



Subject:	Update on dual language street signs postal issues
Date:	7 th October 2025
Reporting Officer:	Kate Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control
Contact Officer:	Ian Harper, Building Control Manager, ext. 2430 Alan Mayrs Principal Building Control Surveyor, ext. 2428

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes ☐ No ☒
Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.	
Insert number	
1. Information relating to any individual 2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual 3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information) 4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter 5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained 6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction 7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime	
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	☐
After Council Decision	☐
Sometime in the future	☐
Never	☐

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes ☒ No ☐

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	To update members on the review that has taken place into the postal issue.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	The Committee is asked to note the contents of the report
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<u>Key Issues</u> <u>Background</u> 3.2 The Director of Planning and Building Control provided an update to members at the People and Communities Committee on 5th August regarding an issue which affected the return of dual language street sign surveys using prepaid envelopes. 3.3 An account suspension applied to BCC Royal Mail account between 15th April 2025 and 17th July 2025 has impacted a number of survey returns being processed and delivered to BCC by Royal Mail. It is unclear and we have been unable to ascertain to date when this suspension resulted in letters being held by Royal Mail. During our account suspension the Royal Mail Delivery Centre held 375 surveys. In addition, a number of surveys had been internally transferred to their National Returns Centre for return to sender (residents). 3.4 Whilst we have received all the survey returns held by the Royal Mail Delivery Centre and are continuing to receive surveys from the National Returns Centre, we are unable to obtain accurate numbers for the surveys which were sent back to residents. A small number of residents have contacted BCC directly to advise they had received their survey back. This involved the surveys of Rosetta Avenue, Skegoneill Avenue and Victoria Road. 3.5 A further report was brought in September where members agreed to resurvey 20 streets at the People and Communities committee on 9th September. Internal Review 3.6 Around the middle of June, the team who deal with dual language street sign surveys notified Building Control management that the number of survey returns for recent surveys were lower than expected. 3.7 Investigations by officers using a personal contact within Royal Mail discovered the account used for survey returns had been suspended due to an unpaid invoice. This was confirmed to Building Control on the 4th July. 3.8 On 7th July the Building Control Manager referred this matter to Central Transaction Unit (CTU). CTU were able to identify an invoice from June that had not been paid and confirmed our account was suspended. This invoice was paid into Royal Mails bank account on the 10th July, and they were notified via CTU directly to remove the suspension. 3.9 On 21st July Building Control were made aware of completed surveys being returned to residents and further communications with Royal Mail Finance department confirmed our account was suspended from 15th April based on three invoices which had not been paid in April. One of these invoices was paid on 16th April with the other two being paid on 20th May.

3.10	The suspension on the account was not lifted following the payment of these invoices and remained suspended until 17 th July following the further unpaid invoice in June. On all invoices received from Royal Mail in relation to our account, incorrect PO's were quoted and original invoices were not emailed but instead posted hardcopy. Without valid PO's on invoices, CTU could not determine the location or department responsible for the charges as this was not stated on the invoice.
3.11	As previously reported, Royal Mail have confirmed the account is now operational, and new surveys relating to dual language street signs applications are continuing unaffected.
3.12	CTU have conducted an internal review to assess the issues and have put in place measures to prevent the same situation occurring again.
3.13	The preventative measures that have been taken are as follows: • Created online account access with Royal Mail and amalgamated all BCC accounts with them so that we can access PDF invoices online • Switched all accounts to billing via e-invoice as well as statements. • Updated the customer account with the correct PO so that this will feed directly into DB Capture when received into the designated mailbox. • Run a weekly check for invoices on the online account to ensure they are prioritised into the E5 system • Marked all Royal Mail supplier accounts in E5 as PRIORITY suppliers which will move their invoices to the front of the queue in DB Capture when received • Established a direct contact point with Finance personnel in Royal Mail to address any issues when they arise. <u>Review with Royal Mail</u>
3.14	Several attempts have been made to obtain an operational contact with Royal Mail to discuss this matter. This has included email communications with their finance, media, public affairs and customer services team, in an attempt to establish a senior operational contact in Belfast to discuss this matter to ensure this issue cannot happen in the future. At this time Royal Mail have not provided any local contact, but we will continue to explore options.
3.15	<u>Financial and Resource Implications</u> Internal mitigations outlined will be undertaken by existing staff.
3.16	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u> None
4.0	Appendices
	None