Information from FCO Legalisation Office - Corvid 19

20 March - The staffing of our offices in Milton Keynes is steadily reducing; we have therefore taken the decision to **stop accepting applications for our postal service from tonight**. The reason for this is two-fold; if we focus our resources on the business counter we can process more applications more quickly because they are generally presented in an acceptable format, do not require additional work to dispatch and we can maintain a quick turnaround. We can support the largest number of customers through this route. It also guards against the build-up of documents awaiting legalisation on our premises which might become difficult to access or return if movement restrictions increase. Any postal applications already sent to us or already logged on the application portal will be processed, although may return to you slightly more slowly than usual. We will keep our out of office message updated so that you can continue to see which day’s post we are processing.

Applications can be presented to the business counter through one of the already-accredited companies, and we are also able to add Notaries to the list of businesses able to access this service through their existing Legalisation account. If any of your members would like to take advantage of this opportunity they should contact Your.BusinessApplication@fco.gov.uk.

We are experiencing significant difficulties dealing with non-straightforward applications at the moment – the signatories and organisations we need to contact to verify signatures are not able to respond to us quickly, or in some cases at all, so for the moment we will reject those documents straightaway so that customers are not left in limbo. They can be resubmitted once we are confident that we can offer a robust and timely service to customers.

We will obviously aim to resume service as quickly as possible, but my priority is to ensure that we offer customers as much certainty as we can and the best provision we can manage with the resources we have available. We will keep the operation of the business counter under review, and our team are as always at your disposal if you have helpful feedback about how we can offer the best possible service in these challenging conditions.

Please feel free to pass this message on to your colleagues, and as ever I’m happy to discuss anything if you would find this helpful. I am sure that this will not come as welcome news to you, and we are very conscious of the impact on your operations, but have tried to find the right balance between maintaining the best service we can for the largest number of customers whilst not running unnecessary risks should the situation change quickly.