

REPORT

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| To: GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE | Subject: REMOVING PUBLIC CALL BOXES OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS (OFCOM) REVIEW OF THE UNIVERSAL SERVICE OBLIGATIONS |
| From: DIRECTOR OF ADMINISTRATION | |
| Date: 26 April 2006 | Ref: MS/MR |

1. Purpose of Report

The report advises of the publication of a Guide, by the Office of Communications (Ofcom), regarding their consultation in respect of the removing of public call boxes.

2. Background

Ofcom have stated that they have recently completed their review of the Universal Service Obligations (USO) which ensures that basic fixed line telecom services are available at an affordable price across the UK. The review was to ensure that the requirements of the USO keep pace with the changes in consumer demand and technology, and the benefits of USO reached those who really need them.

3. Considerations

Phone boxes provide an essential service for those who do not have a land line at home or where using a mobile phone is not possible. However, with the growth in the use of mobiles some phone boxes are very rarely used and BTs revenues from call boxes have fallen by around 47% between the year 2000 and 2006.

Ofcom have concluded that local communities must continue to have a final say in decisions about keeping or removing the last phone box from a particular location – known as “the local veto” and have published a set of rules and guidance which confirm that:-

- the local veto will be available to unitary, metropolitan, district and equivalent Councils. Other local bodies must still be consulted
- the consultation period for proposals to remove the final phone box will be extended from 42 days to 90 days
- the local veto will apply to the last phone box within a 400 metre area
- BT will have more freedom to use cashless phone boxes where boxes are subject to repeated vandalism or are needed primarily for emergency use.

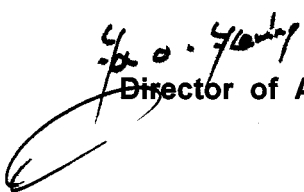
To assist local authorities Ofcom have published a Guide to the new rules, a copy of which has been deposited in the Members' Library.

The Guide sets out the procedures that BT must follow if it wishes to remove a public call box and what the body holding the local veto on the removal must do in response. The Guide also provides advice about how to appeal the removal of a public call box and how to request that a new one is installed.

However, it should be noted that there is no indication at this stage which public call boxes within the Council's area will be removed.

4. **Recommendation**

Members are asked to consider the foregoing proposals.


Director of Administration

Members seeking further information on the content of this report are asked to contact Mr. Fleming, Head of Central Services on extension 2228.