



Ashburton Town Council

**MINUTES OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 24 APRIL 2019 AT 7.30PM IN THE
COUNCIL CHAMBERS OF THE TOWN HALL**

Present: Cllrs Dennis, Baker, Parker-Khan, Giles, Distin, Irens, Nutley, Ashford

In attendance: The clerk and deputy clerk. Also, the Postmaster

032/19GP Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllrs Vogel, Brewer and Daw (previous engagement). Acceptance of these apologies was proposed by Cllr Baker, seconded by Cllr Dennis. All in favour.

033/19GP Public comments/statements. The public may speak for a maximum of 10 minutes on items on the agenda or items that may be considered for a future agenda at the chairman's discretion.

The Postmaster made a statement:

Every update I present to Ashburton Town Council has to recognise the support of Jackie my amazing wife Jackie, Ashburton Post Office original apprentice and now full time manager Joanna JO PO Giles and Elaine Douglas who supports the branch when I am not in there.

Without our customers, businesses and organisations supporting the branch there would be no Ashburton Post Office

Ashburton Post Office appreciates the on going support of Ashburton Town Council.

High Streets, Towns, Villages and Communities are Nationally Witnessing the biggest change in retail.

Respect Research advises that some 31'000 people have lost their job in retail between April 2018 and March 2019.

Thousands of retail premises have closed.

<https://www.retailresearch.org/whosegonebust.php>

Which the well-respected consumer organisation advised

Which? has been tracking bank branch closures since 2015. At least 3,314 branches have been shut down in the past four and a bit years, at a rate of nearly 70-a-month.

<https://www.which.co.uk/money/banking/switching-your-bank/bank-branch-closures-is-your-local-bank-closing-a28n44c8z0h5>

Ashburton has lost its last bank in November 2016.

It has to be acknowledged the collaborative working between Ashburton Town Council, Ashburton Chamber of Trade and ourselves at Ashburton Post Office in establishing "Ashburton is Open for Business" has been so important and communicating what banking services can be undertaken for Residents, Businesses and Organisations at Ashburton Post Office.

There are High Streets, Towns, Villages and Communities who have seen Retailers, Banks and The Post Office close.

Recent research by The National Federation of Sub Post Masters undertook a survey of 1000 Sub Post Masters.

The feedback highlighted that

22% are planning to close, downsize or hand on their business in the next 12 months.

I want to assure Town Councillors and the Amazing Community of Ashburton that Ashburton Post Office is not planning to close and or downsize.

We believe the way to be sustainable is to continue to work collaboratively.

Ashburton Post is proud to contribute and participate in our Great Town and not just operate.

Collectively we can make a difference to sustain Ashburton Post Office, Encourage footfall to Town and support each other and traders.

Ashburton is witnessing positive feedback and working together can create positive media coverage with The Ashburton Calendar, Star Wars, Ashburton Antiques Trail, Discover Ashburton and Around Ashburton amongst other initiatives.

The Parliamentary inquiry is welcomed and we appreciate the support of residents, businesses, organisations. Ashburton Town Council and Ashburton Chamber of Trade.

There are many factors that are beyond the Control of 1 Branch, which is why I took the decision to seek election to be the South West Representative for The National Federation of Sub Post Masters. Part of my role is to be Parliamentary link for the NFSP.

The Parliamentary Inquiry is has a result of working across parliament with all parties, I do have to acknowledge our MP The Rt. Hon Mel Stride. I respect and understand that there will be differing views on the support they receive from their MP. I am speaking in context every time I asked for Mr Stride support I have received help.

The subject of Post Offices is well referenced and debated in both the Houses of Commons and House of Lords

There are many parliamentary publications which are in the public domain.

The current inquiry focuses on 8 areas, 5 of topics are relevant to independent branches.

53% of the 11'547 Post Office Branches are in Rural Communities.

BEIS Select Committee Post Office Inquiry

The Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee holds a one-off evidence hearing on Tuesday 21st May on the Post Office network, examining issues such as the franchising of Post Offices, the reduction of Government subsidies, and the long-term resilience of the service.

Post Office network

The evidence session will examine the future of Post Office branches, the moving of Post Office branches into retailers, the Post Office's modernisation programme and the tie-up with WH Smith, and the operation of Crown Post Offices.

The deadline for submissions is Monday 6th May.

The Postal Network

· Is the Post Office currently delivering services to the necessary standard across the UK?

Ashburton Post Office is classified has a Mains Branch and we offer Mails , Banking , Bill Payments , Financial Services , Telephone and Broad Band , Travel , Passport , International Driving Permits and other services .

The only service unique to Post Office is the Postal Order.

We are unable to undertake ID Verification Services something we would like to offer

· What concerns do you have, if any, about the long-term resilience of the Post Office network across the UK?

Post Office is facing competition in all categories both with other Companies and Internally within the Post Office Network.

On line rates for travel are differing to those in branch and we believe rates should be the same.

The mails and parcels market is now more competitive than ever before.

We are witnessing other providers undercutting Post Offices branches through self-employed couriers will less operational overheads and costs. There is self-regulation and we believe that OFCOM the postal regulator needs to have resource to audit all operators.

Customers using cash is continuing to decline. The Ashburton Post Office ATM is the only location in the whole of the UK to donate 2 pence for every cash withdrawal, we are witnessing a decline in cash withdrawals. Seeking support to encourage little amounts of

cash withdrawals more often will assist in maintaining donations to Ashburton Local Charities.

The match funding by E & JW Glendinning is appreciated and the community values of this Company have to be recognised and commended for all this Family Owned Company do for Ashburton.

Ashburton Post Office work with Ashburton Primary School and donate 1/2 the ATM fund to the Bank Youth Project.

We have now started working with South Dartmoor Academy. Seeking the ideas and suggestions of young people is so important. We will continue this and have thanked Councillor Parker Khan for facilitating. Students have met Senior Post Office Management and were invited to Post Office Head Office in London. We plan to continue this work.

- Is the current framework for sub-Post Offices sustainable for sub-Postmasters and the communities they serve?

Ashburton Post Office is like every branch relies on transactions.

The Ethos of Ashburton Post Office proud to be the home of Ashburton Library which continues to be on a rent free basis.

We do need to work collaboratively to encourage more customers to Ashburton, its retailers and The Post Office.

Recent research confirms that individuals who do not have access to a basic bank account are financially disadvantaged.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-48006905>

- Does the increasing role Post Offices play in providing basic banking services provide them with an opportunity or a threat?

The role Post Office now undertakes for basic banking needs for cash & cheque deposits, withdrawals and balance enquiries is benefiting footfall in the branch and Ashburton generally.

Government who is the sole shareholder of Post Office Ltd. need to invest in the Post Office Branch network being able to refer customers to be able to open a basic bank account.

We are witnessing financial exclusion in Communities without banks. If customers are unable to get on line, have the confidence and means to undergo a telephone application then Customers have to travel to open a bank account.

Post Office Branches must have the facility to refer customers via the IT System to allow access to applying for basic bank accounts.

Young people are our customers of today and the future and need the ability to access a bank account via The Post Office.

The most vulnerable customers have confidence in the Post Office and trust us.

Ensuring we continue to be viable and sustainable requires cross government working, involvement of Local Government and sharing with society what difference the Post Office does make.

- What new services, if any, could the Post Office provide to customers?

Society is seeing significant switch to online and digital.

We have to ensure encourage Government to offer choice for continuing to use High Streets and the Post Office and ensure there is awareness to The Post Office Branch Network ,

Customers now have choice without leaving their home and or workplace.

On Line Shopping continues to exceed expectation.

Ashburton Post Office wants and needs to increase awareness to local collect, on line shopping returns and help someone create on line selling start up business.

Ashburton Post Office commits to donating 10 pence to Ashburton Swimming Pool for every Amazon Local Collect which can increase footfall into Ashburton

Amazon offer a charity initiative called Amazon Smile, Customers who register can then donate 1/2 pence of every £1 spent to local Charities.

Seeking the support of Ashburton Town Council to continue to work collaboratively is so important to plan for a sustainable future.

Using the Post Office in Ashburton needs to be in free of risk from a Parking Enforcement Officers issuing tickets.

034/19GP Declarations of interest. To receive any declarations of interest on items on the agenda.

There were no declarations of interest.

035/19GP Minutes of the previous meeting of 27 March 2019

These were signed by the chairman as a true record.

036/19GP Matters arising from the previous minutes of 27 March 2019

There were no matters arising.

037/19GP Post Office Parliamentary review, discussion

The clerk stated that responses had to be in 6 May. Councillors discussed in detail and it was decided that Cllr Irens and Cllr Baker would liaise with the Postmaster to send a response.

037/19GP Update on climate emergency meeting of 11th April

The meeting had been well attended and a list of suggestions was being compiled and would be forwarded to those interested. Cllr Parker-Khan stated that this may be linked with Ashburton Futures and a core of people would get together to take things forward.

038/19GP Matters raised by councillors for information only or possible inclusion on a future agenda.

- The clerks stated that the only available water in the recreation ground was from the RBL hut. It was suggested that Grove Homes may supply water for a fountain.
- There had been a rescue by teenagers of a boy at Spitchwick. It was suggested that they be given a community award.

- Cllr Parker-Khan gave an update on the situation at the school regarding possible redundancies. Cllr Distin stated that the town council needs to put a strategy together to support staff with form filling etc.
- Cllr Baker has been in touch with the Co-op re street furniture.

There being no further business the chairman closed the meeting at 8.40pm.

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CHAIRMAN