfactory, we were encouraged by the proposal to establish a "forum" to "further discuss and potentially reach agreement on some of the points that you have raised".

In conjunction with our Representatives we considered our next steps including the proposal above regarding a "forum" and it was agreed by all that we should support this proposal in order to be able to influence the Post Office's direction on any policy and strategy in relation to the Coronavirus. The first meeting (via conference call) of the forum will take place later today and further developments will be reported.

Yours sincerely

Andy Furey
Assistant Secretary