



CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S OFFICE
R.B.W.M.

- 9 OCT 2009

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From the Direct Communications Unit

6 October 2009

Mr Ian Trenholm
The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead
Town Hall
St Ives Road
Maidenhead
Berkshire
SL6 1RF

Dear Mr Trenholm

The Prime Minister has asked me to thank you for your recent letter.

As you can imagine, Mr Brown receives thousands of letters each week and regrets that he is unable to reply personally to them all.

I have been asked to forward your letter to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs so that they may reply to you direct.

Yours sincerely

MR S CAINE

promoting better local government



Local Government Association

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S OFFICE
R.B.W.M.

- 7 OCT 2009

Ian Trenholm
Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead
Town Hall
St Ives Road
Maidenhead
Berkshire
SL6 1RF

29 September 2009

Dear Ian,

Council motion- Post offices.

Thank you for your letter of the 24th September 2009 which logged support for a proposal submitted by Bristol City Council under the Sustainable Communities Act, *'that the government extend the same business rate relief to urban post offices as rural'*.

As you are aware the LGA has a statutory role as the Selector under the Sustainable Communities Act to receive and shortlist proposals from local authorities. The short-listing process will be undertaken by a cross party member panel in October and November and we hope to reach a decision that can be communicated to proposing authorities in December this year. As I'm sure you can appreciate we are unable to comment on specific proposals until this process has been completed. I can confirm that we have logged Windsor and Maidenheads support for the proposal which will be considered at the appropriate time by Selector Panel members.

Yours sincerely,

Martin Wheatley
Programme Director for the Environment
Local Government Association.

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22 OCT 2009

16 October 2009

Mr Ian Trenholm
Chief Executive
The Royal Borough of Windsor &
Maidenhead
Town Hall
St Ives Road, Maidenhead
Berks, SL6 1RF

Our Ref: JD/JD/024918/09
Your Ref: CE/DR

Dear Mr Trenholm,

Business Rates and Urban Post Offices

Thank you for your letter of 24 September to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government concerning business rate relief for urban post offices. Your letter has been passed to me for reply.

As you will know, the village shop rate relief scheme was designed initially to help small rural communities which were at risk of losing their last source of essential goods and services, namely their village general store and/or post office. It was later extended to include the village public house and petrol filling station. The 50% mandatory rate relief entitlement is tightly focused and to qualify for mandatory relief the hereditament must be the sole one in the rural settlement.

However, as from 1st April 2005 the Government introduced a rate relief scheme for all eligible small businesses, in both rural and urban areas. The scheme gives 50% rate relief for properties with rateable values up to £5,000. For larger properties the percentage of relief gradually tapers off, with no relief for properties above £10,000 rateable value.

It is the case that under this scheme, local authorities have a discretionary power to grant rate relief up to 100% to any business, including post offices, if they feel it is of benefit to the local community to do so. The Government believes it is only right that billing authorities should have to help pay for any relief granted as it is local people who benefit. Of course, the Government recognises that local authorities would like their contribution for any discretionary relief granted to be lower. However, the Government has to weigh the impact of any increases in Government contributions on both other ratepayers and on the increased cost borne by other taxpayers more generally to fund any relief given.

I can confirm that the Government has no plans to change the current arrangements in regards to mandatory rate relief for urban post offices.

You may wish to note that In May 2007 the Government announced £1.7 billion in public funding, up to 2011, to modernise and rationalise the UK post office network and place it on a more stable footing whilst maintaining national coverage. This funding includes an annual network subsidy of £150 million to support non-commercial post offices. The subsidy, which was formerly only for branches in rural communities, is being applied to post offices in urban areas – as well as branches in rural communities – from April 2008.

In May 2007 the Government also introduced new distance-based access criteria to ensure reasonable access to Post Office products and services across the country, including special protections for customers living in deprived urban areas [i.e. 95% of the total urban population across the UK to be within one mile of their nearest post office outlet].

Yours sincerely,



E J Stanislas