



Sadiq Khan MP
House of Commons, London
SW1A 0AA
t: 020 7219 6967
f: 020 7219 6477
e: sadiqkhanmp@parliament
w: www.sadiqkhan.org.uk



Councillor Maurice Heaster
Deputy Leader of the Council
The Town Hall
Wandsworth High Street
London
SW18 2PU

Thursday, 20 March 2008

Dear Maurice,

I am writing further to our discussion last night about the role Wandsworth Council could play in securing the future of the four post offices in Tooting facing closure under the current plans from Post Office Ltd.

You are aware of the discussions between Essex County Council and Post Office Ltd which could lead to fifteen post offices being saved in Essex.

I have been told by the Secretary of State for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform, the Rt Hon John Hutton MP, and by the Minister of State for Post Offices, Pat McFadden MP, that they are **encouraging Post Office Ltd to engage seriously with local authorities who wish to step in and fund particular branches**. My understanding is that there are fifty local authorities in serious discussions with Post Office Ltd, however, Wandsworth is not one of them.

I saw from the local paper that you had written to the Minister of State expressing an interest in working with Ministers to “identify potential solutions to post office closures in Wandsworth.” I am surprised that you were not aware that it is Post Office Ltd who are responsible for this, and not Government Ministers. Please do let me know if I can help in this regard.

From discussions I have had with other local authorities and with Post Office Ltd my understanding is that a combination of councils using the services of the post office network and additional investment, could lead to some, if not all, of our post offices being saved.

For example, rather than spending thousands of pounds each year hiring offices for parking shops in our town centres to provide parking permits to residents, this could well be a service provided in our local post offices. Similarly, council tax and council rent could be paid in our local post offices. I was disappointed to discover that Wandsworth is one of only four local authorities which does not provide facilities for Freedom Passes to be renewed in post offices. Similarly home and day-care bills could be paid for in our post offices.

The above are just a few examples of the sort of services Wandsworth Council could be providing via our post offices, which would make them more viable than they currently are.

I am also disappointed that none of the four post offices in Tooting threatened with closure have received any grants from the council, which I understand have been given to post offices in Putney.

If you were to do the above, it would mean the level of subsidy that is currently given by Post Office Ltd would be reduced, as would the losses Post Office Ltd are making. You will be aware that the losses are currently £500,000 a day. This would mean a better chance of saving our post offices because the financial commitments would be considerably lower.

Even if you decide to offer none of the above services to our local post offices, my understanding from looking at the Essex County Council rescue package, and speaking to Post Office Ltd, is that the approximate investment required to keep a post office open is £18,000 per year. I am aware from calculations which have been done that **the increase in council tax for a Band D council tax payer to save one post office equates to less than 15 pence per year.** I believe that the vast majority of local residents would be more than happy to pay this if it meant keeping their local post office open. **To keep all four of our Tooting Post Offices open would be just over 1 pence per week for Council Tax payers.**

As I have explained to you and your officers previously, and as I made clear at the public meeting last night, I am extremely keen to work with the Council and local residents to try and save our post offices. This is a matter far more important than scoring cheap political points, and I would hope that we would try and keep party politics out of this. This is the least our residents deserve.

I look forward to working with you in the coming weeks and months to secure the financial viability and survival of all of our post offices.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Sadiq Khan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'S'.

**Sadiq Khan
MP for Tooting**