

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Communities, Housing and Public Protection
DATE	14 th January 2025
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Space within libraries for Post Offices
REPORT NUMBER	F&C/25/005
DIRECTOR	Eleanor Sheppard
CHIEF OFFICER	Stephen Booth
REPORT AUTHOR	Stephen Booth
TERMS OF REFERENCE	1.1.1

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 At Council on 21 August 2024 the Executive Director of Families and Communities was instructed to investigate, with urgency, the opportunity for post offices that are closing to be set up in our local libraries and to report back to the Communities, Housing and Public Protection Committee as soon as possible. The report aims to satisfy that instruction.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:-

- 2.1 Note the contents of this report and take no further action at this time.

3. CURRENT SITUATION

- 3.1 At Council on 21 August 2024 the Executive Director of Families and Communities was instructed to investigate, with urgency, the opportunity for post offices that are closing to be set up in our local libraries and to report back to the Communities, Housing and Public Protection Committee as soon as possible.
- 3.2 Officers met with two representatives from the Post Office in November 2024 to explore the possibility of the Post Office utilising library spaces for the provision of services at Cults and Peterculter. Post Office representatives shared that they intended to address closures in areas they consider to be high priority, with interim measures to ensure continuity of service where deemed most appropriate. This will most likely be through provision of a mobile post office service or by nearby host Post Office branches. Neither Cults nor Peterculter have been identified as high priority branches.
- 3.3 The Post Office has advertised the opportunity to run a Post Office in Peterculter and Cults. A link to the opportunity is attached [link](#). Both have

closing dates in Q1 2025. It is notable that the Post Office is looking for a successful retailer to either purchase the current business or incorporate a Post Office Local into their existing or proposed business.

- 3.4 Officers explored the mechanism for Post Offices to operate in public buildings and the delivery model used in other areas. Officers were advised that where Post Office facilities have been established they have been operated by an individual taking a sub lease of space from building owners. they were unable to offer any experiences where a council would have taken on this role or whether this was possible.
- 3.5 Peterculter and Cults Post Offices do not have any form of guaranteed income and anyone taking on these facilities would require to make the investment to set it up from their own resources.
- 3.6 Officers are of the view that a Post Office could be established within a public building, the most common and straightforward option would be where an operator is identified who would be willing to enter into a lease agreement for part of a building with the council on appropriate terms and then be in a position able to meet set-up costs without any guaranteed return. It is considered unlikely that there would be anyone in this position.
- 3.7 Consideration has also been given to whether the Council could operate as a subpostmaster. Section 20 of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 covers the Councils power to do things which advance wellbeing and there is nothing in legislation governing the Post Office which explicitly prohibits a local authority from being a subpostmaster. Should there be a desire to take this forward in future it will be a question of Post Office policy and contractual requirements which would therefore require discussion with the Post Office. Further details can be found here - [FAQs - Run a Post Office](#).
- 3.8 Post Office Guidance confirms that they do permit partnerships and companies to enter into this relationship with the Post Office, so I see no reason in principle why a local authority could not do the same. However, the Post Office appear to still want a named individual to take on the responsibility and meet their standards, which might make it difficult for them to accept a corporate body without a clear individual in control. The Post Office contract also includes other requirements, such as non-compete provisions, which could potentially interfere with other services the Council offers.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no direct environmental implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

7. RISK

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H) *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
Strategic Risk	NA			
Compliance	NA			
Operational	NA			
Financial	NA			
Reputational	NA			
Environment/Climate	NA			

8. OUTCOMES

COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN 2023-2024	
	Impact of Report
Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement	No impact
Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2016-26	
Economy	No impact
Children and young people	No impact
Adults	No impact
Community empowerment	No impact

9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
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Integrated Assessment	Impact	No assessment required. I confirm this has been discussed and agreed with Stephen Booth, Chief Officer Corporate Landlord on 25 th November
Data Protection Assessment	Impact	Not required

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

11. APPENDICES

12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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