



Leeds
CITY COUNCIL

Originator: S Wynne

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Report of the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods

Executive Board

Date: 14 January 2009

Subject: Post Office Branch Closures in Leeds

Electoral Wards Affected:

All Wards

Ward Members consulted
(referred to in report)

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

Eligible for Call In

Yes

Not Eligible for Call In

(Details contained in the report)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The report responds to the deputation to Council from 'Communities Against Post Office Closures'. The deputation requested the Council to negotiate with the Post Office to re-open the 22 post offices recently closed in Leeds under the Post Office Network Change Programme.

Discussions are ongoing with Post Office Ltd to explore various options for collaborative working with the Council. The work aims to safeguard and enhance essential services across local communities in Leeds. The substantive outcomes of this work will be reported to a future meeting.

1.0 Purpose Of This Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to consider a deputation and petition which were delivered to Council on 19 November 2008 by 'Communities Against Post Office Closures' (appendix 1). This requested that the Council negotiate with Post Office Ltd to re-open the post offices closed under the Post Office Network Change Programme.
- 1.2 In total, 22 post offices were identified for closure under the above programme from the network of 98 post offices across Leeds.

2.0 Background Information

- 2.1 The Government announced its policy on the future provision of the country's post office network in May 2007 and identified that 17% of post office branches would have to close across the UK by 2011 to enable the network to become self-sustaining. This review was entitled the Network Change Programme.
- 2.2 In May 2008, Post Office Ltd developed and published a local area plan proposal for the West Yorkshire Area setting out the changes that it planned to make under the Network Change Programme. This detailed the proposed closures of post offices in Leeds.
- 2.3 The Area Plan proposal for West Yorkshire was published on 13 May 2008. This was followed by a six week period of local public consultation to allow customers, representative bodies and other interested parties to express their views on the proposal. During this period, Post Office Ltd received approximately 4,400 items of correspondence and attended 33 meetings with customers and their representatives. During the consultation period the Council wrote to the Post Office to formally express its concern with regard to the closures.

3.0 Key Issues

- 3.1 The deputation referred to the work of Essex County Council to reopen post offices and establish a local network providing postal and community information points across a range of small, independent retail outlets.
- 3.2 The above approach involves time-limited grants to support a mixture of stand-alone services and core post offices. Essex County Council has set aside £1.5 million over three years to support a network of around 10 outlets.
- 3.3 Council officers met with representatives from Post Office Ltd at the end of October 2008 to consider the potential opportunities for closer working to safeguard and enhance the provision of and access to essential services in communities across Leeds. This meeting identified a number of services and products required by local communities and the potential opportunities to better meet these needs through joint working.
- 3.4 The above work is complex and requires further detailed discussion and testing against local need and accessibility, the availability of alternative services, and the financial costs and benefits of the service provision. There are no substantive outcomes to report at this stage.

4.0 Implications for Council Policy and Governance

- 4.1 There are no implications for Council policy or governance at this stage.

5.0 Legal and Resource Implications

5.1 There are no legal or resource implications at this stage.

6.0 Recommendation

Executive Board is asked to

- note the request and petition received from 'Communities Against Post Office Closures' for the Council to re-open and run closed Post Office branches
- request officers to consider and report back on cost effective ways of working with Post Office Ltd to safeguard and enhance the provision of essential services to communities across the city .

Background Documents

Communities Against Post Office Closures deputation and petition to Council

Area Plan for West Yorkshire produced by Post Office Ltd May 2008