

**MINUTES OF THE EMERGENCY MEETING OF EGREMONT TOWN COUNCIL HELD ON  
WEDNESDAY 8TH FEBRUARY 2023 AT 5.30PM IN THE TOWN COUNCIL OFFICE**

Present:

Mrs Elaine Woodburn (EW)                      Chairperson  
Mr Stephen Bell (SB)                              Vice Chairperson

Also:

Mr Sam Pollen (SP)  
Mr Neil Ferguson (NF)                          Mr Michael McVeigh (MM)  
Mr Gareth Stringer (GS)                      Mrs Jean Lewthwaite (JL)

Mrs Geraldine Pritchard (GP)              Town Clerk  
Mr Brian Skirrow                                Owner of Bureau de Change shop in Egremont

147.22.23	<p><b>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</b> RESOLVED to accept apologies (with reasons noted) from G Calvin &amp; D Wright.</p>	GP
148.22.23	<p><b>EGREMONT POST OFFICE</b> EW welcomed everyone &amp; thanked them for attending at such short notice &amp; explained that this meeting has been called following a concern that had been raised by BS following his application to incorporate a post office service within his current business on Egremont Main Street. She then invited BS to explain to everyone what his concerns were.</p> <p>BS thanked Councillors for their time &amp; he explained that he himself had been the postmaster for Egremont for 18 years previously and he, along with many others, had been disappointed to learn that the post office was closing down following the closure of McColls shop. He recognised that the post office itself was not sufficient to allow it to be run independently but it would need to be incorporated within another business and therefore he applied to have a post office facility within his current bureau de change shop on Egremont Main Street.</p> <p>BS explained that he was already aware of the post office restrictions (one of which included that a post office could not operate alongside a financial services business) but he was also aware that the post office do allow waivers.</p> <p>BS said that he had been honest and upfront from the beginning and he was told that having a financial business would not be a problem The post office has visited &amp; measured up the building already and although BS said that the post office would require two counters, the post office will only pay for one counter which BS predicts will lead to queues but at least Egremont would have a post office.</p> <p>BS was feeling quite hopeful about it all &amp; that his final hurdle to overcome was an interview and if this was successful, he would get the go ahead and could be open by the summer but he was disappointed when he received a phone call from the post office to say that due to him having a financial business, he would not be allowed to house a post office facility.</p> <p>As far as BS is aware, there was only one other interested party which too was a financial services provider so this same problem would affect this business too but he feels that the post office has refused him as they do not want to set a precedent for others by allowing a waiver.</p>	



Councillors were aghast that BS's application was not considered on its own merit, their criteria clearly states that waivers can be given and this refusal is not a good enough reason to turn him down and Egremont ends up without this service.

EW said when herself & JL had attended a meeting with Trudi Harrison MP, she had spoken to a post office official who stated that the main problem the post office has when a site closes down is finding a business willing to take on the post office service & they also acknowledge that it is not affordable to run it as stand-alone business and yet here we are with a willing person ready but he has been turned down. Councillors felt that the post office must recognise that they would still gain a profit from a post office service still in Egremont as they were not considering closing the post office facility down when it was situated within the McColls store.

Councillors also felt that each application should be considered individually as there were too many factors to make it an umbrella policy and having a post office in Egremont was paramount.

Councillors recognised that BS would be taking a risk in taking on this business but he has proved his commitment to Egremont by applying to do so, Councillors feel he would be ideally suited as he already knows the business and how it operates so he knows the pitfalls to avoid and would ensure he made a success of it.

Councillors also questioned why a post office would turn this down when we are a town of 8,000+ residents plus we have footfall from nearby villages etc which would be and are already affected by the closure of the post office.

Concerns highlighted were:

Poor transport links to nearby post offices

Access for disabled people

Cost of travelling

Community service it offers especially to the elderly

Loss to local businesses as it is thought that people who go elsewhere to use the post office will do their shopping there too so by-pass Egremont altogether

This is the nearest town for the outlying areas and is well used by people coming in, the post office was a lifeline to many when the banks closed down

Egremont has no banks and only one building society which is not open full time.

People carrying cash on public transport/further afield due to necessity

BS was informed that he had the full support and backing of Egremont Town Council and he was requested to email us the post office contact that he had with an address.

The Town Council RESOLVED that EW would email other official bodies to explain the situation and that we will expect them to give their support too to help this application go through. Also RESOLVED that a draft letter will be compiled and emailed to BS for his agreement/amendment, this letter will then be sent to all the bodies previously emailed so they can see the wording that they need to agree with and it will be sent to the post office without further delay.

BS then thanked the Councillors for listening to him and giving him their support, he was in turn thanked for bringing this matter to the Council's attention and for his willingness to take on this service which is essential for all and one that cannot be lost. BS then duly left the meeting & the meeting was brought to a close at 7pm.

EW

EW

