



6th Report

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON
LOCAL AUTHORITIES, SERVICE COMMISSIONS
AND STATUTORY AUTHORITIES
(INCLUDING THE THA)

on an

**Inquiry into the operational efficiency of the
Trinidad and Tobago Postal Corporation and the effects
of the Covid-19 pandemic on its service delivery.**

Second Session (2021/2022), 12th Parliament

Sixth Report

Of the

Joint Select Committee on Local Authorities, Service

Commissions and Statutory Authorities

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6th Report on an Inquiry into the operational efficiency of the Trinidad and Tobago Postal Corporation and the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on its service delivery

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ABBREVIATION	ORGANISATION
CDAP	Chronic Disease Assistance Programme
CPU	Caribbean Postal Union
KPI	Key Performance Indicators
MOH	Ministry of Health
MOWT	Ministry of Works and Transport
MPA	Ministry of Public Administration
MPU	Ministry of Public Utilities
MSDFS	Ministry of Social Development and Family Services
PSIP	Public Sector Investment Programme
SEO	Search engine optimisation

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS.....	4
LIST OF TABLES.....	8
LIST OF APPENDICES	8
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	9
SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS	12
INTRODUCTION	15
Background	15
Inquiry Rationale.....	16
Summary of Evidence Together with Findings and Recommendations	18
Objective 1: To Assess the Operational Efficiency of TTPost.....	18
Oversight of the TTPost	18
Staffing Arrangements at the TTPost	18
Revision of Postal Services	19
Establishment of Mailbox Services	20
Challenges to Mail Delivery	21
Hindrances to TTPost’s Efficiency	21
Financial Challenges.....	21
Infrastructural Challenges	22
Administrative Challenges.....	22
Union Engagement	23
Provision of Services in Rural Areas	23
Provision of Services in Tobago	23
Financial Viability of TTPost	24
Establishing a Sustainable Business Model	24
Submission of Annual and Auditor General Reports	24

Auditor General Reports.....	24
Annual Reports	25
Financial Reports.....	25
TTPost Cost Reduction Drive	26
Tipping of Postmen.....	26
The Committee’s Findings	26
Recommendations	28
Objective 2: Evaluate the Performance of TTPOST’s International and Local Courier service.	29
Assessing the TTPost’s Performance	29
Key Performance Indicators	29
TTPost’s Market Share.....	31
TTPost’s Vehicle Fleet.....	31
Revenue and Expenditure	33
Establishing a Competitive Courier Service	34
The Committee’s Findings	34
Recommendations	35
Objective 3: Assess the Current Strategies Utilised by the TTPost to Modernize its Current Services and Counteract the Negative Effects of COVID-19	36
Ministry’s Policy Position	36
Breach of Covid-19 Protocols	36
Revolutionising Services	36
TTPost’s Recovery/ Business Continuity Plan.....	37
Limitations to the Postal Service due to COVID-19.....	38
Transition of Services to Online.....	38
Cybersecurity Systems.....	39
Records Management Systems	40

Implementation of a Nationwide Zip Code System	40
Policies for Unregistered Parcels of Lands	42
TTPost’s Track and Trace Online System	42
Health and Safety Measures Implemented by the TTPost.....	42
Legislative Amendments	43
The Committee’s Findings	43
Recommendations	45
Objective 4: To Examine the Potential Viability of the Auxiliary Services Facilitated by the TTPOST	46
Impact of COVID-19 on TTPost’s Services	46
Financial Services	46
Partnerships with Government Ministries and Agencies	47
Private Sector Partnerships.....	49
Sales and Marketing Strategies used by TTPost	49
The Committee’s Findings	50
Recommendations	51
Appendices.....	54
Appendix I.....	55
TTPost’s Covid 19 Policy	55
Appendix II	59
Terms of Reference for TTPost’s Strategic Plan.....	59
Appendix III.....	64
Revenue Earned and Cost Associated with Auxiliary Services	64
Appendix IV	67
Advertising and Marketing Strategies of TTPost.....	67
Appendix V	70
Summary of Public Submissions.....	70

Appendix VI	73
Minutes	73
Appendix VII	83
Verbatim Notes	83

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Composition of TTPost’s Vehicle Fleet	22
Table 2: KPI Assessments Utilised by TTPost.....	30
Table 3: Revenue and Expenditure Figures of TTPost's Local and International Courier	33
Table 4: Revenues earned from Auxiliary services	65
Table 5: Advertising and Marketing Strategies for Fiscal 2021 - 2022.....	68

LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX NO.	DETAILS	PAGE NO.
Appendix I	TTPost’s Covid-19 Policy	55
Appendix II	Terms of Reference for TTPost’s Strategic Plan	59
Appendix III	Revenue Earned and Cost Associated with Auxiliary Services	64
Appendix IV	Advertising and Marketing Strategies of TTPost	67
Appendix V	Summary of Public Submissions	70
Appendix VI	Minutes	73
Appendix VII	Verbatim Notes	83

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. At its 8th meeting held on Wednesday 3rd November, 2021, the Committee resolved to inquire into the operational efficiency of the Trinidad and Tobago Postal Corporation (TTPOST) and the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on its service delivery and agreed that the following four (4) objectives would guide the inquiry:
 - i. To assess the operational efficiency of TTPost;**
 - ii. Evaluate the performance of TTPOST’s International and Local Courier service;**
 - iii. Assess the current strategies utilised by the TTPost to modernize its current services and counteract the negative effects of Covid-19; and**
 - iv. To examine the potential viability of the auxiliary services facilitated by the TTPOST.**

- 1.2. To this end, the Committee identified relevant stakeholders it wished to engage to acquire a holistic perspective on the issues under consideration. Further to this, on Wednesday 5th January, 2022, the Committee convened a public hearing with the primary stakeholders involved including TTPost and the Ministry of Public Utilities (MPU).

- 1.3. Some of the issues which were highlighted during the course of the inquiry included:
 - a. TTPost’s productivity levels and service delivery performance during the Covid-19 pandemic;**
 - b. The revisions made to TTPost’s courier model to adapt to the Covid-19 pandemic;**
 - c. Procedures to establish mailbox services in newly constructed private and public housing developments;**

- d. The impact of the Union on TTPost's workplace and vaccination policies during the Covid-19 pandemic;**
- e. Requirements for improving postal services in rural areas;**
- f. The current state of the postal services in Tobago;**
- g. TTPost's financial portfolio and the expansion of its current financial offerings;**
- h. The critical need for a finalised Strategic Plan;**
- i. Oversight measures employed by the MPU including the submission of annual reports and financial statements by TTPost;**
- j. The practice of Postmen requesting financial 'gifts' from members of the public;**
- k. Cost containment measures implemented by TTPost;**
- l. Standards utilised by TTPost to assess its performance within the postal market;**
- m. Plans and proposals aimed at restructuring TTPost's business model and increasing its market competitiveness;**
- n. Efforts being pursued to digitize TTPost's services;**
- o. The need for the implementation of cybersecurity systems as the Corporation increases its e-commerce service offerings;**
- p. The progress achieved in implementing the National Zip Code system;**
- q. The extent of the progress achieved in implementing a new and improved Track and Trace service;**
- r. The need for legislative amendments to support the business development, plans and organisational transformations of TTPost;**
- s. The strategic decision to provide auxiliary services to the public; and**
- t. The need for more effective marketing strategies to promote TTPost international courier service.**

1.4. From observations made during this inquiry, the Committee has proffered recommendations which it believes will appropriately address the operational

shortcomings and challenges identified based on the evidence received. A summary of these recommendations follow this Executive Summary.

- 1.5. We anticipate that the Parliament, MPU and the TTPost and other stakeholders will give due consideration to the findings and recommendations contained in this Report with a view to ensuring that the TTPost is optimising its operations to service all areas within Trinidad and Tobago. The Committee looks forward to reviewing the line Ministry's response to this Report, which becomes due, sixty (60) days after it is presented to the Houses of Parliament.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The key recommendations proposed by the Committee are as follows:

- i. the global move towards digitilisation and e-commerce should prompt the TTPost to revise its operations with a view to aligning them with the changing realities of the postal sector which were prompted in part by the Covid-19 pandemic;**
- ii. the MPU must play a leading role in revising the existing postal rates as this is critical for enhancing the financial viability of TTPost. The MPU should provide a status update on the commencement of the rate review exercise for of TTPost in its response to this report;**
- iii. TTPost should work with alacrity to complete its strategic planning process. The corporation may find that planning for a 3-year period may be more useful than forecasting for a longer period. E.g. 5 years;**
- iv. TTPost should formulate clear guidelines that should be published for the establishment of community mail boxes in public and private housing developments;**
- v. TTPOST should conduct periodic pre-qualification exercises to ensure that qualified independent contractors are hired to augment its delivery/courier services;**
- vi. The MPU should evaluate its existing processes for scrutinizing, financial statements and other reporting documents submitted by entities under its purview with the aim of making the process more efficient;**

- vii. TTPost must strive to continuously modify its services to meet the increasing public demand and expectation for an efficient, timely and seamless courier service experience amid growing competition in the courier market;**

- viii. The absence of current and accurate market data highlights the need for precise and continuous record keeping within this sector which is necessary for conducting accurate market research;**

- ix. Given the Corporation's challenges with revenue generation, TTPost should strive to incorporate additional innovative ways to offer its services in a rapidly growing digitilised environment;**

- x. TTPost must create and maintain more deliberate and robust customer interfaces. This may include a database comprising customers to facilitate the communication of updates and targeted offers;**

- xi. TTPost should develop and launch a mobile app that facilitates all package tracking features for the benefit of its customers;**

- xii. The Corporation must move with alacrity as it pertains to the finalization of its Strategic Plan in order to better align its operations with specific objectives/benchmarks;**

- xiii. The transition of services to online platforms including the TTPost's website was an important strategic move that the Corporation must continue to capitalise upon, as it aims to further diversify its service offerings;**

- xiv. The digitisation of the Corporation's files is an essential prerequisite for enhancing its overall records management systems. This investment will translate into the more efficient storage, organising and retrieval of records;**

- xv. The Corporation must provide the Parliament with a status update on the delivery app that is set to accompany the implementation of the Nationwide Zip Code system. Further collaboration should be done with relevant entities to ensure that an accurate Geographic Information System (GIS) is utilised in determining addresses;**

- xvi. We encourage TTPOST to make representation to the Ministry of Digital Transformation with a view to:
 placing the unique issues and challenges related to the delivery of national postal services on the Ministry's policy agenda;**

- xvii. The Corporation, must as a priority, submit its legislative amendments with a view to commencing discussions and revisions with its line Ministry and the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs;**

- xviii. That TTPost continue to engage in further discussions with entities with a view to expanding its provision of auxiliary services;**

- xix. TTPost should move with alacrity as it pertains to the creation of specific regulations which govern its operations within the financial services sector.**

INTRODUCTION

Background¹

- 2.1. TTPost Couriers was introduced in 1999 with the aim of providing a system through which corporate and non-corporate organizations and/or individuals could move a variety of items in a safe and secure manner within the Twin Island Republic.
- 2.2. The value proposition included an express service, that would allow businesses to access desired delivery points nationwide at a low cost and an express service that the general populace could access to send documents and parcels domestically through a network of retail outlets.
- 2.3. TTPost Couriers expanded its logistics capacity with the addition of **three international services:**
 - i. **International Courier (serviced through DHL) with a logistics presence in over 200 countries worldwide;**
 - ii. **Express Mail Service (EMS) allowing for an economy express service through the mail; and**
 - iii. **Internet Shopping Services (serviced through Hummingbird Express) which provides its subscribers the ability to access US goods online.**

Vision Statement

- 2.4. 'To be a world leader in the provision of postal and consumer services, while achieving economic viability and sustainability.'

Mission Statement

- 2.5. 'To provide innovative, competitive, quality postal services and solutions for business and consumers. We do this through knowledgeable, customer-focused employees and effective systems.'

Line Ministry

- 2.6. The Ministry of Public Utilities (MPU) is the arm of the Trinidad and Tobago Government mandated to ensure the effective delivery of affordable and quality Public Utilities to the citizenry of Trinidad and Tobago. To this end, the MPU provides advocacy to the Utility Agencies under its purview, which includes the Trinidad and Tobago Postal Corporation.

Inquiry Rationale

- 2.7. TTPost was last examined in the Fifth Session of the 10th Parliament by the Joint Select Committee of Parliament on Ministries, Statutory Authorities and State Enterprises (Group 2). The Covid-19 pandemic has been a catalyst for an exponential increase in technology use and reliance. As such, the growth potential of the TTPOST Courier service should be examined and maximized. Given this present reality, the Committee will seek to assess the current adaptive business strategies utilised by the TTPOST to develop and sustain its operations. Notwithstanding the facilitation of auxiliary services such as traffic violation payments, the sustainability of the courier model in a transformative world necessitates innovation.
- 2.8. Businesses have augmented their use of courier services to deliver items to clients as a means of maintaining their profit margins during a time of minimized physical contact. An increase in online services and shopping has created a

platform for the TTPost to market and capitalize on its existing shipping services as a means of increasing its income potential.

- 2.9. Additionally, government entities such as the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs, have utilised the TTPost as an option for dispatching key documents such as birth certificates, marriage certificates, etc.

Methodology for obtaining evidence

- 2.10. On Wednesday January 5th, 2022, a public hearing was held virtually via the Zoom Video Conferencing platform with representatives of the MPU and the TTPost at which time the Committee interviewed the officials on issues relevant to the inquiry objectives. The respective entities were represented as follows:

Trinidad and Tobago Postal Corporation (TTPOST)

Mr. Hakeem Ahmad	Chairman
Mr. Francis Delpesh	Managing Director
Mr. George Alexis	General Manager, Operations
Ms. April Peters	General Manager, Finance
Mr. Nicholas Martin	Manager of Courier and Express Services

Ministry of Public Utilities

Ms. Nicolette Duke	Permanent Secretary
Ms. Arlene Collis	Director, Economic Research, Policy and Planning

- 2.11. The Minutes and Verbatim Notes relevant to the Committee's public hearing with the TTPost and the MPU are attached as **Appendix VI** and **Appendix VII** respectively.

Summary of Evidence Together with Findings and Recommendations

Objective 1: To Assess the Operational Efficiency of TTPost.

Oversight of the TTPost

- 3.1.1. By written submission dated December 30th 2021, the Ministry of Public Utilities (MPU) advised the Committee that it provides strategic direction to TTPost for the implementation of Government's policy for the postal sector. Additionally, the MPU monitors and evaluates projects, plans and programme implementation to ensure that service delivery is consistent with the expected outputs. Monitoring and oversight are conducted in accordance with established reporting requirements of the Ministry of Finance (MoF) and the Ministry of Planning and Development (MPD) and agreed-upon indicators set by the MPU.
- 3.1.2. As such, the MPU receives monthly and quarterly reports from TTPost concerning project implementation and the utilisation of funding. TTPost is also required to submit its annual budget and strategic plan to the MPU for assessment. Board Minutes are also made available to the MPU to ensure that the Board is operating within the framework of the Corporation's Strategic Plan and the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (GORTT). As it pertains to budgetary arrangements, the MPU is tasked with administering both recurrent and capital allocations.

Staffing Arrangements at the TTPost

- 3.1.3. The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the temporary and in some instances permanent downsizing of the operations of state enterprises. In spite of this, TTPost sought to continuously provide its essential service despite the limitations of the COVID-19 pandemic. In this regard, the Committee was advised that, the

staffing arrangements within the TTPost were maintained during the pandemic. TTPost also reported a noticeable decline in productivity due to the implementation of COVID-19 stringent measures.

- 3.1.4. Notwithstanding the provision of services throughout the pandemic, TTPost rearranged staff times and responsibilities giving consideration to the following:
- i. the number of employees and space availability;
 - ii. the number of employees required at any given time (social distancing);
 - iii. the ability to work remotely and obtaining the required infrastructure; and
 - iv. the logistics involved in the completion of critical objectives.
- 3.1.5. The implementation of the aforementioned measures allowed TTPost to maintain productivity levels above 60% in spite of rotation and work-from-home arrangements.

Revision of Postal Services

- 3.1.6. TTPost reported that traditional bulk mail, over the period of 2016 – 2021, has declined by approximately 4% per annum. Additional information submitted by the Corporation stated that bulk mail declined from 34.9 Mn pieces in fiscal 2019, to 24.3 Mn pieces at the end of fiscal 2021. The global COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the decline in traditional bulk mail and has accelerated the ongoing shift to electronic substitution of mail communication.
- 3.1.7. To address this, the TTPost has done the following: -
- i. Boosted Courier Services – which accounts for 43% of its revenues;
 - ii. Successfully embarked on a cost containment exercise; and
 - iii. Introduced new distribution services through the provision of auxiliary services such as ticket payments and delivery of official documents for public and private entities.

- 3.1.8. The majority of TTPost's core operations has been attributed to the traditional mail delivery service. However, the TTPost has sought to revolutionise its services by implementing the following: -
- a. Launch of an Online Shopping Service – Hummingbird Express.
 - b. Launch of Courier Online Shopping Service payment platform.
 - c. Launch of new point of sale software.
 - d. Restructured Courier Department.
 - e. Expanded Local Courier Contractors and Network routes.
 - f. Launch of Local Courier Track and Trace software solution.
 - g. Automated Courier Delivery process –Handheld scanners used by Courier drivers.
 - h. Implement new training manuals for the Courier Staff.
 - i. Ensure the entity of coverage in Tobago by increasing our retail presence.
 - j. Launch of payment centre project for MOWT in the retail network.
 - k. Launch of new security measures in Courier to mitigate against use of the post business for transshipment of illegal deliveries.
 - l. Partnered with DHL to bring TTPost to international standards relative to service, quality and reach of customer service.

Establishment of Mailbox Services

- 3.1.9. TTPost has established a delivery taskforce that assesses communities and determines the feasibility of delivering mail through a door-to-door system or through franchises within communities. In instances where Housing Development Corporation (HDC) developments are erected, community cluster boxes are established after discussions with TTPost and HDC. In the case of private developers, similar discussions are undertaken with the TTPost for the establishment of mailboxes.

Challenges to Mail Delivery

3.1.10. During the public hearing, TTPost stated that in its attempts to address the challenges associated with the delivery of mail, there have been instances where postal locations have been difficult to access due to challenging terrain. As a potential mitigating measure, TTPost has begun preliminary discussions on the use of drones to deliver mail.

3.1.11. In cases where cheques are to be delivered, given the potential security risks, its delivery is accompanied by security. Especially in high risk communities.

3.1.12. An additional challenge has been the shortages with postal material within franchises. However, TTPost has clarified that this occurrence has been attributed to the lack of payment made to TTPost by franchises which has limited the supply of goods to franchises.

Hindrances to TTPost's Efficiency

3.1.13. According to the written evidence submitted by TTPost, the factors that are hindering TTPost's operational efficiency may be categorised into Financial, Infrastructural and Administrative challenges.

Financial Challenges

3.1.14. The TTPost has expressed that the current mail tariff has remained unchanged for approximately 20 years. Therefore, the current tariff is not reflective of the Corporation's operational costs nor is it adequate to cover the cost of moving a piece of mail.

Infrastructural Challenges

3.1.15. In terms of infrastructure, the TTPost stated that there was an inadequate supply of bicycles and scooters. According to written evidence submitted, it was stated that TTPost's fleet of bicycles and scooters is inadequate to treat its current demand.

3.1.16. The breakdown of TTPost's fleet is outlined in the table below:

TABLE 1: COMPOSITION OF TTPOST'S VEHICLE FLEET

Vehicle Type	Currently Obtained	Required
Scooters	38	72
Bicycles	50	140

Administrative Challenges

3.1.17. The continued manual execution of many tasks within the TTPost has underscored the need for the full automation of its systems. The Public Sector Investment Programme is currently addressing some of the manual systems within the Corporation, however, a more extensive computerisation drive may be necessary to achieve greater efficiency.

3.1.18. In spite of the Corporation's efforts to retain most, if not all, of its staff during the pandemic, inadequate human resources continue to impede upon its operational efficiency. Financial restraints have impacted upon the Corporation's ability to hire the optimum number of staff required. As such, staff has been required to manage additional responsibilities.

Union Engagement

- 3.1.19. When questioned on the level of consultation held with the Trinidad and Tobago Postal Workers Union, the TTPost reported that both parties engaged weekly during the pandemic.
- 3.1.20. During the public hearing, TTPost stated that the Union raised issues regarding staff and COVID-19 safety protocol practices inclusive of TTPost's vaccination policy, which strongly emphasized vaccinations. As such, at the time of writing, discussions were in progress regarding the Government's proposed mandatory vaccination policy. The Union in response had discouraged employees from sharing their vaccination status.

Provision of Services in Rural Areas

- 3.1.21. TTPost stated in public that it has a North and South Task Force for Trinidad that identifies areas that have no mail delivery service and seeks to find feasible solutions to provide relief and access. TTPost further posits that it has adequate communication channels through which the public may contact the Corporation.

Provision of Services in Tobago

- 3.1.22. The revenue generated in Tobago for postal services in fiscal 2021 was \$1.5Mn which accounted for 10% of TTPost's overall revenue. During the public hearing, TTPost underscored that all services provided in Trinidad are also available in Tobago.
- 3.1.23. There are three main retail outlets that facilitate postal services, i.e. Bon Accord, Scarborough and Roxborough. In instances where mail cannot be delivery, the default alternative retail centre is in Roxborough for collection. Additional sub

stations/ franchises of TTPost are available in rural areas, where TTPost services are facilitated through businesses such as groceries and pharmacies.

Financial Viability of TTPost

3.1.24. During the public hearing, TTPost stated that it has re-evaluated its operations and has operated with \$12.2Mn less than its usual revenue. TTPost seeks to make itself independent of government subventions.

3.1.25. The monies owed by Ministries for auxiliary services provided by TTPost is being remitted slowly. Ministries have cited funding constraints as the reason for its slow remittance.

Establishing a Sustainable Business Model

3.1.26. TTPost stated in its written submission that it was in the process of engaging the services of a consultant to develop a five-year Strategic Plan. During the public hearing, it was stated that the Strategic Plan will be completed within the 3rd quarter of 2022. Tenders have since been invited and received. The consultant was expected to be chosen in January 2022. **Appendix II** provides further details on the guidelines for the Terms of Reference outlined for TTPost's Strategic Plan.

Submission of Annual and Auditor General Reports

Auditor General Reports

3.1.27. TTPost stated in public that the last audit conducted by the Auditor General on the financial statements of TTPost was conducted in 2005. Subsequently, TTPost has utilised local accounting firms to conduct audits with the approval of the Auditor General. As such, audits have been conducted for the years 2008 – 2019. The 2020 audit was set to commence after January 2022 with no definite date

provided. According to TTPost, a key shortcoming that was highlighted during the audits conducted were accounting issues. Based on additional information submitted by the Corporation in August 2022. Some of the issues included:

- i. Processes involved in cash at bank and cash in hand transactions;
- ii. Non-provision of Investment Statements;
- iii. Accounts receivable and prepayments;
- iv. Fixed Assets;
- v. Inventory;
- vi. Accounts Payable and Accruals;
- vii. Deferred Income;
- viii. Income; and
- ix. Non- creation of a Pension Plan.

Annual Reports

3.1.28. During the public hearing, it was stated that Cabinet has approved the Annual Reports up to 2011, however Cabinet notes are being prepared for the Report from 2013 to 2018. Some issues that have been highlighted in the Annual Reports were the need to advance its information technology infrastructure and systems to better adapt to global advancements.

Financial Reports

3.1.29. Financial Statements for the period 2008 – 2012 have been laid in Parliament. The financial statements up to 2019 were submitted to the MPU. These statements are being reviewed by the Ministry prior to being submitted to Cabinet.

TTPost Cost Reduction Drive

3.1.30. The cost reduction strategies that are to be implemented by TTPost include assessments of overtime, stationery, mobile phone allowances, reduction in electricity use after hours, rent relief and deferrals and a freeze on hiring, which commenced during the middle of 2020.

Tipping of Postmen

3.1.31. TTPost made it publicly clear that it abhors the practice of ‘tipping’ post men. TTPost stated that it is in contravention of the moral code which is to be exercised by postal staff. Therefore, financial donations should not be solicited from clients however if a client chooses to voluntarily demonstrate their appreciation for a postal worker, that can be acceptable.

The Committee’s Findings

Based on the evidence set out in this section, the Committee concluded as follows:

- i. The oversight procedures and systems utilised by the MPU to monitor TTPost’s operations appear to be sufficient and aligned with the general practices applied to the oversight of state enterprises by line Ministries;
- ii. The Committee commends TTPost’s efforts to meet its current and increased demand notwithstanding reduced production levels resulting from nationally implemented COVID-19 measures;
- iii. The Committee noted that there was some innovation by TTPost in diversifying its service offerings. It demonstrated a reasonable capacity to adapt to the changing conditions of the postal services market. However, it was evident that the absence of a finalised Strategic Plan has created a gap between the Corporation’s strategic objectives and its operational systems and resources;

- iv. The stagnant mail tariff is undesirable as it has contributed significantly to the current unsustainable and inadequate financial position of TTPOST. Similar to proposed rate reviews for WASA and the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission, there appears to be some unwarranted delays in the revision of rates for the national postal service;
- v. The inadequacy of TTPost's fleet and the consequential decision to outsource certain delivery services were observed by the Committee as a strategy to enhance the efficiency of the Corporation's delivery services. However, the cost of contracting this service must be closely monitored and contained;
- vi. The pandemic has been a catalyst for the incorporation of internet-based and automated services into organizational processes. The Committee duly noted that internally, postal services have the unenviable challenge of competing with technological innovations such as email and e-commerce online platforms, while also trying to leverage the technology to maintain relevance in a rapidly changing market space. The essential nature of TTPost's service requires that the provision of its main services are adapted to technological advancements. It is therefore commendable that the Public Sector Investment Programme contains projects that aim to replace the manual processes within the TTPost; and
- vii. Notwithstanding the submission of financial statements to the MPU by TTPost, the Committee took note of what appears to be a significant delay in the review and transition of Financial Statements to Cabinet by the line Ministry. Such delays compromise the efficiency of oversight and accountability arrangements. However, what is also important is the role played by the MPU in reviewing the said statements and identifying issues and or discrepancies and working with the Board and management of TTPOST to rectify them.

Recommendations

Based on the evidence received and further to the foregoing findings, the Committee respectfully recommends as follows:

- i. Whilst the TTPost's maintained its staff complement during the pandemic, the global move towards digitilisation and e-commerce should prompt the TTPost to revise its operations with a view to aligning them with the changing realities of the postal sector which were prompted in part by the Covid-19 pandemic;**
- ii. The MPU must play a leading role in revising the existing postal rates as this is critical for enhancing the financial viability of TTPost. The MPU should provide a status update on the commencement of the rate review exercise for the postal service in its response to this report;**
- iii. TTPost should work with alacrity to complete its strategic planning process. However, given that the environmental factors (e.g. technological and economic) are rapidly evolving, the corporation may find that planning for a 3-year period may be more useful than forecasting for a longer period. E.g. 5 years;**
- iv. TTPost should formulate clear guidelines that should be published for the establishment of community mail boxes in public and private housing developments;**
- v. TTPOST is encouraged to conduct periodic pre-qualification exercises to ensure that qualified independent contractors are hired to augment its delivery/courier services;**
- vi. The MPU should evaluate its existing processes for scrutinising financial statements and other reporting documents submitted by entities under its**

purview with the aim of making the process more efficient. Additionally, key components of this review exercise must include:

- a) the identification of issues or discrepancies flagged by auditors; and**
- b) engaging the entity with a view to assisting with resolving the discrepancies identified.**

Objective 2: Evaluate the Performance of TTPOST's International and Local Courier service.

Assessing the TTPost's Performance

Key Performance Indicators

- 3.2.1. According to written evidence provided by the TTPost, its Courier consists of three (3) main services i.e.
 - i. Local or Domestic Courier (TTPost Couriers);
 - ii. International Courier (Hummingbird Express International Courier Service);
and
 - iii. Online Shopping (Hummingbird Express Online Shopping Service).
- 3.2.2. The performance of each service is assessed giving consideration to:
 - i. Operational components – on-time delivery, pickups, service levels between customer and courier, in house supporting staff and delivery capacity;
 - ii. Revenue Performance – fiscal targets; and
 - iii. Profitability - assessing the Local Courier and International Courier market.
- 3.2.3. In addition to the above, profitability assessments undertaken by the TTPost comprise discussions with the Managing Director and the Finance Division to

ensure that all the direct costs are considered until an acceptable margin contribution is made.

3.2.4. The table outlined below identifies the existing KPIs and benchmarks utilised by TTPost during the period of October 1st 2020 to September 30th 2021 to assess Performance Revenue and Operational performance.

TABLE 2: KPI ASSESSMENTS UTILISED BY TTPOST

Service	Performance	Benchmark	KPI
Local Courier	Revenue	Revenue gained from the same period in previous years.	Attainment of monthly targets set for the existing year
	Operational	Stated volume delivery capacity of each courier in their individual set geographic area of operation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volume of items delivered per courier per month. • Volume of undelivered items per courier. • Number of complaints via social media, email, phone calls or through couriers received. • Number of claims due to service standard failings. • Volume of tracking requests via email or phone calls
International Courier	Revenue	Revenue gained from the same period in previous years.	Attainment of monthly targets set for the existing year
	Operational	<p>Customer service level requirements as well as Service standards of competitors i.e., *DHL, FedEx, and UPS</p> <p><i>*Although TTPost uses DHL, it also competes from customer at the retail level</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of complaints via social media, email, phone calls or through couriers received. • Number of claims due to service standard failings. • Volume of tracking requests via email or phone calls
Online Shopping	Revenue	Revenue gained from the same period in previous years.	Attainment of monthly targets set for the existing year
	Operational	Customer service level requirements as well as Service standards of competitors e.g., Aeropost, Ezone, Web Source, CSF, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transit time from customers' items arriving in Miami to its arrival in T&T. • Timeline from arrival in T&T, cleared through Customs, processed, and delivered to customers. • Number of complaints via social media, email, phone calls or through couriers received. • Number of claims due to service standard failings.

3.2.5. The benchmarks utilised by the TTPost in assessing high and low performance are as follows:

- i. Local Courier – profitability is high, revenue is high, operations trending high;
- ii. International Courier – profitability, revenue, operational are all high; and
- iii. Online Shopping- profitability high. Revenue and operational are low.

TTPost’s Market Share

3.2.6. According to TTPost’s written submission, limited accessible information in the industry and market does not allow for a reliable market share assessment within Trinidad and Tobago.

3.2.7. TTPost’s estimated market share in comparison with other local and international courier services is as follows:

- i. Local Courier – 75% of the total market;
- ii. International Courier estimated market share – 30% of the total market; and
- iii. Online Shopping estimated market share – 4% of the total market.

TTPost’s Vehicle Fleet

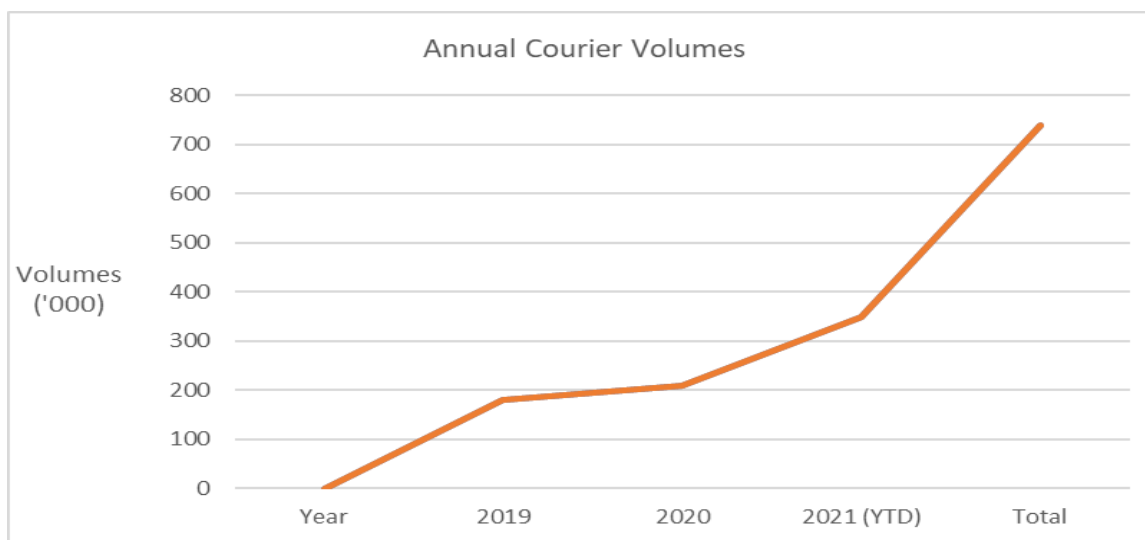
3.2.8. The Corporation’s fleet comprises TTPost owned vehicles subdivided into the Transport Department and the Courier Network. The composition and size of both TTPost owned vehicles and courier network are as follows:

- i. TTPost Transport – 51 trucks and vans; and
- ii. Courier Network – 38 vans, pickups and station wagons.

3.2.9. The current policy utilised by the Courier Department allows for the contracting of additional independent drivers when volumes are anticipated to surpass its

existing capacity. TTPost also stated that there was an increase in demand for its courier service of 46% during the pandemic.

Chart 1: Local Annual Courier Volumes



3.2.10. The Corporation noted that customers used TTPost’s Hummingbird Express International Courier Service to send their items abroad. The increase in Hummingbird Express International Courier Service use compared to the previous year was estimated at 52%.

3.2.11. When questioned on the effectiveness of the current package processing system utilised by the TTPost for delivery distribution, the TTPost cited the following challenges: -

- i. Insufficient manpower and inadequate floor space in relation to peak volume demands; and
- ii. The need for equipment upgrades.

3.2.12. TTPost expressed in its written comments that the possible solutions that are being considered have been incorporated into a draft restructuring plan. Key proposals in the plan include:

- i. expanding and realigning TTPost’s manpower and processes;
- ii. the expansion of the floor with specific focus on the required infrastructure;
and
- iii. the maintenance and upgrade of the required equipment.

Revenue and Expenditure

3.2.13. The revenue and expenditure figures recorded from the international and local courier services provided in the past three (3) years, 2018-2020 and 2021 are outlined in the following table.

TABLE 3: REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE FIGURES OF TTPost's LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL COURIER

Product	2018– 2019 (TTDM)		2019 – 2020 (TTDM)		2020 – 2021 (TTDM)	
	Revenue	Expenditure	Revenue	Expenditure	Revenue	Expenditure
Local Courier	7.67	3.69	8.00	3.66	12.61	5.61
International Courier	4.84	2.55	2.87	2.52	5.36	3.87

3.2.14. The cost associated with utilising the DHL company for international shipping through the Hummingbird Express in 2020/2021 amounted to \$3.86 M.

3.2.15. The Committee noted the potential disruptions to customs clearances caused by the pandemic and questioned TTPost on the potential impact on the Hummingbird Express Online Shopping Service. In response, TTPost cited the following challenges: -

- Increased manpower costs as staff has to be at the bond for a lengthy period awaiting scheduled times for clearances; and
- Clearance delays equate to increased timelines to dispatch shipments to customers, whereby decreasing the quality and reliability of the service and leading to customer dissatisfaction.

Establishing a Competitive Courier Service

3.2.16. During the public hearing, TTPost stated that it seeks to improve its competitive position within the courier market through the consolidation of packages prior to shipment in Miami. Additionally, an online payment platform has been established. A supplementary service that the TTPost is facilitating is the delivery of packages to persons as gifts.

The Committee's Findings

Based on the evidence set out in this section, the Committee concluded the following:

- i. The analysis of TTPost's operations utilizing the KPIs provided, demonstrates a detailed assessment framework that takes into consideration factors that impact the local and international courier markets differently;
- ii. While it is encouraging that an increase in demand for local courier services has resulted in an increase in the Corporation's revenue, the limited physical infrastructure available to facilitate the efficient processing of an increasing volume of packages compounded by inadequate human resources, may require that TTPost finds innovative ways to meet client demands;
- iii. As is outlined in Table 3 above, TTPost has realized some notable increases in revenue over the last five (5) years on account of increasing demands within both its Local and International Couriers markets. It is reasonable to glean that such revenue increases can be credited to the peculiar conditions created by the Covid-19 Pandemic including the significant reduction in brick and mortar services globally;
- iv. While more persons are utilizing the Hummingbird Express International Courier

- service, the costs and benefits associated with utilizing DHL as the main courier to facilitate international shipping may require re-evaluation; and
- v. The exploration of innovative ways to increase the use of TTPost's services by customers such as the delivery of gifts is commendable.

Recommendations

Based on the evidence received and further to the foregoing findings, the Committee recommends that:

- i. Notwithstanding the analysis conducted utilizing the KPIs provided, TTPost must strive to continuously modify its services to meet the increasing public demand and expectation for an efficient, timely and seamless courier service experience amid growing competition in the courier market.**
- ii. The absence of current and accurate market data highlights the need for precise and continuous record keeping within this sector which is necessary for conducting accurate market research.**
- iii. Given the Corporation's challenges with revenue generation, TTPost should strive to incorporate additional innovative strategies in the delivery of its services in a rapidly growing digitilised environment.**

Objective 3: Assess the Current Strategies Utilised by the TTPost to Modernize its Current Services and Counteract the Negative Effects of COVID-19

Ministry's Policy Position

- 3.3.1. Written evidence submitted by the Ministry stated that the policy position of the Ministry on the modernization of TTPost, is predicated on the need for TTPost, like all postal operators worldwide, to rise to the new reality of digital postal services and transform its operations by using advanced and emerging technologies to improve its operational efficiency and offer new products and services.

Breach of Covid-19 Protocols

- 3.3.2. During the public hearing on January 5th 2022, there was a reported breach of COVID-19 regulations due to overcrowding at TTPost sub-offices in June 2021. This breach was attributed to the lack of notice given to recipients on the late distribution of public distribution grants which resulted in this occurrence.

Revolutionising Services

- 3.3.3. TTPost has been required to modernize its services during the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure operations are sustained (i.e. business continuity). It is further evident that funding is necessary to execute a majority of the Corporation's transformational plans.
- 3.3.4. The MPU noted that notwithstanding the Corporation's existing resource constraints, TTPost has been making strides to diversify and modernize its service/ product portfolio. As such, the Corporation continues to develop new

products to increase its revenue stream and promote financial sustainability which includes

- i. a shift in focus to domestic parcel operations and other areas such as logistics;
- ii. The launch of new e-commerce delivery services; and
- iii. The digital delivery of Government Services.

3.3.5. TTPost noted that one of the more significant impacts of the pandemic, has been changes in consumer behavior which has inadvertently led to the TTPost losing significant market share as it relates to traditional bulk mail.

3.3.6. TTPost submitted that the timeframes for achieving some necessary changes in its operations can only be confirmed following the finalising of its Strategic Plan.

3.3.7. In terms of critical success factors that are necessary to address some of the operational shortcomings highlighted, the Corporation identified issues such as funding and legislative deficiencies as two key areas for reassessment.

TTPost's Recovery/ Business Continuity Plan

3.3.8. TTPost furnished the Committee with a detailed Covid-19 response plan highlighting measures to be employed by the Corporation to safeguard its employees and itself, as the employer, as well as a Recovery Plan set to maintain the services of the Corporation. Key measures were implemented in response to the pandemic. More details are included in **Appendix I**.

3.3.9. The following outlines key steps necessary to implement information technology advancement within the Corporation in the medium term: -

- a. Facilitates the leveraging of opportunities in new business areas;
- b. Refreshes hardware and software;
- c. Embraces the UPU requirements;

- d. Leads the organization to operate in a more modern environment; and
- e. Embraces technology for the new normal in working from home and virtual meeting.

Limitations to the Postal Service due to COVID-19

3.3.10. Among the major challenges TTPost has encountered are maintaining its current staff complement and providing a reliable service to customers while fulfilling its mandate as an essential service. Mandatory national shutdowns, however, have caused a reduction in business levels which has resulted in lower revenues.

3.3.11. The following contingency measures were employed to counteract the negative impacts of COVID-19 on TTPOST's operations: -

- i. Staff in Operations function on morning and afternoon shifts so that if one shift is contaminated, the second shift can offer a semblance of service continuity;
- ii. Some staff who can work from home have been doing so;
- iii. Some staff work alternate days;
- iv. Spacing based on Covid-19 protocols to ensure no gathering; and
- v. Ordering and provision of masks, sanitizers, gloves and other essentials on a regular basis.

Transition of Services to Online

3.3.12. The key aspects of TTPost services that have transitioned to online are as follows:

- i. Courier Online Payment Platform - This allows payment for local Courier Humming Bird Express Online Shopping Service;
- ii. Track and Trace Courier Solution tracking software- This enables customers to Track their sent items from the convenience of their locations for local delivery;

- iii. TTPost website allows customers to track their international deliveries via the link to DHL website;
- iv. Email Courier Pickups and Delivery requests;
- v. Philatelic Payment Platform- local and International Customers can purchase philatelic items online on the TTPost website;
- vi. Tender Documents can be purchased and accessed online at the TTPost website;
- vii. Registration for the Hummingbird Express Online Shopping Service;
- viii. Online Calculator for Hummingbird Express Online Shopping Express;
- ix. Application for a P.O Box/Bag; and
- x. Email alerts - This gives information on new TTPost services.

3.3.13. Given the national move towards digitilisation, TTPost has sought to process payments to its suppliers via the Automated Clearing House (ACH) platform. It has also been encouraging its customers to process payments via the same platform.

3.3.14. TTPost has recently formed a team tasked with finalizing the establishment of the Online Payment Platform to facilitate payment for an increased suite of services apart from the Hummex Online Shopping Service. This in turn has resulted in the modernization of Financial Services and ecommerce.

Cybersecurity Systems

3.3.15. The management of TTPost's online payment platform is presently outsourced to First Atlantic Commerce (FAC) via the local company Quoviz Consulting Limited. FAC is based in Bermuda and has been operating for over 20 years, providing online payment solutions and international credit card processing for

merchants, banks and partners all over the world. Their payment gateway allows merchants to accept and process credit and debit card payments online.

3.3.16. Cybersecurity measures implemented for the online payment platform used by TTPost include:

- a. Use of SSL certificates provided by Quoviz, on the TTPost website;
- b. Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI DSS) provided by First Atlantic Caribbean; and
- c. Encrypted data transfer of customer information provided by First Atlantic Caribbean.

Records Management Systems

3.3.17. According to written evidence submitted, TTPost manages and maintains both manual and electronic records. Soft copy documents/proof of transactions are saved on the Corporation's accounting software (SAGE) which is backed up on its on-site server daily, by personnel of the IT Department; whilst its off-site server is backed up on a weekly basis. Hard copy documents from these transactions (some are printed and attached to supporting documents) are properly labelled, filed, and stored within the respective Department's filing system. Upon these hard-copy records reaching a semi-active or inactive stage through its lifecycle, they are then physically transferred/submitted to the Records Department (which acts as an Archive) for storage.

Implementation of a Nationwide Zip Code System

3.3.18. According to the MPU, the national roll-out of the Universal Postal Union's S42 Addressing Standard and Postal Code System which is poised to improve efficiency and bolster revenue was completed on March 10th, 2021. The benefits of this new postal system are as follows:

- i. Improving operational efficiency by facilitating the machine sorting of mail;
- ii. Facilitating economic development since business would be able to identify and locate new client and develop and grow new markets; and
- iii. Promoting e-commerce by allowing businesses to facilitate access to their services and products- including those ordered via the internet.

3.3.19. As of March 2021, the Corporation has completed delivery of address cards to all addresses in the 14 Regional Corporations and the Tobago House of Assembly. Over 420,000 address cards have been delivered.

3.3.20. TTPost during the public hearing, advised that the public may request postal cards for their businesses and homes online. In instances where new developments are constructed, street names must be established after which the TTPost may be petitioned for the issuance of postal cards. A Cabinet subcommittee was set to review the card distribution process and has given a timeline of two years for postal addresses to be established nationwide.

3.3.21. The Address Improvement and Postal Codes when fully implemented will benefit courier delivery through the provision of accurate location information. The anticipated development of a delivery app will improve delivery efficiency by courier, delivery staff and state and private entities.

3.3.22. Factors that have hindered the full implementation of this system are: -

- i. Available manpower resources in-house;
- ii. Communications tools and resources;
- iii. Funding;
- iv. Technology resources;
- v. Legal clarity on data sharing; and
- vi. Buy-in by state agencies.

Policies for Unregistered Parcels of Lands

3.3.23. Field teams were employed by TTPost to map and geocode properties with road frontage access. Expanses of land that were not accessible by road frontage could not be identified and coded. The system seeks to facilitate location verification for efficient effective orderly delivery of mail to properties accessible by TTPost.

3.3.24. TTPost continues to partner with the Regional Corporations to apply postal (S42) addresses and postal codes to streets, once names are assigned, by the Regional Corporations.

TTPost's Track and Trace Online System

3.3.25. On June 30th 2021, the soft launch of the Online Track and Trace system was executed. The former courier service operated mainly using a manual tracking process where customers were required to call or email the Courier Department or Customer Service Department to obtain updates about the status of their delivery. This involved manual searches through papers to locate the delivery status information for the customer. The new system requires that a serial number is inputted into an online platform which provides an updated tracking location.

3.3.26. The system has worked well 95% of the time, with an increase in the coverage of clients making use of the system moving from 5% to 97% in the same period. A significant challenge in implementing the Track and Trace system is obtaining and maintaining signal strengths in several rural areas.

Health and Safety Measures Implemented by the TTPost

3.3.27. TTPost developed and implemented a comprehensive Covid-19 response policy. Further details are outlined in **Appendix I**. Some of the key measures implemented are as follows: -

- i. Implementation of overall Covid policy;

- ii. Implementation of a return-to-work policy;
- iii. Staff rotation;
- iv. Work from home;
- v. Temperature guns testing at all locations;
- vi. Staggered introduction of wash sinks;
- vii. Varied sanitization schedule at all locations;
- viii. Posting of Signages;
- ix. Educational Drives;
- x. Accelerated PPE distribution;
- xi. Compulsory mask wearing;
- xii. Contact tracking;
- xiii. Immediate quarantine for person showing flu like symptoms; and
- xiv. Erection of glass partitions between the staff and public

3.3.28. The estimated/ projected cost of TTPost's Covid 19 response for FY 2022 is \$500,000 VAT exclusive.

Legislative Amendments

3.3.29. When questioned during the public hearing, TTPost stated that it has not submitted its legislative amendments for the consideration of the MPU. Any proposed amendments are to be incorporated into its Strategic Plan, which is deemed to be in its drafting stages.

The Committee's Findings

Based on the evidence set out in this section the Committee concluded as follows:

- i. The implementation of real-time package tracking system is past due. TTPost must work urgently to eliminate any glitches identified during the testing phase of the online tracking system and move towards the full implementation of the system;

- ii. The Committee noted that the Corporation has been making efforts to migrate some of its services to online. This was primarily achieved through the upgrading of its website to include some e-commerce features;
- iii. The establishment of cybersecurity robust measures is a clear means of establishing customer confidence in the use of online postal and financial services;
- iv. The Committee was also pleased to learn about the digitization of the Corporation's records. It is clear that some notable progress has been achieved on this project. However, increases in client volumes may require an increase in the allocation of resources to expedite the file digitisation process;
- v. The Committee considers the implementation of a zip code system as a significant attempt by TTPost to match its operations with international standards. The full implementation of this system can only be beneficial to both the Corporation and its customer as it promises to provide precise location information for efficient identification of delivery locations/addresses;
- vi. Whilst the benefits of the Track and Trace online system must be acknowledged, rural areas continue to face unique challenges in terms of access and remote connectivity. This issue should be discussed as part of the wider efforts of the state to improve the digital landscape of Trinidad and Tobago;
- vii. The Committee was disappointed to learn that the Corporation was yet to submit the necessary legislative amendments to its line Ministry. The Corporation must determine whether advancing these amendments should be prioritised at this time.

Recommendations

Based on the evidence received and further to the foregoing findings, the Committee respectfully recommends the following:

- i. TTPost must create and maintain more deliberate and robust customer interfaces. This may include a database comprising customers to facilitate the communication of updates and targeted offers;**
- ii. Given that mobile phone marketing is an essential method of engaging customers, TTPost should develop and launch a mobile app that facilitates all package tracking features for the benefit of its customers;**
- iii. The Corporation must move with alacrity as it pertains to the finalization of its Strategic Plan in order to better align its operations with specific objectives/ benchmarks;**
- iv. The transition of services to online platforms including the TTPost's website was an important strategic move that the Corporation must continue to capitalise upon, as it aims to further diversify its service offerings;**
- v. The digitization of the Corporation's files is an essential prerequisite for enhancing its overall records management systems. This investment will translate into the more efficient storage, organising and retrieval of records;**
- vi. The Corporation must provide the Parliament with a status update on the delivery app that is set to accompany the implementation of the Nationwide Zip Code system. Further collaboration should be done with relevant entities to ensure that an accurate Geographic Information System (GIS) is utilised in determining addresses. The Corporation should engage a consultant or another suitable source**

of technical expertise to assist with the successful execution of this project, if this has not already been done;

- vii. Connectivity challenges is an important matter for consideration as part of a wider national Digital Transformation Initiative. We encourage TTPOST to make representation to the said Ministry with a view to placing the unique issues and challenges related to the delivery of national postal services on the Ministry's policy agenda;**
- viii. The Corporation, must as a priority, submit its legislative amendments with a view to commencing discussions and revisions with its line Ministry and the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs.**

Objective 4: To Examine the Potential Viability of the Auxiliary Services Facilitated by the TTPOST

Impact of COVID-19 on TTPost's Services

- 3.4.1. According to TTPost, the pandemic has resulted in a shift from traditional mail to electronic communication. This has resulted in a decline in traditional mail volumes by 5%.

Financial Services

- 3.4.2. TTPost is aggressively exploring re-entry into the financial services market and an expansion of its e-commerce business in possible partnership with Caribbean Postal Union (CPU).
- 3.4.3. According to Section 6 (b) of the TTPost Act, TTPost has the ability to engage in financial services surrounding any business relating to postal services including postal financial services. During the public hearing on January 5th, 2022, TTPost

stated that its offices in Toco and Charlotteville are able to encash cheques for recipients of public assistance. This has been accounted to challenges in having access to encashment facilities in these areas. It was further stated that the TTPost is currently exploring the option of expanding the cheque encashment service to other areas in Trinidad and Tobago.

- 3.4.4. TTPost sought to further underscore the safety of its cash encashment services by highlighting that it has implemented security features to identify fraudulent cheques, however TTPost acknowledges that criminals may find new ways to evade this system.
- 3.4.5. According to additional information submitted by TTPost on August 2nd, 2022 TTPost is seeking to venture into Local Money Transfers and the provision of Storefront services. The Corporation operates a small local money transfer service entitled “Inland Money Order” and is considering quickening, expanding, and modernizing this service digitally.
- 3.4.6. Furthermore, the Corporation seeks to act as a store front for other businesses. This service includes collecting cash and customer data on behalf of other businesses, where the Corporation will charge a fee for the provision of these services.

Partnerships with Government Ministries and Agencies

- 3.4.7. In addition to the foregoing, TTPost has identified the following seven (7) areas of business that are being explored for its entry into the financial services sector:
 - i. Agency Banking – Representing an established player (FCB is being considered) in rural locations where they hold no presence, but where a TTPost exists.

- ii. Bill Payment – This service is already provided for the Ministry of Works and Transport with the UTurn Project. According to TTPost, this model could be expanded to many areas of Government in the first instance – The Magistracy, Land and Building Taxes, Passports etc.
 - iii. The exploration of Money Transfer services – This can be potentially facilitated using smart phone technology which is already in existence.
 - iv. ATM services with an established institution.
 - v. Card Printing Services –TTPost facilitates this sign up process for food card services, however TTPost is considering expanding this service to the printing and provision of these cards. At present, this is done by FCB.
 - vi. Exploration of the Gov-Pay system.
 - vii. Exploration of the possibilities provided by e-commerce.
- 3.4.8. Written evidence from the MPU suggests that at present, TTPost formed a strategic partnership with the Ministry of Works and Transport (MOWT) for the implementation of the UTurn System. Additionally, TTPost further partnered with the Ministry of National Security (MNS) to improve the process of citizens applying and receiving their passport.
- 3.4.9. Similar strategic partnerships were entered into with other Government Ministries such as the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services (MSDFS) for the delivery of social support grants, the Ministry of Education (MOE) for the delivery of examination material and the Ministry of Health (MOH) for the delivery of the Chronic Disease Assistance Programme (CDAP).
- 3.4.10. During the public hearing, TTPost stated that auxiliary services facilitated through TTPost have generated \$7.3Mn in revenue in 2021 which represented a \$1.3Mn increase from the \$6Mn revenue recorded in 2020.

Private Sector Partnerships

3.4.11. TTPost was able to forge partnerships with international courier giant DHL and with the Canadian High Commission and the US Embassy for the delivery of US and Canadian Visas to local applicants.

Sales and Marketing Strategies used by TTPost

3.4.12. During the public hearing, TTPost stated that its efficiency in mail delivery should serve as its first point of public relations in building trust and credibility with citizens. However, upon the submission of public comments on TTPost's efficiency, as surmised in Appendix V, members of the public underscored their dissatisfaction with TTPost's current operations.

3.4.13. However, TTPost in its written submission stated that its efficiency was at 88% which is over the 85% industry standard as defined by the Caribbean Postal Union (CPU).

3.4.14. The marketing strategies that have been utilised by TTPost to promote its international courier services are as follows:

- a. Advertising and promotional campaigns on social media platforms i.e. Facebook, Instagram and Twitter;
- b. Advertising and promotional campaigns on radio;
- c. Upselling activities through our 34 retail post shops that offer the service;
- d. Mall crawls and other onsite activities promoting the service; and
- e. Aggressive upselling by Account Executives to existing and new customers, inclusive of group presentations.

3.4.15. TTPost utilizes a mix of conventional media of Radio, Press and Television which is used for national impact and large audience. Additional media such as Billboards, Banners, Flyers, Posters, Danglers, mobile's shelf talkers advertising mail and point of sale techniques are also utilised.

3.4.16. Various platforms have been engaged for maximum customer returns such as Facebook, Instagram, Youtube, Tik Tok, Twitter and website (TTPost). The advertising budget is used to boost marketing and promotional posts to reach massive audiences. Search engine optimisation (SEO) is also used to advertise content to users whose search content relates to TTPost's products and services.

3.4.17. These employed strategies are supported by a team of highly skilled Account Executives whose key responsibilities are to ensure customer relations and revenue generation through sales. The Customer Service Unit supports the marketing and promotions efforts of TTPost. Collaborations with state and private businesses to execute joint campaigns. TTPost uses its thirteen (13) corporate retail shops and fifty-one (51) franchises to promote its products and services and attract new customers and revenue streams. Individualised marketing plans and activities have been focused on the following areas:

- i. Po Boxes/ PO Bags;
- ii. Merchandise;
- iii. Stamp and Philatelic; and
- iv. Direct Marketing.

3.4.18. Further marketing plans and initiatives of TTPost may be found in **Appendix IV**.

The Committee's Findings

Based on the evidence set out in this section the Committee concluded as follows:

- i. TTPost has made concerted efforts to facilitate and expand its current auxiliary services. Performing the role of an intermediary for transactions and payments for government agencies is a critical starting point for the expansion of TTPost's financial services.
- ii. Notwithstanding TTPost's reports of increased efficiency, public comments during the inquiry highlighted that TTPost continues to fall short where customer satisfaction is concerned. While the Committee notes the improvements made to internal systems within TTPost, greater efforts must be made to dispel the notions of TTPost's inefficiency and unreliability in the public domain.
- iii. TTPost's attempt to utilise unconventional media platforms in its marketing strategy is commendable and necessary given the increasing competition within the courier market. TTPost's public presence must be increased in order to be seen as a viable courier service.
- iv. TTPost has made its first attempts to engage in the provision of additional financial services through the direct encashment of cheques. While this is commendable, the formulation of an appropriate regulatory framework to indemnify TTPost and also safeguard the interest of customers, is necessary to mitigate against potential litigation and potential customer disputes.

Recommendations

Based on the evidence received and further to the foregoing findings, the Committee respectfully recommends the following:

- i. **That TTPost continue to engage in further discussions with entities with a view to expanding its provision of auxiliary services. E.g. Partnering with National Petroleum (NP) *Quik Shoppes* for use as mail collection hubs/centres.**

- ii. TTPost should move with alacrity as it pertains to the creation of specific regulations which govern its operations within the financial services sector. These regulations must include a detailed verification process prior to cheque encashment and a complaints process for stolen and or misappropriated cheques facilitated through TTPost's cheques encashment service. Additional regulations may be necessary to treat with technological advancements within the financial sector such as the incorporation of financial technology payment methods.**

The Committee respectfully submits the foregoing for the consideration of the Parliament.

Dr. Varma Deyalsingh
Chairman

Mr. Esmond Forde, MP
Vice-Chairman

Mrs. Lisa Morris-Julien, MP
Member

Mrs. Ayanna Webster-Roy, MP
Member

Mr. Nigel De Freitas
Member

Ms. Khadijah Ameen
Member

Mrs. Renuka Sagramsingh-Sooklal
Member

Ms. Jayanti Lutchmedial
Member

Dated September 7, 2022

Appendices

Appendix I

TTPost's Covid 19 Policy

TTPost's Covid 19 Policy

1.0 DEFINITIONS

Infectious disease

A disease (such as influenza, malaria, meningitis, rabies, or tetanus) caused by the entrance into the body of pathogenic agents or microorganisms (such as bacteria, viruses, protozoan, or fungi) which grow and multiply there.

Reasonably Practicable measures

Measures or procedures implemented to acceptable levels.

Delivery Officers

Employee who have been recruited to conduct mail delivery on a daily basis

Courier Drivers

Drivers contracted by the Corporation to deliver online shopping packages to customers.

2.0 PURPOSE

In light of the impact that this pandemic is having globally, the Trinidad and Tobago Postal Corporation (TTPost) is committed to safeguarding the health and well-being of its workers, customers and environs. While it is understood that some of these measures stated hereunder might be new, a high degree of compliance is of major

significance if the Corporation is to successfully minimize the risk of spreading this infectious disease among staff.

1. Wash hands regularly with soap and water.
2. Practice social distancing.
3. Wear a facemask ensuring that your nose and mouth is fully covered.
4. Sanitize areas that are frequently used.
5. If you are exhibiting flu like symptoms, stay at home and inform your supervisor.

The aim of this policy is to ensure that the Corporation is proactive in its response to the pandemic involving any communicable diseases and natural disasters which can impact on employees' welfare and risks cessation of its operations.

3.0 SCOPE

This policy covers all existing and future communicable disease outbreaks and threats of similar nature. All staff, customers, visitors and contractors will be adhering to this policy, which will work towards preventing the spread of infections.

4.0 POLICY STATEMENT

Trinidad and Tobago Postal Corporation (TTPost) is introducing this COVID 19 Policy as a strategic measure to safeguard its employees, stakeholders and customers in an effort to reduce the spread of the Coronavirus / COVID-19 disease within the workplace. Since the inception of this deadly virus, many lives have been lost.

This policy is subject to immediate amendments and will be amended as necessary in response to current and future local and international public health recommendations and regulations which could arise during an influenza pandemic.

5.0 SUPPORTING LEGISLATION AND POLICIES

The following legislation of Trinidad and Tobago and other guidelines support this Policy

- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 as amended 2006; Chapter 88:08.
- The Public Health Ordinance.

Policies

- Centers for Disease Control Prevention Guidelines (CDC)
- TTPost Terms and Conditions of Employment
- TTPost Occupational Health and Safety Policy
- TTPost Human Resource Policy Manual.
- United States Department of Health and Human Services Centres
- World Health Organization (WHO) Guidelines

Customer and Stakeholders face to face interactions

The Corporation recognizes that in the delivery of its services a vast majority of its personnel interact on a face to face basis with its customers and stakeholders. The Corporation is committed to providing the necessary personal protective equipment (PPE) such as face masks and hand sanitizers for use by the relevant personnel. In the event that the customer displays flu-like symptoms, the employee shall assess the situation and if necessary advise the customer to use his/her own pen for signing for receipt of documents or packages and to use hand sanitizers.

In the event that the customer does not comply, the Delivery Officers, Customer Service Representatives, Transport Drivers and Couriers shall refuse to treat with the customer after consultation with their immediate Manager/Supervisor.

Stakeholders shall be expected to comply with instructions from the Corporation with respect to their interactions with the Corporation. As far as possible, documents shall be received and transmitted by email and hard copy to minimise personal interactions.

The Corporation shall advise all stakeholders of the precautionary measures.

Appendix II

Terms of Reference for TTPost's Strategic Plan

1.0 BACKGROUND

The Trinidad and Tobago Postal Corporation (TTPost) is a State Corporation, formed by an Act of Parliament, the Trinidad and Tobago Postal Corporation Act No.1 of 1999. The Trinidad and Tobago Postal Corporation is the premier postal solution provider for GoRTT and the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. TTPost's vision is to be a world leader in the provision of postal and consumer services, while achieving economic viability and sustainability. It operates its business from sixty-six (66) delivery offices, comprising of four hundred and eighty-five (485) walks, thirteen (13) retail outlets, fifty-one (51) franchises and one hundred and nine (109) stamp resellers. These outlets offer a variety of products and services including, but not limited to: stamp sales, courier item sales, merchandise sales, traffic ticket payment services, mail collection and drop off, customer query handling,

To correct its challenges, achieve business continuity and profitability, TTPost intends to engage the services of a Consultant to map a strategic path for the organization to meet emerging market trends in the postal sector locally and internationally. The path will focus on an appropriate TTPost's business model, operations, human capital and new business. The consultancy will commence with examining the global and local postal sector and TTPost with a plan to move TTPost into becoming a financially viable, reputable and efficient postal operator, over a five (5) year period.

2.0 OBJECTIVE

The objective of the Consultancy is to develop a five-year strategic plan for TTPost to position the organization for financial stabilization, given its current state; and the achievement of sustainability over the long run. The strategic intent is to improve and diversify revenue generation, cost optimization and operational efficiency, while delivering a superior customer experience.

3.0 SCOPE OF WORK

The scope and focus of this strategic assignment is to provide technical, strategic, and facilitation support to assist with the development of the new Strategic Plan for TTPost and to enable the development of new strategic objectives that would be the target of execution during the next 5 years.

The Trinidad and Tobago Postal Corporation's expectation is that the proponent's facilitation will entail the review of the previous strategic goals and objectives. Also needed will be an assessment of the organization's SWOT as well as its Threats and Weaknesses (TOW) Matrix.

Desktop Review

1. Complete a review of the following:
 - Reports on past reform postal efforts in Trinidad and Tobago
 - Previous and current draft national postal policies
 - Review of agreed internal and external audit reports
 - Key reports/positions generated by the Universal Postal Union
 - TTPost Act and subsidiary laws and regulations
2. Based on the desktop review, as well as other considerations as appropriate, details a recommendation on the most suitable business model for TTPost that focuses on its Universal Service Obligation mandate and its commercial activities.
3. Develop and execute a financial stabilization programme to stabilize TTPost within one year.

Core Plan

4. Develop a Strategic Plan and implementation roadmap for the period 2022-2027 with related schedule of work activities on the basis of the recommended Business Model. The Plan must include:
 - Clearly defined and quantifiable strategic goals for the Plan's period
 - A manpower plan and revised organizational structure
 - An adaptable enterprise wide information technology plan and solution which supports TTPost approved business model, its operations and strategic requirements
 - A culture change management plan
 - A detailed risk analysis and associated mitigation actions
 - A re-capitalization scenario with options and alignment to any revised business model
 - The development of Key Performance Indicators to function as the value driven qualitative and quantitative indicators for existing and targeted delivery items.
 - Recommendation for legislative and regulatory amendments
 - Operation plans for each Unit/ Department
5. An envision of TTPost Performance Management System with scoreboards and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) aligned to the recommended strategic TTPost goals.

Plan Execution

6. Priorities and project plan the USO obligation and all viable commercial and revenue enhancement activities with clear owners, timelines milestones, dependencies and critical path analysis.
7. Provide guidance and support to the senior and middle management team during execution / roll-out of all aspects of the Strategic Plan.
8. Update and roll-out the policies and procedures in support of the effective execution of the Strategic Plan.
9. Undertake the re-design and re-engineering of the business processes of TTPost in accordance with any recommended Business Model and the Strategic Plan.

General

10. Identify key stakeholders and ensure appropriate engagement of same at each stage of the Consultancy through the creation of critical thinking workshops that encourage strategic thinking about the Corporation's current and future environment.

4.0 DELIVERABLES

The Consultant will be required to deliver the following:

1. An inception Report detailing the work plan with defined timelines and the methodology to be utilized in addressing each item under the Scope of Work.
2. A desktop review report and a recommended Business Model for TTPost.
3. A report detailing the recommended financial stabilization measures and the Action Plan for its implementation.
4. A core Strategic Plan and an Implementation Road Map with the following:
 - Clearly defined and quantifiable strategic goals for the Plan's period
 - A manpower plan and revised organizational structure
 - An adaptable enterprise wide information technology plan and solution which supports TTPost approved business model, its operations and strategic requirements
 - A culture change management plan

- A detailed risk analysis and associated mitigation actions
- A re-capitalization scenario with options and alignment to any revised business model
- Recommendation for legislative and regulatory amendments
- Operation plans for each Unit/ Department
- A revised Performance Management System with scoreboards and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) aligned to the strategic goals
- A financial valuation of the Strategic Plan with robust financial options / scenarios and recommendations
- Facilitative support for the development of working arrangements that would allow the Corporation to monitor the implementation of the Strategic Plan over the duration of its lifecycle.

5.0 REPORTING

The Board of Directors of TTPOST will identify the appropriate office or institution to provide general oversight and guidance.

The Consultant will be required to provide monthly reports in an agreed format reflecting activities and results. This includes, but is not limited to, achievements to date, project progress, timelines and anticipated outcomes for presentation to the Ministry of Public Utilities.

The Managing Director will serve as the Project Coordinator to facilitate and support the work of the Consultant.

6.0 TIMELINE

Four (4) months

7.0 CHARACTERISTICS OF CONSULTANCY

Place of Work: Trinidad and Tobago

8.0 QUALIFICATION OF CONSULTANT

The experience and qualification of the lead and junior members of the team executing the consultancy should be clearly established. The Consultant will be limited to persons and institutions who are citizens of or registered for business in Trinidad and Tobago, respectively.

Appendix III

Revenue Earned and Cost Associated with Auxiliary Services

6th Report on an Inquiry into the operational efficiency of the Trinidad and Tobago Postal Corporation and the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on its service delivery

TABLE 4: REVENUES EARNED FROM AUXILIARY SERVICES

Ministry of Social Development:	2020	2021
Revenue		
Delivery of social welfare cheques	523,051	482,816
Commission - encashment of social welfare cheques	108,000	108,000
Over the counter/courier delivery of food cards & administrative duties	477,000	205,905
Courier service - salary relief grants & food cards	460,544	-
Courier service - delivery of Covid relief cheques	-	25,968
	1,568,595	822,689
Cost		
Marginal cost - delivery of social welfare cheques	709,928	808,162
Purchase cost - Track paks (food cards & salary relief grants)	107,442	51,415
Courier costs - variable rate per delivery	326,102	80,651
	1,143,472	940,228
Amount owed as at 30.09.2021		1,652,646
National Insurance Board:	2020	2021
Revenue - Delivery of salary relief grants	770,668	70,000
Cost - marginal	523,279	34,600
Amount owed as at 30.09.2021		Nil
Ministry of the Attorney General & Legal Affairs:	2020	2021
Revenue - sale of A5 Track Paks to facilitate delivery of birth/death/marriage certificates etc.	-	288,880
Cost		
Purchase cost - Track paks		64,056
Courier costs - variable rate per delivery		100,480
		164,536
Amount owed as at 30.09.2021		Nil
NIPDEC	2020	2021

6th Report on an Inquiry into the operational efficiency of the Trinidad and Tobago Postal Corporation and the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on its service delivery

Revenue		
Use of delivery offices for Cloth Masks RFP project	18,000	-
Purchase of contract tickets to send to pharmacies nationwide re CDAP *	700,000	78,000
Purchase of A5 Track Paks to send to doctors re CDAP *	11,500	1,725
Purchase of local parcel tickets to move temperature-sensitive stock (e.g. Insulin)	-	100,000
Courier service - acceptance & remittance to Nipdec of CDAP application forms	-	11,910
	729,500	191,635
Cost		-
Purchase cost - Track paks, contract tickets, local parcel tickets	274,772	80,660
Courier costs - variable rate per delivery	4,000	4,743
	278,772	85,403
Amount owed as at 30.09.2021		Nil
<hr/>		
First Citizens Bank (Credit Card Centre)	2020	2021
Revenue		
Purchase of A5 Track Paks to facilitate delivery of debit & credit cards	1,651,000	2,460,000
Purchase of bulk rate stickers re Visa Rewards cards	80,000	
Purchase of foolscap Track Paks re delivery of cheque books	69,000	-
	1,800,000	2,460,000
Cost		
Purchase cost - Track paks & bulk rate stickers	412,507	545,478
Courier costs - variable rate per delivery	594,334	855,652
	1,006,841	1,401,130
Amount owed as at 30.09.2021		230,000
<hr/>		
Ministry of Education	2020	2021
Revenue - Delivery of exam packs & papers regionally and internationally	393,655	583,754
Cost (see note below)		
Amount owed as at 30.09.2021		977,409
<i>Note: Costs pertaining to DHL for the delivery of these services have not been captured separately.</i>		

Appendix IV

Advertising and Marketing Strategies of TTPost

The following table illustrates the planned AP for each product for fiscal 2021 to 2022, inclusive of timelines and costs associated with each activity.

TABLE 5: ADVERTISING AND MARKETING STRATEGIES FOR FISCAL 2021 - 2022

Activity	Product	Timeline	Objective	Comment
Costing and Pricing Review	TTPost Couriers	October 2021	Ensure viability	New pricing strategic will maintain price competitiveness
	Hummex ICS /EMS		Ensure viability	
	Hummex OSS		Ensure viability	
Van Branding	TTPost Couriers	November 2021	Visibility and brand awareness	All vehicles will be branded with all Courier products
	Hummex ICS /EMS		Visibility and brand awareness	
	Hummex OSS		Visibility and brand awareness	
TIC Expo	TTPost Couriers	November 2021	Branding awareness and sales outreach	TTPost has recorded positive ROI's each year it participated. Life-size decorated model van will be used as the booth
	Hummex ICS /EMS		Branding awareness and sales outreach	
	Hummex OSS		Branding awareness and sales outreach	
TrackPak Stickers	Hummex OSS	November 2021	Target specific customers for peak period i.e., Black Friday / Cyber Monday	
Email blasts	Hummex OSS	Monthly	Seasonal – sales Non seasonal – brand awareness	25,000 databases will be used.
Floor decals	TTPost Couriers	December 2021	Brand awareness and visibility	Decals are to be placed at shops and at escalators in specific malls / plazas
	Hummex ICS /EMS			
	Hummex OSS			
Video and Still Social Media Advertising	TTPost Couriers	Dec 2021, Feb, Mar, Jun 2022	Awareness – Gov. e.g., MOWT, MNS, etc.	
		May, Jun, Aug, Sep 2022	Sales – MSME's e-commerce	

Activity	Product	Timeline	Objective	Comment
	Hummex ICS / EMS	Dec 2021, Feb, May, Jun 2022	Retail Sales	
	Hummex OSS	Monthly	Seasonal – sales Non seasonal – brand awareness	
Radio Ads	TTPost Couriers	Dec 2021, Jun 2022	Sales	
	Hummex ICS / EMS	Dec 2021, Mar, Jun 2022	Sales	
	Hummex OSS	Nov, Dec 2021,	Sales	
Caravan Road Show	TTPost Couriers	Mar 2022	Visibility and brand awareness	Caravan will include a life-size decorated model van with six TTPost vehicles in tow.
	Hummex ICS / EMS			
	Hummex OSS			
Beach Show	TTPost Couriers	Apr 2022	Visibility, brand awareness and sales	Van booth to be set up on Maracas beach during Easter season.

Appendix V

Summary of Public Submissions

6th Report on an Inquiry into the operational efficiency of the Trinidad and Tobago Postal Corporation and the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on its service delivery

Name	Concerns	Recommendations
Wayne Ramoutar	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The implementation of Online payment whereby persons can pay online to post a package and be able to just download a label to put onto the package to post. 2. Automated tracking, use of scan tools to update a package on where it is, both locally internationally. 3. Use of QR codes labels for sensitive documents moving within the country. Especially for parliamentary documents. 4. Mobile app development. With a mobile app you can possibly combine all previous mentioned suggestions. 5. Creation of user profiles that utilize the postal service. This is to potentially track any dangerous/harmful/suspicious activity back to the sender/receiver. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The establishment of an online payment system for the postal of an online package; 2. Establishment of improved tracking systems; 3. Downloadable Labels for packages, inclusive of QR codes. 4. The introduction of a Mobile App. 5. Introduction of a Log in System.
Stephen Jaskaran	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In adequate tracking system for packages. 	Stated Above.
Vishnudat Singh	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. International Courier Services – Competent 2. Door to Door Mail Delivery - Shockingly incompetent. Delivery about once a fortnight. Document posted in south Trinidad arrived SIX months later. Ought to be contracted out! 3. National Zip Code- Under utilised. 4. Coercion by Postmen - Postal delivery ladies ought to be ashamed of themselves to leave envelopes addressed "Please Remember Your Postlady". 	Stated Above

6th Report on an Inquiry into the operational efficiency of the Trinidad and Tobago Postal Corporation and the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on its service delivery

Name	Concerns	Recommendations
<p>Juliet Wong (Tobago)</p>	<p>I live in Tobago. We have not been able to receive or send mail in a timely manner whether it is internally within each island, inter-island or overseas. This has not been as a result of the pandemic.</p> <p>The Track pak is a great initiative and needs to be maintained. The cost is affordable. During the pandemic this has helped small businesses tremendously. Again, it is inefficient. It can take up to 5 days between Trinidad & Tobago. The system of tracking the track pak is not available online. This would be very helpful.</p> <p>Reagrding zip codes, I don't think we are completed in Tobago. I received one for my business in Scarborough but haven't received one for my residence in Bacolet Point. Hasn't affected me because I have always used a Post Office Box.</p>	<p>1. Stated Above.</p>
<p>Mitra Ramroopsingh</p>	<p>Challenged with the non-receipt of local bills and communication. I subscribe to an international organization (ascd.org) and my membership means I receive journals and print books. After more than a year of not receiving anything I had to cancel my subscription. I reported the situation at the TIPOST head office in Piarco and there was no improvement. Allow me to say that the staff at both venues seemed to empathize and were warm and professional.</p> <p>I also never received several items (small and light weight - less than 2 ounces) from online vendors on Aliexpress and Ebay.</p> <p>We received no mails for months on end...even after the rest of the country started receiving theirs. I called both the Head Office and Tunapuna to arrange to collect but both places were saying it was the other who would have our mail</p>	<p>2. Improved communication with citizens on lost packages, i.e. an improved tracking and compensation system.</p> <p>3. Further recommendations stated above.</p>

Appendix VI

Minutes

**MINUTES OF THE 9TH MEETING OF THE JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE
APPOINTED TO INQUIRE INTO AND REPORT ON LOCAL AUTHORITIES,
SERVICE COMMISSIONS, STATUTORY AUTHORITIES (INCLUDING THE THA)
HELD ON WEDNESDAY JANUARY 5, 2022**

This meeting was held virtually via Zoom

PRESENT

Members

Dr. Varma Deyalsingh	Chairman
Mrs. Lisa Morris – Julian, MP	Member
Mr. Nigel De Freitas	Member
Mrs. Ayanna Webster – Roy, MP	Member
Ms. Khadijah Ameen, MP	Member
Mrs. Renuka Sagramsingh-Sooklal	Member
Ms. Jayanti Lutchmedial	Member

Secretariat

Ms. Khisha Peterkin	Assistant Secretary
Ms. Terriann Baker	Graduate Research Assistant
Ms. Sherlana Ramdeen	Procedural Officer Intern

Absent

Mr. Esmond Forde, MP	Vice-Chairman
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INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Chairman called the meeting to order at 9:47a.m.

**CONSIDERATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE 8th MEETING HELD ON
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 03, 2021**

2.1 The Chairman asked Members to examine the Minutes page-by-page.

2.2 The Minutes were confirmed on a motion moved by Mrs. Ayanna Webster – Roy and seconded by Mrs. Lisa Morris – Julian.

The meeting was suspended at 10:01 a.m.

PUBLIC HEARING

- 7.1 The Chairman reconvened the meeting at 10:25 a.m. and welcomed both the listening and viewing audience.
- 7.2 The Chairman highlighted the objectives of the inquiry and introductions were made.
- 7.3 The Chairman then invited the lead official of each delegation to make a brief opening statement.

The following are the main issues highlighted during discussions with the *Trinidad and Tobago Postal Corporation (TTPOST)* (for further details, please see the Verbatim Notes):

Breach of COVID-19 Protocols within TTPost Offices and Safety Protocols

1. The breach of COVID-19 regulations at TTPost sub-offices in June were attributed to the lack of notice given to recipients regarding the late distribution of public assistance grants which led to overcrowding at TTPost offices.
2. There are no public washroom facilities within TTPost service centres.

Financial Services (Cheque Encashment)

3. TTPost offices in Toco and Charlotteville encash cheques for recipients of public assistance grants.
4. TTPost is currently exploring the option of expanding the cheque encashment service to other areas in Trinidad and Tobago.
5. TTPost has implemented security features to identify fraudulent cheques, however it acknowledges that new practices may be utilised by criminals to evade this system.

Mail Delivery

6. In addressing the challenges associated with the delivery of mail, TTPOST reported that there have been instances where postal locations have been difficult to access due to challenging terrain.

7. There have been preliminary discussions on the use of drones to deliver mail.
8. TTPost staff are accompanied by security when delivering cheques in high-risk communities.

Discussions with Trade Union concerning COVID-19 matters

9. The union representing Postal workers has raised issues in relation to staff and COVID-19 safety protocol practices inclusive of the organisation's vaccination policy. Discussions are in progress in relation to TTPost's response to the Government's position on vaccination of all public officers.
10. The Union has discouraged employees from sharing their vaccination status, however, according to management records out of 906 employees, 306 employees have been vaccinated to date.
11. The Union has been advocating for PPE gear for postal staff.

Employee Vaccination efforts

12. TTPost is currently encouraging staff to become vaccinated. There is no mandatory call for vaccinations at this time, which the Union underscores.
13. Contingency plans are to be discussed regarding the labour disruptions within the postal service that may result from the Government's propose mandatory vaccination policy for public sector workers
14. The entire management team has been vaccinated at TTPost.

Transport Fleet

15. The current fleet of 51 vehicles is fully operational and well maintained. An additional 38 vehicles are available via private contractual arrangements.
16. This fleet is inclusive of vans, motor scooters and bicycles

Services provided in Tobago

17. All of the services provided by TTPost in Trinidad, are available in Tobago.
18. The three main retail outlets that facilitate postal services are Bon Accord, Scarborough, and Roxborough.
19. In instances where the physical delivery may not be facilitated, mail may be accessed at an alternative retail centre in Roxborough.
20. Sub stations have been established in Roxborough for rural areas.
21. Franchises of TTPost are available in many rural areas through other businesses e.g. Pharmacies, Groceries

22. Courier services are also facilitated within Tobago.
23. The revenue generated in Tobago in fiscal 2021 was \$1.5Mn which accounts for 10% of overall revenue generated by TTPost.

Conditions for the Establishment of Mailbox Services

24. TTPost conducts an assessment of communities through its delivery task force, which determines the feasibility of delivering mail through a door-to-door system or through franchises within communities.
25. Communities may petition for door-to-door delivery and or community mail boxes, which may alleviate several postal challenges.
26. The establishment of community cluster boxes, have been the result of discussions with TTPost and HDC developments and private developers.

Revenue generated from Auxiliary Services

27. Auxiliary Services facilitated through TTPost have generated \$7.3Mn in revenue in 2021. This represents an increase from the \$6Mn revenue recorded in fiscal 2020.

Online Tracking System

28. TTPost has established an online tracking system.
29. Discussions are underway for the tracking of registered mail and parcel mail during fiscal 2022.

Track and Trace System

30. TTPost's tracking service requires that the serial number is inputted into an online platform which provides an updated tracking location.

A Competitive Courier Service

31. TTPost seeks to improve its competitive position within the courier market through the consolidation of packages prior to shipment in Miami.
32. An online payment platform has been established for the delivery of items. Additionally, online packages can be delivered as gifts to persons anywhere within Trinidad and Tobago.
33. Postal bonds are utilised to reduce the cost and reduce the waiting time for customers to receive their items. However, TTPost has had some challenges with respect to retaining its Bond, but this is currently in the process of being rectified.

34. TTPost has not adequately marketed the provision of this service due to its minimal budget for marketing. However, TTPost seeks to expand its marketing through alternative means such as social media.
35. TTPost is currently providing courier services for small businesses during the pandemic, which is being facilitated through the use of contracted services.
36. DHL as a partner courier, has provided efficient service to citizens. There have been improvements with the delivery times and DHL has reduced the package processing time.
37. Although TTPost has a fairly efficient system, the increase in volume of packages have prompted a review of the current processing system.
38. The review of the processing system is currently ongoing however no deadline has been provided for the finalisation.

Availability of Postal Material

39. Shortages with postal material within franchises may be attributed to the lack of payment issued to TTPost.

Postal Addresses

40. TTPost has advised that the public may request postal cards for their businesses and homes online.
41. For the construction of new developments or homes, street names must be established after which TTPost may be petitioned to issue postal cards.
42. A Cabinet subcommittee is currently reviewing the card distribution process and has given a timeline of two years for postal addresses to be implemented nationwide.

Inspection of overseas Packages

43. Packages are checked, x-ray scanned and inspected in the presence of Customs.
44. TTPost currently has access to one scanner.

Digitisation of TTPost Services

45. The main areas set for digitisation within TTPost's operations are the Human Resources systems and the delivery system for improved efficiency.

Revision of Staff Roles during the Pandemic

46. Although productivity levels reduced during the pandemic, TTPost offices remained opened. This was supplemented by the implementation of staff rotation and Work-from-Home arrangements.

The Financial Viability of TTPost

47. Independent of government subventions, TTPost has operated with \$12.2Mn less. TTPost is making strides to make itself financially independent of the government's subventions provided.
48. The monies owed by the Ministries for auxiliary services are slowly being remitted to TTPost, on account of funding constraints confronting said Ministries

Modernising its Services through Legislative Amendments

49. TTPost has not submitted its legislative amendments for the consideration of its line Ministry.
50. The details of such amendments are to be contained within the Strategic Plan that is being drafted.
51. TTPOST Act currently permits TTPost to engage in mail delivery, courier services and financial services.

Strategic Plan

52. TTPost anticipates that its new Strategic plan will be completed approximately five (5) months after the tender is awarded. It should be completed within the 3rd quarter of this year.

Adverse Reports

53. Audits have been conducted for the years 2008 – 2019. The 2020 audit is set to commence shortly, with the 2021 to follow.
54. Significant operational issues were not highlighted during these audits however, accounting issues were raised and TTPost is working to address this.

Auditor General Reports

55. The last audit conducted by the Auditor General on the financial statements of TTPost was conducted in 2005. Subsequent to this, TTPost has utilised local accounting firms to conduct audits with the approval of the Auditor General.

Revision of Tariffs to Deliver Mail

56. The existing tariff was introduced approximately 20 years ago and is no longer sustainable in meeting the operating expenses of TTPOST.

Provision of Services in Rural Areas

57. TTPost has a North and South Task Force for Trinidad that identifies areas that have no mail delivery service and seeks to find solutions to provide relief.
58. TTPost was of the view that it had adequate communication channels through which the public may contact them.

Marketing Plan

59. TTPost is of the view that its efficiency in delivering mail, must serve as its first point of public relations thus building credibility with citizens. TTPost was at 66% efficiency, presently it's at 88%, which is over the 85% industry standard as defined by the Caribbean Postal Union.

Proposal Mail Collection at Gas Stations

60. The Corporation is in discussion concerning the facilitation of mail collection at gas stations.

Tipping of Postmen

61. TTPost abhors the practice of 'tipping' post men which is in contravention of the moral code expected to be exercised by postal staff. However, the choice is left up to the client.
62. TTPost also stated that prior to the recent media reports, the current Board was unaware of the current practice of "tipping" postal staff.

TTPost Cost Reduction Drive

63. In terms of cost reduction strategies, the areas identified to be addressed were Overtime, stationery, mobile phone allowances, reduction in electricity use after hours, rent relief and deferrals and a freeze on hiring which commenced during the middle of 2020.

The following are the main issues highlighted during discussions with the **Ministry of Public Utilities**:

Financial Independence of the TTPost

1. The Ministry is in support of TTPost's move towards financial independence. However, in light of the increase in digitalisation, TTPost should explore all available avenues to increase revenue and efficiency in the provision of services.

2. In anticipation of the Strategic Plan, the Ministry expects that additional areas will be highlighted and explored.
3. The marketing strategies utilised by TTPost to provide services to Ministries is commendable.
4. Legislative changes are necessary to facilitate TTPost's plans to improve its financial services.

Submission of TTPost's Strategic Plan

5. At the end of January 2022, a vendor should be selected to manage TTPost's strategic planning exercise.

Submission of Annual Reports

6. TTPost had submitted Financial Statements up till 2019 to the Ministry, however, only financial statements for the period 2008 – 2012 have been laid in Parliament. Currently, the financial statements for the years 2013 – 2019 are being reviewed by the Ministry prior to submission to Cabinet.
7. The Cabinet has approved Annual Reports for TTPost up to 2011, however Cabinet notes are currently being prepared for reports for the period 2013- 2018.

Issues highlighted in its Annual Reports

8. The need for TTPost to advance its information technology infrastructure and systems to better adapt to the advancements within the world.
9. The Ministry has not recorded any discrepancies in the operations of TTPost.

Oversight of the TTPost

10. The Ministry utilises the frameworks outlined by the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Planning and Development to oversee the operations of TTPost. Additionally, the MPU monitors TTPost's implementation of its PSIP projects.

Auditor General Review

11. There have not been any recent reports from the Auditor General on TTPost.

Tariff

12. The MPU anticipates that the proposed revision of the tariff will be considered when submitted.

ADJOURNMENT

7.1 The Chairman thanked Members and adjourned the meeting.

7.2 The meeting was adjourned at 1:10 p.m.

I certify that the Minutes are true and correct.

Chairman

Secretary

February 8, 2022

Appendix VII

Verbatim Notes

VERBATIM NOTES OF THE NINTH VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON LOCAL AUTHORITIES, SERVICE COMMISSIONS AND STATUTORY AUTHORITIES (INCLUDING THE THA), HELD (IN PUBLIC) ON WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 05, 2022, AT 10.25 A.M.

PRESENT

Dr. Varma Deyalsingh	Chairman
Mrs. Lisa Morris-Julian	Member
Mrs. Ayana Webster-Roy	Member
Mrs. Renuka Sagrarsingh-Sooklal	Member
Mr. Nigel de Freitas	Member
Ms. Jayanti Lutchmedial	Member
Mr. Julien Ogilvie	Secretary
Ms. Khisha Peterkin	Assistant Secretary
Ms. Terriann Baker	Graduate Research Assistant
Ms. Nicole Brown	Graduate Research Assistant

ABSENT

Mr. Esmond Forde	Member
Ms. Khadijah Ameen	Member

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO POSTAL CORPORATION (TTPOST)

Mr. Hakeem Ahmad	Chairman
Mr. Francis Delpesh	Managing Director
Mr. George Alexis	General Manager, Operations
Ms. April Peters	General Manager, Finance
Mr. Nicholas Martin	Manager of Courier and Express Services

MINISTRY OF PUBLIC UTILITIES

Ms. Nicolette Duke

Permanent Secretary

Ms. Arlene Collis

Director, Economic Research,
Policy and Planning

Mr. Chairman: Good morning members of this Committee and members who are here present from the TTPost and the Ministry and members of the viewing public. I would like to welcome you to this enquiry today from the Joint Select Committee on Local Authorities, Service Commissions and Statutory Authorities (including the Tobago House of Assembly) where the objectives of our enquiry today is to assess the operational efficiency of TTPost and then to evaluate the performance of TTPost international and local courier services, and to assess the current strategies utilized by TTPost to modernize its current services and counteract the negative effects of COVID-19, and also to examine the potential viability of the auxiliary services facilitated by TTPost.

I must say the purpose of this meeting here today—it is a very important—because as we know the whole idea of receiving post, receiving mail, it is part of our communication efforts, and especially more so important and very challenging in this COVID time. And I might say the Christmas vacation and the holiday season would have given additional challenges, additional burdens, and the fact that we are having this meeting today would have probably—would give us some idea of any sort of challenges also faced over the season that recently passed.

So, I welcome the members who have made themselves available from TTPost and the Ministry, and I am saying that, you know, our Committee serves to look into different authorities and service commissions, to look at their functioning to see if there are any sort of inefficiencies that we could address, to see if there are benchmarks that are not being made. So really here to cooperate with you to see if we can brainstorm any ideas that can probably help the public out there. And, also,

to see if we can somehow manage the public purse properly because, remember, the subventions that you are getting would be something that, you know, are under public scrutiny. We have to know that you are doing the best thing to manage the affairs to self-sufficient TTPost out there.

So at the stage I would like the following persons to make brief opening remarks, and I would like to welcome Mr. Francis Delpesh, the Managing Director of TTPost to please give us some brief remarks.

[*Pause*]

Ms. Lutchmedial: Sorry, I am not hearing, I think everyone—Mr. Delpesh, I think you are muted still.

Mr. Delpesh: How is that now?

Mr. Chairman: Loud and clear. Thank you.

Mr. Delpesh: Excellent. Good morning, Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee, and members of the viewing public. The Chairman of TTPost, Mr. Hakeem Ahmad, has prepared an opening statement. I would say a few words as well when my turn comes to answer any question, but I would refer your invitation to the Chairman of TTPost, with your permission, Mr. Hakeem Ahmad.

Mr. Chairman: Welcome Mr. Hakeem Ahmad and I look forward to your brief presentation. [*Pause*] Thank you. Mr. Ahmad, your mike is muted, so if you could please.

Mr. Ahmad: Thank you. Good morning, Mr. Chairman, and distinguished members of the Joint Select Committee. The Trinidad and Tobago Postal Corporation is extremely pleased to be appearing before this august Committee today. It affords us the opportunity to share with the parliamentary arm of the Government, and ipso facto the general public, some of the recent developments at TTPost in the fulfilment of its obligation to efficiently deliver mail and parcels to our citizens in this COVID

environment. Members of the Committee, TTPost is currently in a transformation mode. Our average mail delivery time is now within the Caribbean Postal Union standard for this region. Our courier business is experiencing significant growth and our productivity levels have been enhanced. Our staff levels are becoming in line with industry norms. We recognize that we have some distance to travel with respect to total digitalization, but we have started that process already.

Over the last 12 months only one industrial relation matter has been referred to a third party for resolution. This is primarily due to the harmonious relationship with our labour union partner. This was not possible without the mutual cooperative efforts of our senior management team and the executive of the Trinidad and Tobago Postal Workers Union. It should also be noted that we have audited statements up to the year 2019.

The meeting this morning is spearheaded by our Managing Director Mr. Francis Lucien Delpesh. It includes the General Manager Finance, Ms. April Peters; the General Manager, Operations Mr. George Alexis; and the Product Manager, Courier and Express Services, Mr. George Nicholas Martin.

Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee, and the viewing public, and again thank you for the opportunity, we eagerly look forward to responding comprehensively to your questions. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Chairman, and welcome members of staff there. At this stage I would like Ms. Nicolette Duke, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Public Utilities, to give a brief opening statement, and also introduce any members of your staff, I think, who are also present with you. Ms. Duke.

Ms. Duke: Good morning, Chairman and members of the Committee. The Ministry of Public Utilities thanks you for this opportunity to contribute to this enquiry into the efficiency and effectiveness of the Trinidad and Tobago Postal Corporation. The

Ministry continues to work closely with TTPost to facilitate the access of citizens and business alike to an efficient, reliable and modern postal service. TTPost, like many entities, has had to address the impact and fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic, and while its locations remained open to service the citizens, a number of key services were shifted to an online platform, and strict measures taken to safeguard workers. This experience has taught us that we must adapt to the new reality, and TTPost's approach is to be lauded as it seeks to integrate new and emerging technologies into its internal processes; it seeks to deepen and widen its courier business and implement new business initiatives.

The Ministry will continue to provide strategic guidance and support to TTPost to assist it in delivering on its mandate, and in this regard we look forward to today's discussion and any recommendations that the Committee may wish to put forth to assist us in this thrust. With me today I have the Director, Economic Research Policy and Planning, Ms. Arlene Collis. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you PS, and welcome Ms. Collis. And I would like to probably just start, you know, just remind members that please Committee members and officials to direct your questions and concerns through the Chair, and members please kindly activate your microphone on your devices when you are acknowledged, and please turn it off after you have concluded your contribution. And at this stage we would like to start the ball rolling, and I am very pleased that the Permanent Secretary, Ms. Duke, mentioned that with the COVID times there were challenges, and you know you have seen the need how to manoeuvre around the challenges.

And why I was concerned is because, I think it was June 02, 2021, I remember reading an article in one of the newspapers that:

“TTPost shuts branches as COVID rules breached”

Meaning that people probably amassed in their TTPost shops, their TTPost outlets, and again it caused a concern for the workers, and even concern among the members of public who were there. And I think it was really persons coming in, I do not know if it was to cash cheques, to collect cheques or whatnot. So therefore, two things I would like to ask here is: the safety measures, do you have a—the safety measures, was that addressed in the sense that the crowd that amassed those outlets, was that addressed? Are you still seeing that? Are you having any difficulties in dealing with the rules, COVID rules, being breached? The TTPost staff may decide to—

Mr. Delpesh: Yes, I will be happy to answer, Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Sure.

Mr. Delpesh: That event was caused by citizens looking forward to their cheques on a specific day and not receiving it on the specific day. There was a late delivery of the cheques to TTPost, and with the, if you wish, domino effect taking place at the end. The delivery outlets “beared” the brunt of, if you wish, that assault. But I am just saying that since then, since June we have had no such repeat because we have met with the parties concerned in terms of the NIB, the Ministry of Social Development, and we came up with a plan where we would inform long in advance where it is predicted that we would be late as we were on that particular day.

Mr. Chairman: So that was really due to a delay causing that, but usually if those are on time it would not have created such a situation? Have you put in place something to at least tell the members of the public that their cheques would be delayed? Because I have noticed you have good, you know, like any sort of online platforms or ways of telling the members of the public you have to probably wait a day or two, or how to stagger the mass of the people coming in. Because if it is, again, a delay, do we have something in place where we could get additional staff, get persons out there to run the line to see if we can have some sort of order? Have

you put something in place just in case there is a delay again at getting those cheques at your post office?

Mr. Delpesh: And we have, Chair. In addition to what you have said in terms putting additional people to man the station, we have also embarked on a communication strategy where in advance we tell the people when they are going to get their cheques, not only at the outlets but in their homes. So there is no need for other than out of a sense of anxiety for them to leave their home when they would be getting their cheques on the same day that they show up at the particular outlet. So yes, we have. There is now a committee looking at it on a monthly basis in advance to determine what communication strategies are required, and what additional resources are needed for us to have a smooth operation. Since then, as you can see, we have had no such reoccurrence of the issue.

Mr. Chairman: Sir, am I to understand that the delivery of the public assistance grants and senior citizen pensions, disability grants and whatnot, food support cards, do you deliver that at home or do persons still have to come to your post office to get that?

Mr. Delpesh: It is a combination. The majority is delivered door to door to the homes of the citizens. But some people because of their mailing address, because of the difficulty in reaching that location, or for security concerns, are asked to show up at the outlets, but this is a minority.

Mr. Chairman: Well, I thank you for that initiative, because in COVID times, you know sometimes you would not want these senior citizens to be coming into the public, risking themselves. So that is an excellent initiative on your part and I congratulate you for that. So looking at the, in terms of the public having the greater safety in not coming out, which I have seen you have attempted, what about your staff? Is it a problem with your members of staff having to go to certain areas that

may be dangerous, like certain hotspots? Because I myself in mental health, we have mental officers who sometimes are hesitant to go into certain hotspots. Do you now, looking at the staff members in terms of—do you have ways of protecting these post officers who go out in the community and certain areas that may be deemed dangerous?

Mr. Delpesh: Well, we would determine them hotspots, and hotspots areas have been identified, Chair, and in those areas they are accompanied by security personnel on the days that they deliver cheques in recognition of the need to protect the safety and well-being of the employees.

Mr. Chairman: I thank you for that initiative. And why I make this—why I was trying to enquire, there was an article in the US Postal Service reports where they said that:

“The USPS is an extremely dangerous place to work”

And they recommended—they actually had, looking at certain job spectrum, and when they looked at different employers they realized that their conditions there with slipping in the snow, dogs going after them. And now with COVID we have to really admire our postal service officers who go out there in those conditions, and again have to congratulate you and welcome you for giving them that additional security that they would be able to have that comfort in delivering their mail.

At this stage I would want to ask any members of my Committee if they would have any questions that they may want to address.

Mrs. Morris-Julian: Thank you, Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Ms. Morris, thank you.

Mrs. Morris-Julian: Chairman, through you, through the Chair, I notice in the response from TTPost on page 4, it said that:

TTPost and Trinidad and Tobago Postal Workers Union met about once a

week during the period—or the pandemic period.

I would like to know what were the issues raised by the union and what were the resolutions? How was it resolved?

Mr. Delpesh: Thank you very much MP Morris-Julian for that question. The union from time to time would raise, if you wish, issues specific to a location. But in terms of the discussions that we had it was about, particularly in the early stages, about what could we do to protect the interest and well-being of not—the staff and as well the customers. In that respect, the union’s cooperation was very much welcome. We did not have anything to argue about. We saw things differently in terms of how to execute naturally, but in the end we went out and we came to a unified approach to dealing with whatever the issue was on the table. So I think the union in this respect did an excellent job in looking after the total interest of the corporation, inclusive of the patrons who use the post office, not only their union members, and we were very happy for that.

Mrs. Morris-Julian: That is indeed very refreshing to hear a union working with the administrative arm. I am really inspired by that, however, Mr. Delpesh, through the Chairman again, I do have some follow-up questions because I noticed in newspaper reports of late in response to another matter that may come up later on, that the union spoke about personal protection equipment being an issue.

Mr. Delpesh: Yes.

Mrs. Morris-Julian: Has that been resolved? What is currently ongoing with that particular situation? Because, I think we will all appreciate that these men and women are literally walking from house-to-house interacting with persons. I look forward to seeing my post woman every time, every opportunity, because, you know, we talk and chat. So I am really interested about the personal protection, the equipment aspect, with regard to the pandemic, and the union, and your good

organizing.

Mr. Delpesh: Right. From time to time we have had issues with uniforms in terms of the timeliness. Not that the people did not have uniforms, but they had to use the uniform for longer periods. In terms of the items specifically related to the virus in terms of sanitizers, gloves, and so on, I checked after that report and we had absolutely no shortage. All right, so let me make that—I do not know where it came from, it might have been a misunderstanding as the case may be. There is an issue with respect to uniforms that we are late on, but we have started the distribution on a phased basis in November, and we expect to complete it by the end of February, within a four-month period, that all 900-plus employees that require the uniforms will get their uniforms. And again, we thank the employees and the union for being patient and cooperative with the organization during the period of the delay. But the delay will be taken care of in total by the second month of this year.

Mrs. Morris-Julian: I am very happy to hear that, and I hope that the media will make sure that there is no shortage of personal protection equipment known. I am really happy to hear that, because they need to be safe. As we are still on the topic of unions, through you, Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the fact that you have a good working relationship with the union, and I appreciate also that they are willing to look at the best interest of the corporation and their workers, but could you please tell us about vaccines, the union's viewpoint, and what are you doing to encourage vaccination process with your employees?

Mr. Delpesh: Well first of all, the union's position, if I may, I speak carefully in terms of where they stand, that they are encouraging the workers to be vaccinated so that—that is unconditional. However, their position is that this must not be enforced, and it must be voluntary. And the latest communication I have had from them is a warning that in terms of what is expected to happen on the 15th, if it goes the way it

is going at this point in time, they would not be in agreement with that, because their belief at this point in time is that vaccination should be voluntary, even though they encourage the workers to so do. And in terms of what we do to encourage people to become vaccinated, we have had three rounds of vaccination in the organization. It did not go as well as we expected, and we are planning another round before the 15th in conjunction with the Ministry of Health where we expect a larger turn out. But as of now, in the absence of any legislation that makes it mandatory, our task and our way of proceeding, on a model of proceeding on this matter is to encourage the people to become vaccinated.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you.

Mrs. Morris-Julian: Thank you very much, and Chairman thank you. That would be it for me for now.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, sure, thank you Ms. Morris. I would like to follow up on just one question: In terms of the uniforms, do you have a problem with the actual bags itself? Because I remember some time, some years ago, there were postal workers in south and central protesting that they had defective mail bags and unsafe conditions at the workplace, unsatisfactory working conditions. So as far as you know, the conditions where your workers are in terms of where they have to come, take that rest and that staffroom, is it adequate? And in terms of the bags, is it also any problems with the bags, or has that been addressed?

Mr. Delpesh: I do not know of any problems with the bags. It might have been before my time. I am only with the organization 20 months, so I can say during that period we have bought 300 bags for 362 people. So that the majority of people would have had new bags during the 20 months. I do not know of any problems prior to that, so I cannot speak to that.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, so I see it was addressed. And in terms of the staffroom and

actually rooms for your workers there, there is no sort of complaints? Any sort of complaints there?

Mr. Delpesh: Of all the complaints that come to my attention I have never had one focused area.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you. Because those were complaints before your time and I see it has been addressed, so again congratulations are in order. What I would like to find out now, in terms of your transport fleet, I think there are 51 trucks and vans operational, so is it all 51 trucks and vans operational at this time, and if not, how many are in need of repairs?

Mr. Delpesh: Yes, and I have to tell you that all are operational, all 51. There are 51, if you wish, owned by the corporation, and then there is another 38 which we use on a contracted basis for courier delivery. I can just touch base with my colleague, Mr. Martin, to see what has happened with the—if there is any issue with any of the 38 that we use for delivery in the courier service. But in terms of the TTPost managed vehicles, they are all in good shape, and I think there is, if you wish, a lifespan of certainly of less than five years.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you. So at least you have a way of monitoring your vehicles to see what is in need of repair, what you have to sell, and so far things seem to be in place there.

Mr. Delpesh: Sure.

Mr. Chairman: What about, you know, your agenda to get coverage right through Trinidad and Tobago? I saw some document that you have about 96 per cent coverage, is that so? Is there any sort of areas that you may have difficulties in getting a 100 per cent coverage in the country?

Mr. Delpesh: Yeah. Can I refer that, Chair, with your permission to the General Manager Operations?

Mr. Chairman: Sure. Thank you.

Mr. Alexis: Good morning Committee, George Alexis here, General Manager Operations. Thank you, Mr. Delpesh. Committee Chair, yes, the 96 per cent coverage, there will always be a 3 to 4 per cent geographic addresses which a lot of post offices globally may not be able to reach areas of terrain, areas where people may not have installed infrastructure like mailboxes, very high-risk areas. Those are areas that TTPost and any other organization would reasonably have challenges to provide delivery to. So we would not be able to go up to some of the very mountainous areas where you may have some residences, some very high risk areas, places where people have not installed mailboxes or there are no street signs or street names yet assigned, those would be part of the 4 per cent or thereabouts that would not allow for a 100 per cent full delivery coverage for TTPost.

Mr. Chairman: Have you considered like for high-reach areas drone activity or drone drop out? I mean, this is something you may have to keep with it. I am just throwing that out.

Mr. Alexis: It is something that would be considered. The employment of drone technology is becoming part and parcel of the coastal industry in some of the more advanced markets, so it is something TTPost has had very in-front discussions on.

Mr. Chairman: I want to enquire, do you still have motorcycles in your fleet, or is it just the—or do you have just the drop out vans available?

Mr. Alexis: Chair, the fleet comprises of the vehicles, it comprises of motor scooters, it comprises of bicycles and also the walking postee who delivers on foot. So it is a combination of all modes of delivery basically.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you. I do not know if, you know, the concerns in Tobago, I am hoping Mrs. Ayana Webster-Roy, our member who is in Tobago, would actually have any questions concerning the services offered in Tobago.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Yes, good morning, thank you, Mr. Chair. Good morning to everyone, Happy New Year. Just for the general public, could you please, Mr. Delpesh, just provide a general overview of the services provided in Tobago? The number of service centres as well as the revenue generated in Tobago for TTPost? And I would go on to my other questions after, thanks.

10.55 a.m.

Mr. Delpesh: First of all, in terms of the service, the service very much mirrors what exists in Trinidad. And I will expand on it a little further. In terms of the number of outlets we have three outlets where retail activity would take place; that is Bon Accord, Scarborough and Roxborough. So we are geographically placed in terms of offering the retail services. In terms of delivery however, where retail does not take place we would—I think the main point would be another outlet in Roxborough. There is also delivery in Scarborough, it is under a joint building with the retail outlet as indeed in Bon Accord. From Scarborough and Roxborough we have, if you wish, substations in the far places, particularly out of Roxborough. But in addition to the TTPost operated institution, there are also a number of franchises, drugstores and institutions like that, particularly in the rural areas, where you could find TTPost services being offered.

In terms of the services being offered we of course—would be mail in the first instance, all the stations could sell stamps and receive your mail and have it sent to the central location in Scarborough. But in addition to that there are also parcels and courier services that we offer. We also offer, if you wish, Salary Relief Grants and other social welfare cheques to all areas, all areas. And in the case of Charlotteville, we go further and encash the cheques for the residents in those areas. So those are some of the areas that we operate in Tobago. It mirrors Trinidad to a large degree except in Charlotteville where there is encashment of cheques. That does not happen

in any significant way in Trinidad.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Okay. The gentleman who spoke previously said that once—in some communities once you have a post box you will be able to have your mail delivered. I know where I live in Tobago, I live in Tobago East; I live in rural Tobago East, my mail is delivered to a sub-agent, to a grocery in the village, right.

Mr. Delpesh: A franchise.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: A franchise. So if I purchase a mailbox and put it in front of my home, will the mail then come to me? How does that work? How do you decide which communities would have to go to a franchise or which communities would receive their mail at their home if they have a mailbox? In Tobago.

Mr. Delpesh: George.

Mr. Alexis: Thanks for the question and thanks, Mr. Delpesh. There is an assessment that is done before. We provide the resources to deliver mail because the delivery of mail is not always automatic, it comes at a cost to TTPost as well. So if a community gets together and you are the only person that put up the mailbox, it may be a challenge for TTPost. There is an assessment team which we call our Delivery Task Force, they survey the country on an ongoing basis and they also take requests from communities to look at what options for delivery could be explored and implemented on a case by case basis. It could be delivery to your doorstep as in the case of putting up a mailbox if there is sufficient resources available; it could be what we call community cluster boxes which a lot of the HDC communities and private developers have installed; it could be the last resort which is the way you receive your mail now, through a franchise that is in your community. These are in keeping with best practice, not only as we do here in Trinidad but other jurisdictions throughout the Caribbean, North America, they employ the same methods of delivery based on the challenges that we face in this industry with dwindling mail

volumes, but having to employ the resources to deliver using the resources to deliver that same dwindling resource of mail.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Thank you for clearing that up. One other question, Chair, through you and to Mr. Delpesh, because I do not think you would have answered it before. In terms of revenue generated, could you give me like, a dollar value of what is generated in Tobago for TTPost?

Mr. Delpesh: Yes.

Ms. Peters: Mr. Delpesh.

Mr. Delpesh: Yes, thank you.

Ms. Peters: So, I will just answer that question briefly. We have three corporate shops in Tobago located in Scarborough, Roxborough and Bon Accord and all together for financial year ended September 2021 the three corporate shops generated a total of \$1.5 million in that year, which amounted to roughly 10 per cent of the overall corporate shop revenue, including locations in Trinidad.

Ms. Webster-Roy: Thank you for that information. I appreciate it.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you. As we are speaking about the revenue generated initiatives, right, your submission stated that new auxiliary services have been undertaken by the TTPost, that is, distribution of passports, Immigration Division, acceptance of fixed penalty ticket payments for traffic offences, et cetera. What additional revenue has been rendered by TTPost from offering these additional services?

Mr. Delpesh: April.

Ms. Peters: For our financial year ended 2021, those initiatives would have generated roughly \$7.3 million in revenue, an increase when compared to financial year 2020, when it was \$6 million in revenue.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you. So at least we have some positive generating finances

there. I would just like to—as we were looking at addressing the Tobago situation, there was a member of the public in Tobago, and I just want to quickly give some concerns from members of the public and anyone there could probably give how we can solve this. And I read:

I live in Tobago, we have not been able to receive or send mail in a timely manner whether it is internally within each island, inter-island or overseas. This has not been as a result of the pandemic. The TrackPak is a great initiative and needs to be maintained. The cost is affordable. During the pandemic this has helped small businesses tremendously. Again, it is inefficient. It can take up to five days between Trinidad and Tobago. The system of tracking the TrackPak is not available online. This would be helpful.

Regarding zip codes, I do not think we are completed in Tobago. I received one from my business in Scarborough but have not received one for my residence in Bacolet Point. It has not affected me because I have always used a post office box.

So, any sort of comments how we can address this from a member of the public.

Mr. Delpesh: Chair, I would ask different members to so do. With your permission I just wanted to let the Committee and the members of the public know that the person who was speaking on two occasions prior, to introduce her formally. She is April Peters and she is the General Manager of Finance. So she was adequately prepared to deal with the questions on finance. In terms of the—I will ask Mr. Nicholas to address the overall courier situation between Trinidad and Tobago and I will ask Mr. Alexis to speak of the persons not receiving their card in one area and receiving it in the other area. Nicholas.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Managing Director, Mr. Delpesh; thank you, Chairman and good morning everyone. Chairman, with regard to the question from the member

of the public that spoke about the inefficiencies with the TrackPak, while we may have challenges in between with regard to the line facilities and the boat going, moving between Trinidad and Tobago to move our items across, generally, we deal with each query or concern individually, investigate and resolve it. Tracking online is up and running. I am not sure when the member of the public posed the question but we have had very little downtimes with regard to online tracking and coverage.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, so at least we had, you know, intermittently we will raise what members of the public had some concerns to see if it is being addressed. I think at this stage our member Ms. Lutchmedial would want to ask some questions.

Ms. Lutchmedial: Thank you, Chair. Let me just—I have a couple of questions with respect to competitors but I just want to follow-up on a couple of things that came about already on a couple of issues that arose. Let me deal with the last one first with online tracking. You say online tracking is available for a TrackPak service. I am a user, very frequent user actually, of registered mail and I have the challenge of trying to ascertain whether or not registered mail has been delivered and signed for. It usually takes, and I kid you not, a couple of months before a letter that is undelivered via registered mail is returned as not delivered and this poses a lot of challenges for small businesses, particularly, and professionals like myself who utilize that service. Has TTPost considered an online tracking, especially given the pandemic and so on, online tracking mechanism for its registered mail service?

Mr. Delpesh: George.

Mr. Alexis: Thanks, Mr. Delpesh and through you, Chair. The tracking system that we put in place for the local courier service which Mr. Martin is spearheading is built such that we will be able to accommodate registered mail. That is another phase that will come online in terms of being able to use the tracking system for registered mail as well. It would require some resource adjustments for TTPost because you would

appreciate that now we would have to equip several of our posties with the tools to be able to enter that information online as they deliver the item. So the system right now as it is, it is a manual tracking system but the plans are there to ramp it up to include registered mail, parcel mail and other mails. It will happen in a phased basis so that we will see service level improvements in terms of tracking of registered mail.

Ms. Lutchmedial: I do not know if it is just me but there was a lot of break up there but I gathered that you said it is on stream. Do you have any kind of time frame in mind for registered mail to come, for the online tracking?

Mr. Alexis: In terms of a time frame I do not want to give you a hard commitment but with the courier aspect having come online late last year we want to ensure that this works properly. So I would speculate it would probably be within this calendar year, there may be some opportunity to test and ensure that it can work for registered mail as well.

Ms. Lutchmedial: Okay, all right. Thank you, I would really look forward to that. Another thing that came up, during the course of questioning you spoke about the reach of certain communities being limited due to terrain and all of that, but you did say that community cluster boxes was one option that you had to service certain communities. I saw a lot of pomp and ceremony surrounding the opening of a community cluster box for an HDC development. I was wondering, is TTPost, do you all make the decision as to where a community cluster box would be located and is that a viable solution to cover some of the areas that you are presently not reaching? Because you said there are a couple of areas either due to terrain or maybe safety and so on, that you may not reach. Have you considered the community cluster box option for some of those areas?

Mr. Alexis: Yes, the community cluster box is the option that is considered and in

terms of the location and installation and promotion of the cluster box, it was a mutual decision between the developer, whether it is the HDC or private and TTPost, there is an agreement in terms of location. We would want to put the boxes in a location that is safe and accessible for the postman and also for the residents that would be accessing those cluster boxes.

And in terms of the roll-out of cluster boxes as a viable option, yes, that is the way of the present and the future if you do the research on other posts, New Zealand, Canada, cluster boxes are the preferred option. As an example, Curacao post recently installed 150 cluster boxes, about three months ago to facilitate 80,000 delivery points. And those 80,000 delivery points would have been serviced by postmen delivering to those 80,000 homes. The cost model did not facilitate Curacao post continuing with that approach. So they made a business decision to change their model and look at putting cluster boxes as an option for the residents in those communities.

Ms. Lutchmedial: So, do you feel that community cluster boxes, forget HDC and private developments, let us look at just areas where not presently covered for one reason or the other, be it terrain or safety or whatever, do you think that community cluster boxes could possibly solve the problem of coverage in those areas? And is it something that you all committed to looking at?

Mr. Alexis: We are committed, yes, and again once the particular communities reach out to TTPost, we meet with those communities and offer them the option. As recently as three or four weeks ago we would have gotten correspondence from residents in an area of Charlieville and we spoke to them about it and we are now in some discussion with them to connect them with the suppliers or the fabricators of the boxes so that we could have some level of service of that area.

Ms. Lutchmedial: Okay, all right. Mr. Delpesh, one question that jumped into my

mind, when you were answering a question from another member about vaccination, from Minister Morris-Julien, you said that the union took a particular position. Has the management and the board of TTPost considered, because there is an impending sort of deadline so to speak, an event which may occur, but given the position as you have indicated that the union is adopting, have you all considered mitigation plans to deal with if there is a disruption in terms of your staffing and so on, and how to ensure that services could continue to be provided to the public in the event that the vaccination issue becomes a labour issue or an industrial relations issue?

Mr. Delpesh: Certainly, so much so that that union heard about the first meeting and started to—where rumours went around saying how we were meeting to plan and implementation. So that, yes, we have started. The process would be that the department, the HR/IR department they are in the process of coming up with some contingency plan and this would flow through the managing director and through him the HR committee and ultimately the board because you asked about the board. So the stage we are at right now is that under short notice the HR/IR officials I know they have started to meet. We expect that before the end of the week it would flow to the desk of the Managing Director and through him the HR committee and ultimately the board. So the process has started.

Ms. Lutchmedial: Okay. I got knocked off there for a bit. I do not know if it is everybody or if it is just me having the challenges but I will liaise with the staff to get the full answer and I will review the minutes and anyone else who heard the answer fully can jump in, I do not want to waste time.

All right, let me just get quickly now to the issue of competitors within the courier markets. You mentioned the introduction of the Hummingbird service which is like a courier service and so on, but it did say that there were several competitors, Aeropost, the one that I use, sorry, is CSF and so on, and I have to say, you know,

that some of them are very well established within our country and well known. What is the value proposition that TTPost is bringing or how you are trying to distinguish this service in order to really penetrate that market and become very competitive against all these established competitors?

Mr. Delpesh: I could ask George—Nicholas Martin to respond to that question.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, MD and thank you, member, for the question. When the product was conceptualized and launched back, I believe in 2017, we planned to bring an innovative product to the market by focusing on one key option that people seem to really look forward to which is the consolidation. Most of the other competitors in the market, they do not offer consolidation as one of the core things, as our service does, where you can consolidate in Miami; up to about three months they can hold your packages and instead of having to pay the per piece pound as one pound which always adds up, you can bring in all your packages together and pay just the total weight. So that was one of the offerings which we brought to the table to distinguish ourselves, differentiate ourselves in the market.

The other one would be to have the online payment platform for direct delivery. Because we were looking to leverage on our existing courier network to do deliveries and because of the risk of having cash on board and also the risk to the service standard of the local courier by having terminals or hand-held monitors to collect payments, we push our customers or encourage our customers, is the better term, to pay online through our payment platform which would in turn allow for the courier to just do that direct delivery. What this offers, so that you can buy something and pay for it and have it delivered directly to someone else in Trinidad and Tobago as a gift which was one of the promotion campaigns we had some years ago putting that forward to our customer base.

The other component that we look to distinguish ourselves on and which is what

the product was built on was the fact that we are using our internal resources, our postal bond as part of the clearance process to speed up and reduce cost to the customers. And those would be some of things that we had. Unfortunately, a year or more ago we were directed by our stakeholders in the industry to return our bond or to transfer our bond clearance activities to the courier bond in Piarco which had given us some challenge at the time, but there is a process engaging now that we have returned it to our existing bond. I hope that answers the questions, member.

Ms. Lutchmedial: Well, “hmm”, it kind of raises more questions in my mind because a lot of what you spoke about—because I am a big, big, big online shopper and I want to say now, like, especially with COVID I do not buy anything unless there is a delivery option. So for the last two years I have only looked to people who do delivery. You know, I have not really heard much about this service so I am really concerned about how well is it marketed. I am surprised to hear you say it was launched in 2017. It is only reading your submission that I really learnt about it and I think that I am fairly aware of what is happening around in the country. So do you think that you all have marketed this enough? That is the first question. Everything that you spoke about there that differentiates your service from other providers, do you think that that information and how it can benefit the customer cost-wise is put out there enough? And thirdly, have you all thought about, you know, with this probably as they say, “pivoting” and using your network and so on, during the COVID period to really expand in terms of courier services and to do so, let me give you a simple example. I purchase books, like novels, all the time, but now I found someone who sells novels through an Instagram page and they have just a local delivery service, which is literally someone with a mobile LINX machine that comes to your home and delivers your books. Has TTPost, I mean, in order to just gain market share and earn revenue, considered these types of options and really utilized

the opportunity presented by the pandemic for people who do not want to go out and shop and so on, to do delivery and to expand its revenue base? I know that is a lot of questions but let us deal firstly with the marketing and then you can address the COVID question.

Mr. Martin: Thank you again, member, and I will start with the marketing. We do not have huge marketing budgets like some of our competitors. Our marketing activities has basically been confined to mall crawls, on social media and the couriers on the road and our AEs going to particular customers and trying to encourage usage. I am not sure if—we had a huge drive close to the launch a year after where we were doing “hum-aoke” competition at malls all over Trinidad and Tobago. And where it is we were encouraging people—we had Sunny Bling, we had Rodey, we had Nikki Crosby, we were encouraging people to come up and hum their favourite sound by “hum-aoke” and we were able at that point in time after humming because you hum when you are happy and you hum when you use Hummingbird Express Online Shopping Service. So you dip in a box and you were able to get a discount on the next usage of your item or get 100 per cent off. That was some of the prizes. So that has basically been our marketing drive. Again, the limited budget we had to find innovative ways to market the products and that has been some of them.

With regard to—remind me of the second question again, member.

Ms. Lutchmedial: I was wondering if you all considered the opportunities that came about as a result of the pandemic for doing courier, door to door courier services for small businesses and people who were not allowed to be open and wanted to do delivery and so on.

Mr. Martin: Well, the answer to that question, yes, yes, yes. That has been a major part of our growth factor over the past year/year and a half to two years actually and it has not been only from the general public and from those small SMEs or those

mom and pop shows or the little—the individual who goes on Facebook trying to sell items which go to a retail shop and use our TrackPak. We had an increase in business from the government.

For example, Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs, because they are now processing online certificates. TTPost through its medium get those certificates to these customers. So while there is—I know you drew reference to the hand held payment module, we shy against that because the structure of our network would not accommodate it. We move literally thousands of pieces a day through the courier network and the reason why we are able to do that because we have a speed component. A courier is not supposed to spend any length of time by anyone's location executing a delivery. And you could imagine if I am going to meet Mr. Delpesh, I am going to send a courier to Mr. Delpesh and he is in a meeting right now, the courier would have to wait until he is finished to come outside to do the transaction because it is a card or something to use. We do not have that. So especially for like, our online shopping service we encourage our customers to pay online so that the delivery could just be a straight delivery.

Ms. Lutchmedial: Okay, so just two more questions really. One is really a comment. I also have been utilizing a lot of your TrackPak services because of the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs and there is one issue that I think affects not just me but many people and that is the availability of registration stickers for registered mail and TrackPak at outlets. I live and work in San Fernando, for example, and there is the La Romain Post Office but then there is also just two outlets within the City of San Fernando and there are often times not—they do not have stickers, they do not have TrackPaks, they are waiting on delivery and so on. So I do not know if—what are the processes for persons at these outlets because they are operated by independent operators, right, who have a relationship with TTPost and

I do not know what is the delivery. But in terms of your customer service how are you going to address those issues of dealing with—because at the end of the day, nobody is saying that the electrical store has a problem, they are saying TTPost has a problem, right? So in terms of managing that relationship and the image of TTPost and its service and its customer service and so on, what measures you have in place to deal with those issues with the outlets to receive complaints, to perhaps ensure timely delivery and monitor their usage of these stickers and the TrackPaks and ensure that it is always replenished on time. That is the first question.

And the second question is that, in your submission you spoke about 43 per cent of your revenue coming from courier services. I just wanted to know if you could give us a dollar value, how much is that actually in terms of your revenue, what does that 43 per cent represent?

Mr. Martin: MD, would you like to take the first part regarding the—

Mr. Delpesh: Well—

Ms. Lutchmedial: Outlets. The outlets, how are you dealing with the outlets being replenished and managing your customer service and the image of TTPost with respect to when the outlets are not able to provide adequate service.

Mr. Delpesh: Let me just say that I wanted to jump into a prior question because the two are related in terms of you not being aware, the awareness factor of some of the things. And that position is shared by members of the board at this point in time who have recently come in and that is a general consensus. Which one we accept, not all—[*Technical difficulties*]
—in front.

11.25 a.m.

However, as you would have seen recently, we are trying to change that image and we will continue to so do. You would have seen a lot of activity around track and

trace. You would see TTPost having a national promotion around Christmas and soon we would be moving into the areas that you have spoken of, in particular, not in the absence of funding to use, if you wish, the social media which the advertising there is relatively cheap compared to the traditional media. So that, yes, those are recognized and it is a step in that direction that we are looking to make in the short term, not for the long term.

In terms of the situation with the outlet, I gather the issue revolves around the franchises in particular. But generally you would find that from time to time they have issues with some of the franchises for lack of payment, lack of whatever it is, and for that reason the stocks may not be there as often as it should be. It is a matter now of managing them, as you I think alluded to, and that too has come under the scrutiny of the board and its business development committee in the sense of how do we change the relationship in a positive way to the benefit of our customers and TTPost. We are not happy, to put it my way, with the relationship—

Ms. Lutchmedial: Neither am I quite often, if that is okay. Right?

Mr. Delpesh: Exactly. Right.

Ms. Lutchmedial: But I—

Mr. Delpesh: I want to give you the—

Ms. Lutchmedial: I do not want to call names, but yeah, I will just say San Fernando. But yeah, I gather that there is some work to be done and I understand that it is a relationship and a contractual relationship. So I am happy to know that the issue has been flagged.

Mr. Delpesh: Yes.

Ms. Lutchmedial: The second question really dealt with the dollar value of the 43 per cent that you say that the courier—the international courier services that you all are—that you said—sorry, it was not international. I think you just said courier

services account for 43 per cent of your revenue, if you have an idea of the dollar value of that?

Mr. Delpesh: I do know it. I am wondering whether—we operate in a very competitive environment, member. And to give that, I will be selling some guns to the enemy quite frankly.

Ms. Lutchmedial: I see.

Mr. Delpesh: I prefer not to—as difficult as it is for me to get information from them, I want to make it as difficult for them as well to get information from me. So if you wish, we probably have a means of making that information available to you. I would prefer, however, not to disclose that on the—

Ms. Lutchmedial: Publicly. I understand. We will ask the Secretariat to follow up perhaps—through you, Mr. Chair, I do not know if the Secretariat will be able to follow up and get some of that information?

Mr. Chairman: Sure.

Mr. Delpesh: And we will be happy to provide it to the Committee.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, sure. We look forward to that. And just to follow up with this. According to our member of the Committee who mentioned sometimes challenges in terms of even knowing that certain services existed, I think we have now come to the conclusion that we need some more push in the face of the public that your services are available as a competition to some of those other courier services.

And also, I just want to bring in a concern a member of the public had where she mentioned she received journals and print books and after about a year of not receiving anything, “I had to cancel my subscription. I reported the situation to TTPost’s head office in Piarco and there was no improvement.” Now, she mentioned that certain small items that she may have ordered online, small and lightweight items, she was never able to collect these things. So therefore, we have somehow

some members of the public stating that things may come into Trinidad but when it reaches to the TTPost office, you may have, you know, no sort of tracking on that. So two things I would like to find out there. Do we now—could we put something in place whereby any sort of articles coming in, people could be able to now track those articles? If they have complaints, they can now put it in a public complaint site where you would see the concerns of the public who are having this concern? Because this member of the public actually had some problems and she lives in Tunapuna, and she said she did not receive mail for months on end, even after the rest of the country started receiving theirs. So sometimes you may have another entity bringing in stuff and if you somehow figure that TTPost may—things may disappear. This may be one element whereby members of the public may choose a private entity outside to bring in their stuff. So I think we have to look at any sort of factors that we could put in place to bring back that trust.

I would like to go into—I think member Ayanna Webster-Roy would like to come with a question but I just want to just go back to that question in terms of the vaccination which I think is important in the sense that, you know, members of the public may be wanting to be served by people who they think may be vaccinated and also, you know, it is a little touchy issue. But I want to know, in terms of the vaccination drive, you said that you would also try to have another vaccination drive. Now, I would like to know how many employees are there in TTPost and how many have been vaccinated to date? And, are members of the TTPost management service vaccinated?

Mr. Delpesh: Well, in terms of the number of employees, at this point in time, we have 906 people employed. In terms of the number of them that are vaccinated, we may not be able to give that information because the employees are not willing to give that information and encouraged by the union not to give that information

because that is people's personal medical history. We can say how many people utilize our services. We have the number of people that have been vaccinated through TTPost. It would not give the total picture because some people, like myself, went ahead even before it was available to the employees and got vaccinated.

So I can tell you that using our services, it was 306 employees used our services and we do not feel that we have crossed or we are just above the 50 per cent threshold and hence the reason for us to attempt another rounds of vaccination. In terms of members of the management, they are all vaccinated. So charity begins at home—

Mr. Chairman: At home.

Mr. Delpesh: We are happy to say that home is—

Mr. Chairman: And you probably pursued them well. You persuaded them well. So that is excellent. I think first there is—member Ayanna Webster-Roy would like to ask a question and I think after, Ms. Jayanti Lutchmedial. But I must also congratulate our member Ayanna Webster-Roy for her initiative because this Minister's responsibility for gender and child affairs had, I think, an initiative with you guys to deliver pamphlets on child protection. And I must say personally I knew of a child who actually got information via the mail, had a number, and was able to call for help. So I congratulate Mrs. Webster-Roy for that initiative and you, Mr. Delpesh, for at least accommodating. And, you know, we have to go forward in trying to put pamphlets on domestic violence with numbers where people could at least be able to call. Let it be delivered to all homes.

Also, you know, some countries may have had a service where the postman could even get a cry for help to send to services. So this is something you have to develop whereby you give a pamphlet but there is a part you could tear out and leave in your mailbox, the post officer will see it and realize this is a cry for help in this home, either a child or somebody in domestic violence, and carry it to the authority. So it

is increasing the ambit of the post officer to be somebody who can be one of our eyes out there to help this. So again, congratulations, Mrs. Webster-Roy, and could you proceed with your question?

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and through you, let me just again extend my gratitude to TTPost for agreeing to partner with us and to continue working with us to help to create public awareness and sensitization. Mr. Delpesh, a member of the public would have asked and was asked by the Chairman about the implementation of the zip code and in particular, in Tobago where she would have noted that she would have received one for her, I think, her business address but not for her residential address. I too want an update on the implementation of the zip codes because a number of persons would come to my constituency office asking about it, you know, what is the progress, how and when are we going to start using it, but I do not have all the information. So just from you an update and also from the Ministry of Public Utilities, how are they monitoring the implementation of this system as well? Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity.

Mr. Delpesh: Mr. George Alexis is a member of the Cabinet-appointed subcommittee on this matter and I would ask to refer that question to him. George?

Mr. Alexis: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Delpesh. Let me address the Tobago customer who indicated they got a card for one address but not for the other. Tobago would have been done about eight or nine years ago when we dropped off the cards. So that could be a contribution to the issue. What we told members of the public, at any time they can go to our TTPost website, which is www.ttpost.net, and through the website there is the facility for a customer to place an order for a card, whether it is a replacement card or if they never got a card, they can lodge that and 24 to 48 hours we process and then send out the card to them. So having done the Tobago delivery of cards roughly nine or 10 years ago, it is quite possible the card could have gotten

lost or misplaced. Again, going through the website, it is very easy to obtain a replacement card or a new card which will give your postal address in conformity with the S42 standard which is the global standard. Committee member, you asked for an update?

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Just one thing on that point. So persons—new construction, new houses that would have been constructed, they just need to go online and register and a card will be delivered.

Mr. Alexis: Well, for new construction or new developments, the process may be a little different. They would have to ensure that their addresses are signed by the regional corporation, for example, because TTPost does not name streets or the THA, for example, would be the ones that would name streets. And TTPost would be the one to assign the numbers based on the addressing standard in partnership with the developer who is putting up the property. So going on the website, when you are putting up a development, may not be the best route. It would really be working with the regional corporation and TTPost to ensure that the street names are in place, to ensure that the numbering is in alignment and then the address cards can be issued.

Mr. Delpesh: Let me just, George, before you continue in terms of adding to that. The issue would be, as Mr. Alexis said, the length of time that this process has been going on. And one of the first things we will do, as soon as the green light to go forward is there, is to reeducate and to do exactly that. Go back out and tell the people—people like the folks you have identified—how they can address some of the things because some degree of re-education naturally will be required before full implementation. So you can look forward to that and the people so affected in your constituency, we are mindful of this particular matter and it may be included in the full garment of what we would want to tell the people in the re-education campaign.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: And—thank you very much. And in terms of the timeline—and this is to the Ministry—in terms of timelines, could you give us an idea when we will be fully implementing this?

Mr. Alexis: Mr. Delpesh, you want me to answer?

Mr. Delpesh: Yes, please.

Mr. Alexis: All right. The plan coming out of the Cabinet-appointed subcommittee that is looking to give us the green light to go ahead is looking at a period of over the next two years—two to three years at maximum to have full implementation nationwide.

Mr. Chairman: I think you have an anxious public waiting for this, eh. We are hoping that we can get it quicker. So this plan you have, what is the cost of rolling out this plan? You have any projected cost factor in this?

Mr. Delpesh: Yeah, George.

Mr. Alexis: There are some projections on costs. I would not want to get into details here. I could always provide that information through our Managing Director for the Committee at a later date, if that is okay?

Mr. Chairman: Sure. I recognize Ms. Jayanti Lutchmedial. Question?

Ms. Lutchmedial: Thank you, Chair, just one quick follow up. You mentioned a cheque encashment service in Tobago, is that also available in Trinidad?

Mr. Delpesh: Yes. Yes, the same is available in Toco.

Ms. Lutchmedial: It is available in Toco?

Mr. Delpesh: In Toco. Yes, Toco in Trinidad and Charlotteville in Tobago.

Ms. Lutchmedial: In Tobago. Is this the intention of TTPost to offer it in any other remote areas or is it just those two you all have identified so far as being in need of that?

Mr. Delpesh: We are actively addressing that as we speak, naturally for financial

benefit and we are looking at reentering the financial services, and we see this, what we have done, as a start.

Going forward, however, there are some significant costs in terms of doing that: cost of security, cost of insurance, cost of all the other things. So those are being examined at this point in time and I can tell you it may not be cheque encashment but somewhere in the financial services, we would—we expect to end up before the end of this year.

Ms. Lutchmedial: Right. But you touched on something on my follow up there which is security. How secure, you know—what are the steps or what measures do you all have in place to deal with security and ensuring that you detect fraudulent cheques and things like that? When you delve into financial services, you have all these issues now of money laundering and all of that. So having those measures in place—do you think you have adequate security measures in place for the services presently offered in Toco and Charlotteville?

Mr. Delpesh: And the answer is absolutely yes. The security and safety of our employees is paramount, as indeed the aged people that use the service. So that in both areas there are special security. Fortunately, member, it is done only over a two-day period. So it is not an ongoing thing. We do it over two specified days that the people know to come to the respective outlets to do their—

Ms. Lutchmedial: I think—sorry, when I say security, I mean like security features, being able to detect fraud and for the security of encashing the cheques and so on. Do you think the system you have in place right now with respect to that is sufficient?

Mr. Delpesh: Yes, it is sufficient but it is a challenge. Member, every time we put a new measure in place—

Ms. Lutchmedial: They find a way around.

Mr. Delpesh:—the people who are intent on doing wrong, find a way of jumping around it. So you have to keep ahead all the time. So while I can say that today, next week it may be a new challenge. And that has nothing to do with the two areas. That has to do with the general 60,000-plus cheques that we deliver on a monthly basis, that you have people—

Ms. Lutchmedial: Gotcha.

Mr. Delpesh:—who use the system for their own personal benefit.

Ms. Lutchmedial: Okay. And last question: Apart from the outlets, are there any other like contracted services that you all utilize apart from the contractual relationship with the outlets? In terms of your model, do you use other contracted services to deliver in any part of the operations?

Mr. Delpesh: Well, yes. In terms of the courier service, the delivery is carried out by a team I think of—Nicholas will be able to help me—of around 30 people. So that delivery of courier is fully contracted out.

Ms. Lutchmedial: I see. I know the financial information may not be available but could you provide us with the average cost of that contracted service for the courier? You could provide it to the Secretariat at a later date?

Mr. Delpesh: Yes, we will be most happy to do it.

Ms. Lutchmedial: Okay. Thank you very much. Thank you, Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: You are welcome. Speaking about the security measures, what sort of cheques do you encash?

Mr. Delpesh: April, you want me to go or you will go?

Ms. Peters: You can go, Mr. Delpesh.

Mr. Delpesh: Okay. All right. So it is the standard pension cheques that the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services would distribute to householders. Not only pension cheques but disability cheques as well, but it would be cheques

emanating from the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services. It would not be personal cheques for example. And it would be related, Chairman, to a specific period where the parties who are getting it would know of and they would come to the outlet during that period. Normally it is a two-day period that is announced in advance.

Mr. Chairman: Sure. Thank you. So what you are saying then basically is that—so members could come there, cash their cheques. Do you have like toilet facilities available for members of the public at your outlets? For instance, when they go banks—I remember there was an issue, members of the public, elderly people coming there have problems. So do you have such amenities available?

Mr. Delpesh: George?

Mr. Alexis: Thank you, MD. Chair, in terms of facilities for public, you spoke to having bathroom facilities. None of the post offices would have that facility available for public access to washrooms. Generally speaking, persons who come to utilize the services of a post office are not there for any inordinately lengthy period of time. So, in that regard, it has never been an issue that has come up where there is a demand or a request for bathroom facilities for the public. So none of the post offices or facilities that we have would have been designed to facilitate public washroom access. In the case of some of the franchises, there are—for example, it might be a service station or a pharmacy—

Mr. Martin: A supermarket.

Mr. Alexis:—or a supermarket, they may have a washroom that the public could access, but generally not at the TTPost-owned facilities.

Mr. Chairman: Sure. I am just thinking we are now looking at an ageing population, people with prostrate problems, whatnot, coming in. Chemical toilets may be something you may want to consider in light of this.

Looking at the fact that there were reports that packages were coming into the country where there are drugs like ecstasies and these things, and there were reports coming in where there is a greater degree of scrutiny needed, do you have like scanners or some way of looking at packages that are coming in to see if there are any sort of security measures you can put in place to prevent the drugs from coming in via this method or any other illicit materials?

Mr. Alexis: Mr. Delpesh, you want me to answer?

Mr. Delpesh: Go ahead.

Mr. Alexis: Yes, Chairman, we do have the facility and all packages are inspected with Customs' presence. With the X-ray machines that we have here at the head office, everything coming into the country is X-rayed and scanned. And we do have the random searches, if you will, by the sniffer dogs from time to time to further address those matters. But yes, everything is scanned with the presence of Customs. Nothing is opened without Customs' presence.

Mr. Chairman: And the scanners are your domain. So how many scanners are currently functional and available for use?

Mr. Alexis: Chairman, we have one scanner and it is fully functional and in use.

Mr. Chairman: And you have a back-up plan in case anything goes wrong with that?

Mr. Alexis: Back-up plan is at some stage with funding availability to provide a back-up. We had a back-up scanner which has failed to operate but there have been times before where TTPost would have availed itself of scanners at the airport in the other bonds to assist when we have that challenge.

Mr. Chairman: So it is excellent that you have that sort of, you know, communication with the other departments that could come on board.

Now, I want to ask the question, according to your submission, some of the

manual systems are currently being addressed through the *Public Sector Investment Programme*, the need to achieve a greater degree of computerization throughout the corporation persists. So a question I want to ask: What areas of TTPost operations are in urgent need of computerization?

Mr. Delpesh: Yes. Well, Chair, it exists throughout the organization. I would think the most urgent area though would be the area of HR. In the area of HR where simple things like an application for leave and sick leave, holidays, et cetera, that should routinely take, you would imagine, five seconds in a computerized environment, it is now done by paper and there is an inordinate length of time and it is sometimes frustrating for people who need leave on an emergency basis in terms of having it processed. So I would think the HR area comes to mind.

The other area that would come to mind would be the delivery system where we could install a lot more computerization that would help the efficiency of the delivery system. Those I think would be the two major areas.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. And in light of COVID-19, how has the TTPost revised its job roles and schedules of responsibilities to maximize its current staff complement?

Mr. Delpesh: As some may realize, TTPost has always been considered an essential service. So throughout the pandemic, we were treated as such and all our locations remained opened to the citizens. However, productivity level took a downward turn in terms of complying with the COVID-19 protocols issued by the Ministry of Health which resulted in a rotational and staggered shift being implemented, and the depletion of daily manpower available in production and delivery. So we did experience some level of productivity loss as a consequence of that. But by and large, in terms of the balance between safety and availability of service, I think it was well balanced because when we looked at the delivery numbers, in terms of the period of delivery throughout the pandemic, we are not seeing any decline in the number of

days being delivered.

Mr. Chairman: So you were still able to, as you said, maintain that level of functionality within the pandemic and also when the curfew was there, right? But I understand that, you know, you may be under the microscope to see how you are going to get viable. Because even recently, the line Minister had stated TTPost must become more financially viable—I think it was 60 days ago where, you know, you have to reach a level of giving taxpayers comfort. Because when TTPost came on board in their Trinidad and Tobago Postal Corporation Act in 1999, it was given the idea that you would have a board, you will become financially independent. And even right now, we have seen the same trust is going in terms of when you are looking at zones—the shopping zones recently passed—where you have boards coming into place, the Revenue Authority. We are saying we are going to get boards and they are going to be self-sufficient. They are not going to be a drain on the taxpayers. So from since 1999—and I am seeing the Minister’s concern where he actually said that you have to have structural changes, you know, you would have to improve in that and reducing your corporation’s dependence on the Government.

11.55 a.m.

So the Minister was quite frank in what he wanted from the board and from the TTPost and he basically said you know, the structure that you have is outdated and it cannot support the new business model, he warned. The Minister said he was disappointed in TTPost’s Public Sector Investment Programme as it did not reflect new initiatives. Now he said:

I saw improvement in your infrastructure, your buildings, et cetera, but whilst that is good, it is not going to improve the increased income stream.

And he said he is looking to see if you have new products and new services. So the Minister has given you that mandate.

And even sometime before that, in 2018, the Minister Robert Le Hunte there at the time, also challenged the board of TTPost to work towards achieving greater levels of efficiency and increasing revenue stream. So you have been hearing successive Ministers trying—I know the COVID has come aboard and has caused a little stymie of profit margins. But I mean, are you going to give us any level of comfort to the taxpaying population that somehow you are going to get this on board, you are going to get revenue streams, you are going to get independent of Government's, you know, the purse strings that are there?

But I understand that the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services owes TTPOST an outstanding balance also for provision of auxiliary services. So have you given any deadline for the receipt of payment from this Ministry and who are other main debtors at this time to your organization?

Mr. Delpesh: Well first of all, relevant to the independence of Government's subvention, I would have to report to your members and to your good self that over the last two years, TTPost has operated with \$12.2 million less than it did in prior time so that process has already started. That process has already started and on top of that, there is a strategic plan that is under evaluation at this point in time and one of the main areas is to attack that, if you wish, independence in a sustainable way. The need to wean off ourselves of Government's subvention, I think it is obvious and I am just saying the only issue is a matter of over what period. So we are working assiduously to overcome that and to become financially viable. The other matter you raised, Chair?

Mr. Chairman: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. Delpesh: Chair, you are muted.

Mr. Chairman: Yeah. I think you had mentioned in your submission that the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services has an outstanding balance of

I think almost \$1.6 million for auxiliary services.

Mr. Delpesh: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: So I wanted to know, did you give them a timeline to get this. Also, who are the other debtors that could be preventing you from getting this financial achievement that we are hoping that you could get.

Mr. Delpesh: Well, some of the Ministries, in addition to the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, the Ministry of Education and so on and other Ministries that were significantly behind. I have to report though that in the short term, the last quarter, we have been able to achieve some significant reduction in the areas of millions of dollars from those delinquent Ministries. What we are hoping is that we do not get back to the position of the outstanding amount and the receivables being at significant levels.

But we continue to work with these Ministries and we will utilize, if you wish, the whip and the relationship of our Ministry of Public Utilities as well to speak with the sister companies in terms of making timely payments on the outstanding amount. The cry among all Ministries is funding and the unavailability of funding. So we intend to work with them. We understand but we keep telling them that we have our bills to pay at the end of the month and to continue providing that level of service. So it is a work in progress. We are not exactly where we would want it to be, we think we have made a good start with the addition of the Ministry of Public Utilities. We had a good conversation recently in terms of how they could assist us. In that respect, we hope to not be in a position where the Ministries in particular have outstanding balances for extended periods.

Mr. Chairman: I noted that in your submission, you had mentioned that there is a critical success factor in modernizing your services involve funding and legislative changes. That is page 14 I think that you have given response, b. Has TTPost

submitted its proposed legislative amendments to the Ministry of Public Utilities for its review and considerations and if so, please give us a status update on this review?

Mr. Delpesh: The answer is no. We have not as yet. That would be part of the submission and of the strategic plan that we should have a contractor, an awardee I should say, before the end of the month.

But let me just say in terms of the legislative front, TTPost is mandated by law to only operate in three areas of business: mail, courier and financial services. So we are not in the financial services and hence the rush to get into there as we look to expand. However, I can say that in some other jurisdictions that have gone ahead in terms of dealing with this decline in bulk mail, they have expanded their operation to some retail areas like shoes, clothing, et cetera. If we were to determine that there was a need or an opportunity for us to so do in this area, it would require legislative change because the Act of 1999 that you referred to does not allow us at this point in time to go into those areas.

Mr. Chairman: So at this stage, you have your eyes set on an expansion of your business and your capabilities to earn money which is excellent and I think the Permanent Secretary is here, so again, I would just want to direct some questions there. So first of all, I would like to find out, notwithstanding the facilitation of the auxiliary services such as online shopping, passport, visa delivery services, is the Ministry satisfied with the steps taken by TTPost to become a financially independent entity?

Ms. Duke: Chair, we think that those initiatives are a step in the right direction, however, we know that in the digital environment that we operate in and the competition that that brings, TTPost needs to explore all avenues possible in order to be competitive, not only in the market but, of course, to provide the expected service that the citizenry, of course, can get elsewhere. So we anticipate that,

especially with the proposed strategic plan, additional areas would be explored but we do certainly believe that the thrust to marketing its services to Ministries and Government agencies and private sector partners that have been started is a step in the right direction.

Mr. Chairman: In terms of—in your submission from the Ministry, it was stated that the Ministry is of the view that TTPost is making a concerted attempt to become self-sufficient. That is page 3 of the response. What support mechanisms are necessary to improve TTPost’s current financial portfolio?

Ms. Duke: Well, of course, in terms of weaning itself off of the public purse, as I said before, it has started in the right direction but, of course, coming out of the strategic proposals, there would need to be some legislative changes to take place. Of course, those will only be fully known when we see some of the strategies and the objectives that will come forward from that strategic plan. TTPost, however, if we look at the current thrust towards full implementation of the S-42 system, there are some opportunities to monetize that initiative. Of course, this would be predicated on what the recommendations and proposals are that would be considered and accepted by the Cabinet-appointed committee. But that is certainly one avenue that can help in terms of bringing additional revenue.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, so again, part of the delay might be getting that strategic plan to you to decide how you can move forward to that. Is there any timeline to get this strategic plan on board to you? I mean, have you given like a basis where people can say well at this day, we are going to have that report there to move forward?

Ms. Duke: Well, we certainly expect in this fiscal year to have sight of that plan. We know that the evaluation for the vendor should reach its conclusion at the end of this month I believe, so we are hoping that before the end of the fiscal year, there will be something that we will be able to consider.

Mr. Chairman: So, Mr. Delpesh, do you have a plan when you want to give this plan to the Ministry? Have you had discussions that you will be putting it in a timely manner?

Mr. Delpesh: Yes, our timeline at this point in time is five months after the award of the tender. So that would make it—we would think that we would be ready by the latter part of the year. Certainly over the period, I would say July to September, somewhere in that region. Having gone through the plan—the plan having been written, would need to go through a series of approval before it reaches the MPU. There is a committee stage and then there is the board stage. So even though it would be completed, it would be a draft until finalization. So the period we are looking at, Chair, is the third quarter of the calendar year and the fourth quarter of the fiscal year.

Mr. Chairman: Well, we look forward for that. I think it was mentioned that you have now started giving reports that are due to the line Ministry of your performance and whatnot. But I would like to direct a question to the Permanent Secretary. Based on the reports received in the last five years, what level of satisfaction does the Ministry of Public Utilities have with reports from TTPost?

Ms. Duke: All right. Certainly within the last couple of years, TTPost has been enhancing their compliance with the reports that should be submitted. So for instance in terms of the annual financial reports, the Ministry has received reports up to the year 2019. The reports for 2008 to 2012 have already been laid in Parliament and 2013 to 2019 are currently being reviewed by the Ministry for submission to Cabinet and thereafter laying in Parliament. In terms of their administrative reports, up to 2011 has been approved by Cabinet and Cabinet Notes are currently being prepared by the Ministry for reports from 2013 to 2018.

Mr. Chairman: So we are getting some improvement there. But based on the

reports that you have gotten so far, have you noted any issues you should comment on in TTPost's business operations?

Ms. Duke: Well, for the most part, the issues speak to TTPost's need to advance its, should I say, ICT mechanisms in terms of fostering its efficiency, some of the same things that we have been speaking about today and we have seen that coming out of that, TTPost is actually now improving in some of these areas in terms of its software and hardware, upgrading its website, its video-conferencing and collaboration tools and moving into areas such as its enterprise resource planning areas that speak to increase automation in its human resource information system, its financial management information system, customer relationship management and records management. So those are some of the critical areas that impact on its efficiencies and for which we are now seeing that TTPost is pushing the envelope to get those things in place.

Mr. Chairman: Has there been any audits conducted into the operation of TTPost during the past five years and if yes, what were some of the concerns highlighted by such audits?

Ms. Duke: Right, I would have to push that to TTPost. Certainly from the level of the Ministry, we do not have any adverse reports at this time.

Mr. Delpesh: Ms. Peters?

Ms. Peters: Yes, to answer the question, yes, there have been audits conducted over the past five years. Actually, TTPost was in a serious backlog situation and it started from 2018. The accounts for 2008 up to 2019 have been audited. We also expect to have the start of the 2020 audit to begin shortly and straight into the 2021 audit for the just concluded year.

As far as issues raised, I do not think that there were particular operational matters. The centre may be around accounting issues which we are assiduously working to

address.

Mr. Chairman: But has the Ministry did any sort of internal—like any sort of oversight? I am directing this question to the PS. Any sort of oversight of the runnings of the TTPost over the last five years?

Ms. Duke: Chairman, our monitoring and compliance framework is based on that from the Ministry of Planning and Development and the Ministry of Finance. We use their framework in terms of monitoring TTPost, in terms of their compliance in the reports that I just would have outlined as well as monitoring their implementation of their PSIP projects. So we use those tools in order to address how—the perspectives we have and how TTPost is running its operations.

Mr. Chairman: And do you get reports—the Auditor General, are there any reports from the Auditor General that have been forthcoming recently?

Ms. Duke: No, I do not.

Mr. Chairman: You see, what I am just looking at, the oversight, the general oversight. Remember it is public funds and we just want to see if there are, you know—persons outside may want to question if they have checks, balances, whatever oversights there are and I am thinking that we may have to ensure that these things are there. And—

Ms. Peters: Chair? Chairman?

Mr. Chairman: Proceed.

Ms. Peters: Yes, just a comment with respect to the Auditor General, the last year the Auditor General audited TTPost accounts was in 2005 and since then, we have utilized local accounting firms with the approval of the Auditor General.

Mr. Chairman: While we are looking at raising funds, I think that you have submitted the—TTPost has submitted in your statement that the cost of moving a piece of mail is significantly greater than the current tariff which has not changed in

20 years. Has TTPost approached the line Ministry with the view of amending this current tariff?

Mr. Delpesh: The answer is yes, on several occasions. It has not happened over the last year and a half but we have no choice at this point in time to return to that matter in the area of tariffs. The tariffs that exist right now have existed for 20 years and I do not know any business who would have the same revenue line for 20 years and still be functional and that is one of the reasons clearly and one of the angles we would take in terms of weaning ourselves off Government's subvention because the biggest part of our business, that is the bulk mail business, there is a serious deficiency or gap between the revenue and the expenditure. As I said, the revenue picture has existed for the last 20 years. So it is our intention to return again to make another application for an increase in that revenue situation.

Mr. Chairman: Well, I see the PS there, I am hoping the PS could respond also.

Ms. Duke: Of course, Chairman, all of these things must be put in a context and of course, I know that TTPost would want to put it in the overall context of the direction in which we want to go, so I anticipate that coupled with that proposal would also be all of the other areas that we wish to go in in the strategic proposal. So it would be part and parcel of that, it would be considered in that context as well.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, I guess it would make sense to go with all your proposals one time to go to Cabinet to get that approval.

Ms. Duke: Yeah.

Mr. Chairman: Member—

Mr. de Freitas: Good morning, Mr. Chair. I am assuming that you were calling on me. I did not hear the last part.

Mr. Chairman: No, I saw your hand raised. Do you have a question?

Mr. de Freitas: Yes I do. I do have a question, I was just wondering if you were

actually calling on me.

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Mr. de Freitas: Good morning again, everyone. The question I have is in relation to everything that we have been hearing for the morning thus far regarding the revenue generating initiatives at TTPost as well as the increasing of efficiency and productivity for TTPost.

The question that I have is over the Christmas season, the citizenry of Trinidad and Tobago would have been made aware of a particular long-standing practice whereby certain envelopes will be placed in mail boxes to sort of invite tipping to postmen. What I want to find out from the management of TTPost is, what is your take on this practice? I think it is important that we hear from the management of TTPost because we have heard from the Ministry in relation to that article, but the management of TTPost, we would love to hear from you in relation to that practice because it has been in the public domain and we have had public debate over that practice.

Mr. Delpesh: Yes. Well—

Mr. Chairman: Yes, the sweetheart deal I think the Minister referred to it.

Mr. Delpesh: Yes. Thank you very much for the question, member. The practice, even though it has been going on for a long period of time goes against the code of conduct of TTPost employees which specifically says that no gift or payment should be solicited and I think notwithstanding the fact that it has gone on for an extended period, TTPost management at this point in time feels that it should not continue and it should be left to the discretion of the household if they so desire to reward the postmen beyond their salary. So at this point in time, there is an investigation going on and I do not want to speak too much to the investigation other than to say once it is completed, it will go before the board of directors and we would take it from there.

But in terms of the act of soliciting gifts or any kind of reward from households is one that we intend to stop with immediate effect.

Mr. de Freitas: Thank you very much for your response. It begs another question for me because as I indicated and as you corroborated, it is a longstanding practice. So the question that I want to ask is, why now? If this has been going on for a while and it is, as you have indicated, against the code of conduct of the TTPost, why was it allowed to continue for such an extended period of time?

Mr. Delpesh: I could not answer that in totality, I could account for the recent period. I want to let you know that before the Minister's intervention, we had taken steps in this Christmas season to ward off the practice. What had happened however, by the time we did that, the horse had bolted before the stable doors were closed. So that yes, as I said, I cannot speak in terms of what went before but the intention and the actions of the organization at this Christmas period was to send out circular warning and reminding the parties that this is an activity that should not be engaged in.

Mr. de Freitas: Okay, thank you again. I have just one more question because this particular thing is tricky and not to sort of preempt any investigation or outcome thereof, how can TTPost ensure that such an act is stopped? Because the interaction between a postal worker and a household is sort of personal, nobody is checking on it in relation to when mail is being delivered. One of the things that came up in the public discussion was that if a household chooses not to sort of tip, then that could possibly have an effect on the timeliness that individuals receive their mail. So how will TTPost going forward be able to ensure that the activity is stopped? Because really and truly, a postal worker can still put an envelope there and if the household does not choose to tip the said individual then it can cause a problem. How would you all go ahead in terms of ensuring that the activity is stopped?

Mr. Delpesh: Well, there are different ways. There are supervisory staff at the outlet and for this to happen, it would mean putting the envelope in their satchel before going out. Having said so, I think that we have a responsible staff, responsible employees and this incident notwithstanding, we have employees that comply with the dictates and wishes of the organization. It is a matter of enforcement and weaning people off a situation that has existed for a long time. Of course dealing with change is always—it is not the easiest of things but it is one that we are committed to do. In terms of the possibility of people not being well served in the absence of not bringing any tip or anything forward, I do not think that would happen and it is one that we would entertain at all. We have mechanisms of determining the length of time certain mails reach people and if we see and people at that level always have to answer why it is that mails take an inordinate period of time to be delivered. So I do not see that happening at all. In fact, that is an easier one, member, than the first area of stopping it 100 per cent because it requires the cooperation of the citizenry as well.

Mr. de Freitas: Thank you very much again. Will the TTPost also be putting something out in the daily papers or even some sort of educational material to make the public aware that this practice is being stopped from the customer's side?

12.25 p.m.

Mr. Delpesh: It is early days, early days yet, in terms of I think we should not respond in a panicked zone and then we come back again. We wait for the investigation, see what it says, and on that basis we will know how we should move. At that point in time the board will be involved as well so that what will be coming out will be more than just management recommendation. So that yes there would be something coming out in terms of exactly when and how and what form it should

take. It would be dependent on the outcome of the report that is being done at this point in time, or the investigation that is being done at this point in time.

Mr. de Freitas: Thank you very much. Mr. Chairman, over to you.

Mr. Chairman: Yeah, sure I see the—Mr. Hakeem Ahmad, the chairman, would like to make some comments.

Mr. Ahmad: Yes, thank you Mr. Chairman. The question is the board never knew—this current board never knew about that practice and it was brought to our attention at this point in time. An investigation is being conducted now. When that investigation completes, it will go to the HRC Resource Committee and then come to the board and a decision will be taken there to stop that practice. I think no effort was made in the past to put that practice to an end and we are committed as a board to treat with that and when that treatment is meted out, the public will be aware of the situation. But the board certainly is not in agreement with that particular action taken by the postal people and we are adamant to try to get to the break the back of this. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Well, I would—I am happy that you have given like an official sort of statement that you found this activity. But members of the public, you know, sometimes it is Christmas and they may feel free to give our hard-working postal officers whatever we decide to give. The other countries they may tip people, they may give them Christmas presents. So the public will still be free to do that but at least we know it is not an official agreement among your body.

Mr. Ahmad: Yeah.

Mr. Chairman: I just wanted to touch on this. I have noticed we are looking at the revenue aspect, right, and the cost reduction drive, which I think is very important. So I want to ask something. In your submission you stated that TTPost is

successfully embarking on a cost reduction drive. What aspects of TTPost operations were modified to undertake the cost reduction drive?

Mr. Delpesh: Yes, well there were several areas and this happened in phase one of the plan to operate in a pandemic, but the areas that we focused on at the time will be overtime, reduction in stationery, mobile phone allowances, switching off lights and air conditioning after working hours, rent relief and deferral, reduction in travel to Tobago and on a freeze on hiring. Those were some of the high points in terms of reduction drive which was successfully implemented.

Mr. Chairman: And when did you commence this cost reduction?

Mr. Delpesh: Right? Yes, it started in 2020? [*Discussion among TTPost Officials*] 2020, around the middle of 2020.

Mr. Chairman: I have noticed that as far as—well October 2021, TTPost did a stamp collection launch with—I think it was the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries, where you had bought some lovely stamps with food, different type of food, like crab and dumpling, chicken pelau, salt fish provision—sometimes when you look at your stamps you get very hungry. But I may want to ask something, this launch right, bringing out these stamps, is it in a way viable? Is it something that is still viable? There are collectors out there? What cost factor did you put into this venture of putting these new stamps? Is it something that it is a revenue generating activity?

Mr. Delpesh: Yes, yes so some of it are revenue generating activities. Some of it is just the—adapting certain direction in the normal scheme of changing stamps. We have to buy stamps, we have to produce stamps anyway. So that, whether it is in a launch as you have it there, or people just wanting to buy stamps on a regular basis. So Chair, sorry, but it depends really, on the what is intended. Sometimes we do it for revenue and sometimes we do it for inventory purposes.

Mr. Chairman: You see some people may, you know, look out there and say, well, we already have stamps in production, why spend that money to design new stamps? But I appreciate the stamps, I appreciate the cultural aspect behind it, I think even as far as—sometime back in Indian Arrival Day, you actually had stamps there and I think certain members of the community did find that was an excellent, all-inclusive venture from your part in terms of the culture. So I congratulate you on this aspect and I see once it could generate that revenue it is something that could at least benefit us in that way also.

So at this stage, I think we have, you know, went far and wide. We have asked a lot of questions, we have had concerns from members of the public that wrote to us and I want to at this stage ask any members of my Committee if they have any more questions they would like to put or any comments? Yes, member.

Mrs. Sagrarsingh-Sooklal: Chair.

Mr. Chairman: Yes. Member, you can proceed.

Mrs. Sagrarsingh-Sooklal: Hi Chair, yeah, good day everyone. Firstly, a Happy New Year to everyone. You know, Mr. Delpesh, I must say batting lower down in the order as I am now, I would have had the benefit of listening to the of course, the questions that were posed to TTPost and the manner in which you would have been able to adequately provide the information. And as a person, a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago, I just want to thank you for your service and of course your entire team and what you all have been doing thus far and of course, in your 20 months. I am very impressed with the manner in which you are able to advocate on what TTPost has been doing, the business of TTPost—on the business of TTPost.

Now, that being said, well I am also the Minister who sits in the Office of the Attorney General and the Ministry of Legal Affairs and the reason why I am saying this is because there are just two things that I wanted, it is not—it was addressed

generally from questions that were brought forward in this forum by other members and your good self and your team. But it is just two basic comments—two comments that I wanted to make as it relates to service delivery.

Now, of course, the RG or so at the Ministry, as you would appreciate it we have the Legal Affairs part of it and then there is the Office of the Attorney General part. At the Legal Affairs part of it, as you are aware, we are—our business is that the transactional business of the citizenry of Trinidad and Tobago. And we are also, what I would believe, a very big customer and a client of TTPost, right? Now, mind you, I held my breath when the question was asked about delinquent Ministries and payments and so on, the question put by the Chair, so I did hold my breath for a few minutes. So that being said, one of the concerns of course, sitting as the Minister in this Ministry that, you know, I have always tried to maintain, at least as it relates to the public, an open platform where members of the public can reach out to me and my office, my secretariat, as it relates to challenges that they may have had, right.

One of the major challenges, which as I said before, I know it was addressed, is of course, coming from our rural communities which we serve and one of the challenges— So yes, I would have listened again to the submissions made by your good self and your team relative to the factors that are considered when determining where a post will be established and that is based on locality, security and I understand all of that. However, from some of our customer feedback, especially from those citizens that we serve in the rural community, you know, they have indicated that the process, at least these are some of the comments that came into us, and I stand to be corrected by your good self or your staff, the process that is usually involved especially in a community let us say where, there is not a TTPost outlet, is that there is now an exchange of information or dialogue between the customer, that is the citizen, and TTPost as to establishing a mutually agreed pick up point. And

those pickup points may not necessarily be at an outpost one of those service centres. So, there is some sort of an agreement that is of course made between TTPost and the citizen in these rural communities relative to where this exchange of mail can happen.

Now, as I said before, I am just simply going based on comments that came to my office, at least for the timeframe that I have been serving here and, you know, if you could shed some clarity on that process I would appreciate it, especially for the members of the public who are listening on.

And two, another concern that came out of this is because it seems as if that is the practice, where a person living in a rural community now has to reach out to TTPost themselves. In trying to do this reach out, there is now a difficulty, whether it is the phone services, they are not getting on to a TTPost personnel, they would go online, they would try to utilize the numbers that are available and it is still a difficulty. So as I said, this is just based on at least comments and challenges that persons—issues persons would have raised with me and if there is any clarity, I would appreciate it.

Mr. Delpesh: George?

Mr. Alexis: Thank you, MD, and thank you, committee member. With regard to the first concern you raised, yes, we recognize that we would not always be able to provide the ideal solution and there is always some level of compromise in terms of what TTPost can do with the resources we have to provide an acceptable level of delivery, especially in some of the rural communities, which is why we have struck a balance and continue to strike a balance, not just— I know you mentioned where members of the public were trying to reach out to TTPost but we also, those task forces that I mentioned, north task force, south task force, their responsibility is to go out and proactively look for areas where there is no mail delivery service, engage

people, find out what we can do to assist, find out what levels we can provide a service. If an area for example, falls on a walk already serviced by a postee, we can find ways to incorporate that street or that small community into the existing walk. If it does not fall in a walk, can we offer cluster box service? Can we offer some other level of service? So, if it is a two-way street, we take the feedback from the public and we have teams that go out on a daily basis to do audits on communities to find new houses that go up to bring them into the network, so to speak.

Mrs. Sagrarsingh-Sooklal: And—

Mr. Alexis: Go ahead.

Mrs. Sagrarsingh-Sooklal:—go ahead, go ahead.

Mr. Alexis: All right. With regard to your second issue in terms of the difficulty or the challenge with regard to people communicating with the TTPost as an organization, we do have the several channels that people can communicate with us. You have the website, you have the phone numbers, you have our social media platforms, Facebook, Instagram. At the end of the day, we have even encouraged people, you are seeing the postman every day and we do get information even from the postman who is on the ground, would flag it up the chain. Somebody met me and they have a problem so I pass it to my manager in—let us say in Diego Martin Post Office who sends it to head office.

So, we know that to service a country with 450,000 plus delivery points, which is what we have on the ground, there will always be the odd challenge with someone not being able to reach us or us being able to reach someone, but in the main, and by and large, the network is structured to receive the information from the public and to get information out to the public.

Mrs. Sagrarsingh-Sooklal: Appreciate that submission. So that was one of the—that was just one of the major—and I know as I said before, earlier, I know that this

issue relative to the cluster boxes and that whole process was addressed. But of course, just advocating on behalf of persons who would have reached out to me, that is why I would have raised that issue.

Another issue I know was also—another challenge of course that we have faced at the Ministry in the Registrar General’s Department, it is a relative such—those track packages, those packages, the track packs right. Now at page 20 of the TTPost response, that is the submissions that you all would have put forward before this Committee, a question was asked, what existing challenge impede upon the full implementation of the track and trace system? And what, in response to that question the response simply was now—was simply that you would have identified that other than connectivity—signal strength, sorry, in some of the rural communities, that you all were fully ready to implement the track and trace system.

Now, this is just really a comment so, I am not sure if you will be able to address it, but it is really a comment rather than a question. One of the difficulty with the track and trace system that we have encountered at the Ministry is that—because we—so it is a service that our customers utilize as well and as you are aware, there is a barcode which is the identifier that has to be scanned, right? And at the Ministry, while we would want to assist the public in being able to also track these packages—because people call us, they would call us, even though it is something that, you know, TTPost—even though they would click on an option that, okay, yes, they want to collect a birth paper, let us say, for example, via TTPost, our service centers would receive calls from members of the public asking us about the status of this package. Of course, we cannot provide that information because of the fact that those barcodes, which is a unique identifier to each package, it requires us to scan it. So what we have—what we have found ourselves, or at least the Registrar’s Department, what we have found ourselves in, is that while we want to assist the

public there is now this scanner, this hardware, which we are now required to also have and invest in, in order to be able to track those packages. I am not sure if you are following right.

These scanners, of course, there is a high cost attached to it and I know money is an issue for all Ministries, for all departments. But what I was wondering is that, within the parameters of TTPost, when we look at your PSIP projects for example, that *Public Sector Investment Programme*, is there any avenue through that programme that perhaps TTPost can be able to accrue those scanners and lend that support to Ministries like ours which rely heavily or which is a big customer of TTPost. And the reason why I am asking is because we are now called upon at the Ministry to find—to allocate funding, deploy staff in order to do the scanning, in order to assist members of the public in tracking this package, when really, it is a service we are—it is a service that respectfully, ought to have been rendered by TTPost.

So we as the client, as the customer, we are required, we are now incurring additional expense, whether it is deploying staff, whether it is investing in these scanners, and I am respectfully making the comment, I am not sure, it is something that I have also engaged our RG Department to look into, whether under our PSIP this is something we could probably look into. But I know certainly, at least from the Ministry and from Legal Affairs, if we can get assistance with respect to those scanners, it would save us—it would assist us considerably in being able to discharge and help members of the public who call upon us continuously to assist in the tracking of their packages.

So for now, what we do is that of course, we would just provide, once the calls come in, or the emails come in, we would simply provide them with their number and then the process I know now is that once we provide that tracking number to the

customer, then the duty is on them to do the needful to track their packages. But certainly there are people who sometimes, you know, I tell people, sometimes you really cannot judge a man by our own standard and sometimes a man “doh” even have a dollar on his phone to make a phone call to TTPost, or they may not have Internet and I, especially in our RG Department, if we could be able to offer those additional services to the man on the ground, to man on the street, where we as the Ministry can then track and assist them, I mean that would be awesome, especially for those persons who are severely affected because of financial reasons and cannot, you know, handle their businesses because of that reason.

So that was just a comment I wanted to make relative to those scanners. As I said, I know from our Ministry’s perspective, we would look into whether or not we could probably do that through a PSIP programme but I am not sure if through your PSIP programme if that is perhaps something that could perhaps be considered.

Mr. Delpesh: Nicholas?

Mr. Martin: Yes Sir, thank you member. I would like to say I am happy to hear this because I work very, very, very closely with MAGLA, especially the RG’s office and they are one of our very good customers, we have a lot of business, we have a long years’ service with the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs, especially RG’s office.

Member, I would just like to address your first point. While I hear you with regard to the scanners, scanners are not very expensive, however, our tracking service does not require you having to have a scanner to get the information. All you need to do is if—now, we have been in discussions with RG’s office regard to your—the Attorney General’s personal courier customer portal, through which you upload your manifests and able to track information. However, despite that, any one of your members of staff even downstairs in customer service, et cetera, could just

go to a TTPost website, click on the tracking icon, go to the tracking page and manually enter the number for the particular track pack and the information would be provided to that customer representative or any other member of MAGLA.

However, I was saying before, it is a consideration for us to look at our high volume customers of which MAGLA is one, and look for some cause of consideration with regard to equipment and facilitate the use of the courier service from their end. So that is something a discussion that we can start to have.

Mrs. Sagrarsingh-Sooklal: And I am very grateful for that technical explanation as to how it happens, because you would know at least I have a sense now as to at least what is available in the interim and this is definitely something that I would have, I would go back to the department with, at least our customer service personnel, and, provide well at least enquire, make some further enquiries as to why this is not—why this is not being utilized, probably at a greater extent. So thank you most sincerely for that technical insight into what can be done and uncertainly as one of your customers we will appreciate any assistance that we can get. Of course, it would only benefit the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

So that was really just to—those were two of the major areas of concern that has challenges, not challenges, but areas of concern that have been raised relative to service delivery.

Chair, can I just go on to one quick—through you, Chairman, this is separate and apart from service delivery. It has to do with Appendix One, the Recovery Plan at page 39 in the submissions submitted by TTPost. It is just one quick question I wanted to ask there. Do we have time, Chair?

Mr. Chairman: Yes, you could do quickly. Mrs. Morris-Julian would have two questions after, but yeah.

Ms. Sagrarsingh-Sooklal: Okay.

Mr. Chairman: Mrs. Julian, sorry, Mrs. Julian.

Ms. Sagrarsingh-Sooklal: Yeah, so this is a question to the entire Committee. Now in the Recovery Plan at page 39, I noted that TTPost stated:

Its reputation in the eyes of the public does not bode well for the interest and support by the general public. There needs to be some “wow” moments surrounding the brand the corporation sells and an understanding and support of the organization and its product. This would require a deliberate and sustained programme of branding and public relations.

So that came out from the actual submissions. Now, I know early on and during the course of this discussion, that you all—TTPost is in the process of settling its strategic plan and all of that and I would imagine that rebranding or branding and public relations would form a critical part of your strat plan. But what I just quickly wanted to know is how does TTPost intend to change the public's perspective of their services and, if at all you could probably just address briefly what exactly will be the “wow” moments and rebranding strategy that TTPost intends to embark upon in moving forward and of course, in getting the public to understand and appreciate the kind of work and services that are offered by TTPost.

Mr. Delpesh: Thank you very much, member. Well, some of it goes—will go to the fundamental of what we are in operations for. We are in business with obligations to serve and to deliver mail over a certain period. To the extent that we can do that, that is our biggest public relations. If granny is expecting her mail from wherever, every second Thursday or every Thursday and that happens, I am just saying we do not need to “wow” granny too much. So having said, we have embarked on a restructuring therefore, of our delivery network and service. We have given it a timeframe, expected day plus, so that you—we expect that you should get your mail four days after it is posted.

Now, so far, we have come a long way, in terms of meeting that target. We were at 65 per cent and at this point in time, the latest number we are at 88 per cent. The industry standard defined by the Caribbean Postal Union is that you must do it 85 per cent. So, we have gone ahead of that at this point in time. The difficulty is that 15 per cent or so we have some work to do there and we recognize that. But I am just saying to the extent that 85 per cent of the people or 85 per cent of the time we can get it right, it is a significant improvement.

In addition to that, in terms of the “wow” moment, I think one of your colleagues said earlier about being unaware of certain things. So TTPost has been a sleeping giant and not selling its story and the intention is that we keep now selling our story, and as the Chairman alluded to at the start of his opening statement, that this too is an opportunity for us to sell our story. And I am just saying we intend, we have a—I should say a business development committee now, that is very proactive in us doing those things. So you will find more and more, you will see us in the public eye and selling our stories, talking about our successes and giving the public an opportunity to interact on our behalf.

So those are some of the things in the absence of a strategic plan that we have ongoing now, right now. You would see over the last three months or so we have been in the newspapers in a very positive, very positive way, and that too changes the image. Now we know that there is some difficulty in changing historical image that people may have but the onus is on us to keep trying and to make tomorrow better than today and the following day better than tomorrow. And that is the strategy we are working on until we come up with a grand plan to rebrand and all those other things, all right.

I can say that the delivery network and the delivery service is on the way up, a committee has been appointed and at the board level, at the board level operations

committee to track this so that every month we have to show our numbers in terms of delivery, and we would hear from the committee even before it reaches the board level. So there are many things that we are doing at the same time but we recognize that a lot of people did not have as favourable a reputation of TTPost that we would have liked it to be when we started our journey to rectify the issue.

Ms. Sagrarsingh-Sooklal: And I agree with you, service and performance beat old talk, right—

Mr. Delpesh: Sure.

Ms. Sagrarsingh-Sooklal:—and I agree. To that end I just want to say to members of TTPost respectfully, through you Chair, I know you all would have spoken about, you know, possibly thinking of expanding your services and then of course you would require that is where of course upon the completion of your strat plan and greater introspection and definitely at that stage you may require that legislative assistance, just know that at least at the Office of the Attorney General we stand ready and committed, if and when that time arises to offer that support, that legislative support that may be required by TTPost. We stand ready and committed as I said before. So thanks again, Chair. That is the extent of my submissions.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, and I guess we have, I think, Mrs. Morris-Julian would like to ask I think two questions.

12.55 p.m.

Mrs.: Morris-Julian Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have actually three related questions, somewhat related. Through the Chairman, I was very pleased to see that you said, “Partner with DHL to bring TTPost to international standards relative to service quality and reach of customer service”. I am one of those persons that have received DHL packages regularly and it is a wonderful service and what I have found that if, for example, I am not available they are always very willing to bring the

package to wherever I am and that is really, really thoughtful and considerate, especially for busy persons such as myself and everybody who is here this morning, but can you tell about what tangible benefits that you can say were gained from this particular relationship?

Mr. Delpesh: Nicholas.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, MD, and thank you, member, for the question. There are very, very great tangible benefits that were gained from this relationship. When you partner with an international giant like DHL you have to—and no choice but to increase your service standards at this level and DHL and TTPost have had a very long relationship and a very beneficial one. So, some of the tangible benefits that we would have received would be reduce in customer complaints.

The service provider we had before DHL was not as effective and efficient as we would have hoped and we actually saw an immediate—member, I mean a really immediate changeover. From the day we started using DHL the calls coming to our offices dropped by over 85 per cent. Literally over 85 per cent overnight. Customers were easy to track their items online and the packaging material that we would provide and the level of service was also towards what the market and the customer wanted. Additionally, we were able to get better delivery times and again, as the previous member just said, “Performance beats ole talk”.

So, when you have these, like yourself, the performance is standing out there, we will have less complaints and happier customers.

Another major tangible item that we received is reduction in cost and a marginal improvement in our gross margins, because with our previous service provider we would have to use other international airlines and then pay for the international airline and then also pay the delivery agent in that particular country. With DHL we have a one-stop shop which reduced our cost factor. Those are the

two direct tangible benefits that we would have received.

Mrs. Morris-Julian: Yes, I want to agree, especially with the “cheaper” part. I was pleasantly surprised to see no hidden cost which I must admit happened before. Now, I would like to move on, as we are on the topic of courier services. It was stated that the current system for processing courier packages to delivery utilized by TTPost has been unchanged since the implementation of the courier service and there is another statement about a restructuring document, can I have some clarity? Can I have an update on the reference document, please? And what is the proposed date for completion?

Mr. Martin: The—let us start with the first question. The existing processing, package processing processor that we have is very effective, however even though it has been unchanged for many years we need to look at it because as was stated in other parts of the document submitted, information submitted by TTPost, we have had huge increases in our volumes. And when you have increases in volumes you will have increases in manpower, and not only manpower but increases in our better implementation of different processes to accommodate those—that additional capacity that you would need to manage the new increases.

So along with that we came the view that we needed to restructure the department in its entirety; not just add on manpower resources where needed, but look at the processes themselves along with the manpower, along with the floor space, along with the other infrastructure and tools that we require to manage these at initial volumes coming in and maintain always a positive capacity element. So when we have the peaks and troughs, that we are not caught with our pants down, for lack of better words. So that restructuring document is going through the approval process right now and we hope that very soon that we would be able to—I know we will be able to provide that further information to you at a later date. I do not have a deadline

for when that restructuring process may be completed.

Mrs. Morris-Julian: Okay. Well, I really hope that you would get a deadline soon because, as you would appreciate, restructuring is always important and even though something works there is always—somehow could work better if you keep—if you look at it and make sure that, you know, any way it can be improved, it is improved. But I do agree with you so, a large extent, it is a pretty good service. So moving on, as I stated before we all live very busy lives so I was pleasantly surprised to read about the National Petroleum Company with the Quikshoppes. I think that is a brilliant idea.

Could I just get some more details on behalf of the Chairman and members of the Committee on how this will work because I spend more time in my vehicle than I spend at home? So could I please find out what is it, how is it going to happen and is it that I can just dash right in while the car is getting fuel and see about my business?

Mr. Delpesh: Member, we are not certain of what you speak because you are referring to—

Mrs. Morris-Julian: Sorry. Let me clarify—

Mr. Delpesh: National Petroleum—

Mrs. Morris-Julian: TTPost—Yes, the Quikshoppe. The recovery plan, appendix 1, mention was made of a proposal to collaborate with NP to have mail collection done at the gas stations.

Mr. Delpesh: Right, got you.

Mrs. Morris-Julian: So I would just like a little more info about this proposal because I think it is very innovative, and are you all considering it?

Mr. Delpesh: Yes. It is—

Mrs. Morris-Julian: How are you going forward with something like this?

Mr. Delpesh: Right. So the recovery plan has three phases, immediate, medium and long-term. That was part of the longer-term plan and we are in the process. So, it is at the point where we would need to collaborate or start the communication. We have not started it as yet but that is part of the strategic plan, by the way, in terms of new areas of distribution. So, yes, we are looking. It may not be NP, it may be somebody else, but I am just saying NP, we believe, has the reach, you know, in terms of people. In fact, people who pop into a gas station on their way home could collect their mail and so on.

So that is a proposal that came to us from the General Manager Operations, that I think he saw in—it is either Canada or Australia, one of the two areas, and the intention is to get as much information and to see how viable we can replicate that system in Trinidad. But we are not there yet but it is part of the strategic plan.

Mrs. Morris-Julian: Thank you very much, Sir. And I would really hope that you all will get there because I think it is quite innovative and, as I stated before, we have to keep up with the times. Thank you very much, Chairman. That will be all from me for now.

Mr. Chairman: Well, thank you, and I have heard the need to improve and the strategic plan that may come on board. And a member of the public, Wayne Ramoutar, actually had some recommendations which I will forward to you where he asked for the establishment of online payment system for postal on online packages, establishment of improved tracking system, downloadable labels for packages, inclusive of QR codes which was mentioned by Minister Sagramsingh, and also the introduction of a mobile app and introduction of a login system. So certain comments we have gotten from the public we would send to you and you would be able to see how you could implement that in your plan. But I am very happy and pleased to hear of all the successes so far that we have seen the

progression, we have seen with the reports coming in on time; we have seen, you know, innovative means to get money.

I am hoping I could probably buy my shoes and my pants just now in TTPost and I am looking at encouraging news that we have today. The innovation is there; the drive is there; you have been getting moneys coming into your—the TTPost so things are looking good. And I have to say congratulations to your team; congratulations to the PS for at least being on board, and I think what we are looking for now is that implementation plan quick as possible so we can move a stage further. So I would like now to invite member—well, Mr. Francis Delpesh, the Managing Director, to give us some brief—[*Chairman confers with Clerk*]

Sorry, before I ask for any closing comments, I think Mr. Chairman, Hakeem Ahmad, wanted to make a comment?

Mr. Ahmad: No, I do not think so.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Well, would you mind giving the closing remarks because seeing that you had given the opening remarks, any sort of closing remarks that Chairman would like to give.

Mr. Ahmad: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to express our total gratitude to the Committee in terms of the frank positions and questions you all asked us. We will take this as a learning curve. We are here to get to understand how the public reacts to us and the board particularly is in a transformation mode where we want to digitize the corporation and we want to take all avenues to ensure that TTPost exactly delivers the obligations that they are designed to do. And again, I want to thank the Committee for their presentation and we would take all the situations here on board and we would treat with it in the future. Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Chairman. Ms. Nicollette Duke, PS, I think, you know, your line Minister actually—your Minister actually, you know, has a lot of hopes in

this organization or give them that benchmark that they would have to get viable and somehow he pushed that out, so I would like to hear some closing comments from you, please.

Ms. Duke: Thank you, Chairman. And certainly we are excited by the possibilities of what TTPost can do, especially in light of, you know, the opportunity to provide enhanced services to the citizenry. We at the Ministry stand ready to support TTPost with policy direction, you know, with monitoring, with evaluation, with advice and we have always worked collaboratively. We intend to continue on that road and of course we are really ready to receive those recommendations that may have been made by members of the public and of course recommendations from the Committee which we heard a lot of today and which we really appreciate that will help us in this thrust of bringing greater efficiencies to TTPost and of course fulfilling the policy direction as articulated by our Minister. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much. So at this stage I would like to thank the officials of the TTPost, the Chairman, Mr. Ahmad, then Mr. Delpesh, Mr. George Alexis, Ms. April Peters, Mr. Nicholas Martin. And I would also like to thank Ms. Nicollette Duke, the Permanent Secretary, and also Ms. Arlene Collis for your presence here this morning, your contribution. You know, we are all doing this to help the citizenry and I think together we can get those ideas forward.

I would also like to thank my committee members for participating in this virtual hearing. I would like to thank the staff of the Office of the Parliament for your procedural and logistical support, the viewing and listening audience, and also those members of the public who did submit certain concerns that they had.

At this time, thank you all. Please have a safe journey at home or wherever you are please continue being safe, observing the protocols and looking forward to a better service from TTPost. Thank you very much and I now declare this meeting

6th Report into an Inquiry into the operational efficiency of the Trinidad and Tobago Postal Corporation and the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on its service delivery.

adjourned.

1.09 p.m.: *Meeting adjourned.*