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Council were abrasive over closed Post Office

Kevin Mullan

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Top civil servants thought Derry City Council “ill-advisedly abrasive” in its attempts to get the Northern Ireland postal chief, Dan Carty, to re-open a Londonderry post office at the height of the Troubles.

There was also concern any public commitment to re-open the office in Creggan in 1985 could have been used as a “propaganda coup” by Sinn Féin.

A confidential document newly-published by PRONI and the Conflict Archive on the Internet (CAIN) refers to talks that were ongoing in early 1985 about the potential re-opening of the office.

Civil servant AW Stephens wrote that the Mayor of the day, John Tierney, recognised “that it was unrealistic to hope that the security problems involved in reopening this post office - especially that of transporting money for benefit payments to the Creggan at regular intervals - could be solved for some time to come.”

“They nevertheless felt that it would be helpful to the cause of responsible politics in the city if the Post Office authorities could

give a public assurance that the aim was still to reopen the post office as and when circumstances permitted,” wrote Mr Stephens.

Mr Stephens talked to Mr Carty on the phone on May 13, 1985, and discussed the danger of allowing Sinn Féin to claim credit for any move to re-open the office after scheduled Council elections that year.

Officials were unimpressed by the attitude of Derry City Council at the time.

“I added that we in NIO were quite aware that the Derry Council had been ill-advisedly abrasive in some of their dealings with Mr Carty.

“In particular, we held no brief for their claims to be entitled to conduct policy discussions with subordinate members of his staff behind

his back.

“However, we did share the Council’s concern to avoid making a propaganda gift to Sinn Féin, however inadvertently. The timing of any statement of intent about the future of the post office would therefore require care.”