

Report of: Chief Planning Officer

Report to: Outer West Community Committee

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To note

Sunnybank BD3 Postcode Request Report

Purpose of report

1. To update the Outer West Community Committee on a report (see Appendix 1) that has been prepared by officers in Planning & Sustainable Development in response to a request by Stuart Andrew MP and the Sunnybank Residents group to investigate options for moving forward longstanding issues for residents who have a BD (Bradford) postcode but live within the Leeds City Council boundary.
2. The report is brought for members to note and for discussion and questions. Following this committee meeting the report will be released to residents who responded to the consultation and other involved parties.
3. It should be noted that the final decision in relation to a postcode change request lies solely with Royal Mail and is not a decision that can be taken by Leeds City Council. Therefore, for the avoidance of doubt, members of the OWCC are not being requested to make a decision on the postcode change itself.

Main issues

4. LCC were approach by Stuart Andrew MP, and the Sunnybank Residents group, in Jan 2020 to assist in investigating options for moving forward longstanding issues that residents who live in properties with BD3 postcodes (Thornbury) but within the Leeds City Council boundary experience. The residents affected have been campaigning for a postcode change from BD3 to LS28 (Pudsey) for a number of years, with the perception that this would resolve the issues that they experience.

5. The problem is not unique to BD3 (Stuart Andrew MP has collated similar examples from BD4 and BD10) but the residents group requested whether their area could be used as a test case.
6. A report has been produced by LCC Planning and Sustainable Development to summarise the issues raised from consultation responses by residents, and feedback provided by those organisations cited in the report; and to recommend a way forward (See Appendix 1). The key responses and issues highlighted in the report are set out below.
7. Issues raised by residents include referrals made to the wrong local authority or health care group, or incorrectly rejected by the correct local authority or health care group; confusion over which hospital a patient should be taken to; issues with midwifery services which operate using different geographic referral areas; confusion during COVID lockdowns when Leeds and Bradford were operating under different rules; and a perception of higher insurance costs, and lower house prices.
8. An interim report was produced in January 2021, and local ward members were briefed. The interim report highlighted a number of issues, the most serious of which related to health and social care services. As a result, a decision was taken to obtain feedback from organisations cited in the report to clarify referral policies, to identify whether such policies were being applied correctly and to determine to what extent the residents home postcode was a factor.
9. This feedback clarified that for some organisations (such as Yorkshire Ambulance Services) the home postcode of the patient could be relevant; but also, that clinical need and current demand would also influence which hospital a patient was taken to in an emergency. Community Health Services and the Leeds CCG confirmed that the home postcode of a person was not relevant to their referral systems and this would instead be based on the GP to which they were registered (whether it was a Pudsey GP or a Thornbury GP).
10. Royal Mail have always cited 'Operational Reasons' as the only grounds on which a postcode could be changed, in essence, it would need to be based on their own internal factors in relation to delivering mail. The decision was taken to contact Royal Mail for further discussion, and clarification on this. Royal Mail's response indicated that there was no precedent for a postcode change of this scale being made for these reasons. They stated that Royal Mail policy would not allow a postcode change as it would likely disrupt rather than enhance mail delivery / service provision from their own operational viewpoint.

Corporate considerations

Consultation and engagement

11. Residents of three streets in the BD3 postcode area (Sunnybank Lane / Grove / Avenue) were consulted between September and December 2020 to seek feedback on what issues were occurring, and how frequently. Residents were requested to feedback via the consultation on issues that had occurred between June and December 2020. This was then combined with evidence collected by Stuart Andrew MP during previous consultation exercises covering BD3, BD4 and BD10 (section 4 of report in Appendix 1).
12. A further consultation was then undertaken of organisations named in the report to gather further information on their awareness of these issues, and clarification on their referral procedures (where required) – See appendices 1 - 6 of the appended report.
13. Leeds City Council also undertook further engagement with Royal Mail to seek clarification on their definition of ‘operational reasons’, and also to determine what other evidence could be reasonably provided to support a postcode change request - see Appendix 7 of the appended report.
14. Ward members for Calverley & Farsley were briefed following the completion of the report, and following these briefings minor amendments were made to the report based on their feedback, and are included in Appendix 1.

Conclusion

15. The report highlights the following:
 - a. Some health referral systems are not based on the resident’s postcode, and therefore would not be resolved by a postcode change;
 - b. Some health referral systems are not being applied correctly;
 - c. Changing the postcode would resolve some of the issues;
 - d. BD3 is likely to be more affected than other BD postcode areas as the majority of BD3 is located within Bradford Council boundaries; and
 - e. There is no requirement for local authority and postcode boundaries to be aligned and the response provided by the Royal Mail to the consultation indicate they are unlikely to change the postcode for non-operational reasons.
16. The report identifies that further engagement is required between Leeds City Council, the relevant Health Services, and Royal Mail to help address issues with health referral systems and processes relating to postcode issues. This conclusion does not prejudice any further action residents or other parties may wish to take to continue engagement with Royal Mail.

Recommendations

17. Members are asked to note and comment on the contents of the Sunnybank, Thornbury, BD3 postcode request report set out in Appendix 1