

REPORT

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| To: CORPORATE SERVICES COMMITTEE | | Subject: NETWORK CHANGE PROGRAMME FOR THE PROVISION OF THE BRANCH POST OFFICE NETWORK |
| From: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES | | |
| Date: 21 August 2008 | Ref: TG/MR | |

1. Introduction

- 1.1. At the Corporate Services Committee on 30 August 2007 consideration was given to a report on the initiation by the Post Office Limited (POL) of a Network Change Programme which would determine the future provision of the Branch Post Office Network in the United Kingdom.
- 1.2. The review of the Branch Network has been ongoing for some considerable time and previously this was reported to the Council.

2. Background

- 2.1. The initial review by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) now known as the Department for Business Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR) contained proposals for the modernisation and re-shaping of the Post Office Network to include:-
 - the proposed closure of up to 2,500 branches;
 - the introduction of a "minimum access criteria" in respect of remaining branches;
 - the provision of Government funding for the Branch Network, and
 - the establishment of approximately 500 "outreach" branches in those communities where an Area Plan highlighted the need to provide a form of service but where a full-time branch could not be justified.
- 2.2. The minimum access criteria referred to above foresee:-
 - 99% of the UK population being within three miles and 90% of the population being within one mile of the nearest branch;
 - 99% of the total population in deprived urban areas, which in Scotland comprises the lowest at 15% of data zones, being within one mile of their nearest branch;
 - 95% of the total urban population across the UK being within one mile of their nearest branch;
 - 95% of the total rural population across the UK being within three miles of their nearest branch, and
 - for each individual post code district, 95% of the population of that post code district to be within six miles of their nearest branch.

- 2.3. Consequently, and against the foregoing criteria, POL were instructed to implement the necessary Branch Network changes over an 18 months period through a series of Local Area Plans through which a consultation exercise would be carried out until implementation.
- 2.4. For this purpose, North Lanarkshire Council was grouped in an area comprising the three Ayrshire Councils, East Dunbartonshire Council (part), the three Renfrewshire Councils and South Lanarkshire Council.
- 2.5. Arising from the consideration of the earlier report, and following consultation with appropriate Officers, an initial submission on behalf of North Lanarkshire was submitted to POL. This submission provided details of the demography of the area, the nature of local industry and the impact of past industrial decline, unemployment rates, a profile of the health standards of North Lanarkshire residents and life expectancy and details of deprivation figures. On a more positive note the submission detailed Council and external investment in our Town Centres, improvements in the transport infrastructure and linkages with major cities, private investment initiatives in our schools and other community facilities and increased employment opportunities.

3. **Proposals**

- 3.1. The Post Office Limited have now written to the Council with details of the proposed network changes for this area and in particular have advised of the Branch Post Offices they intend to close. The correspondence also advises on the role of Postwatch, Frequently Asked Questions about the Programme, a timetable for implementation and future service provision for the Area Plan area.
- 3.2. Where closures are proposed, the Post Office may provide an alternative outreach service and details of the four different outreach service models have been provided, these being a mobile service; a hosted service; a partner service and finally, a home service.
- 3.3. In the Ayrshire, East Dunbartonshire, Lanarkshire and Renfrewshire Council areas it is proposed to close a total of 44 Post Office branches of which 13 are in North Lanarkshire, representing approximately 30% of the total branches to be closed for this Area Plan area.
- 3.4. For our neighbouring Councils in the Area Plan area, the number of proposed closures are as follows:-

South Lanarkshire Council – 9 closures
Renfrewshire Council – 4 closures
North Ayrshire Council – 6 closures
East Dunbartonshire Council – 2 closures
East Ayrshire Council – 1 closure
Inverclyde Council – 4 closures
South Ayrshire Council – 5 closures.

It should be noted that in South Ayrshire where there are five closure proposals it is intended to provide outreach services in seven areas.

- 3.5. The Post Office Limited have recently written to this Council with details of their proposed Network Change Programme for this area and in particular have advised of the branch Post Offices they intend to close, these being as undernoted:-

Thorndean Branch Post Office, 205 Motherwell Road, Bellshill
Mossend Branch Post Office, 3 Hope Street, Bellshill
West Cross Branch Post Office, 339 Main Street, Wishaw
Waterloo Branch Post Office, 103 Overtown Road, Waterloo, Wishaw
Eastfield Branch Post Office, 9 Old Eastfield Street, Harthill
Cambusnethan Branch Post Office, 100 Cambusnethan Street, Wishaw
Whinhall Branch Post Office, 21 Whinhall Road, Airdrie
Plains Branch Post Office, 115 Main Street, Plains
Sunnyside Branch Post Office, 1-4 Russell Colt Street, Coatbridge
Blairhill Branch Post Office, 154 Bank Street, Coatbridge
Kildrum Branch Post Office, Afton Road, Cumbernauld
Banton Branch Post Office, 96 Main Street, Banton
Queenzieburn Branch Post Office, Meadows Road, Queenzieburn, Kilsyth.

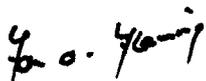
- 3.6. There are no proposals by POL to provide an outreach service for any of the proposed closure areas in North Lanarkshire.
- 3.7. Upon receipt of the proposals details were sent to Elected Members for comment, to all Area Committees, to Airdrie, Bellshill and District, Coatbridge, North and Wishaw and District Local Area Partnerships and also to all Community Councils in North Lanarkshire.
- 3.8. Representations opposing closures have already been received from an Elected Member and from Queenzieburn Community Council.
- 3.9. In addition Airdrie, Bellshill and District and the North Local Area Partnerships and Area Committees have intimated their objections to any proposed closures in their areas and have requested that the Post Office retain the branch facilities.
- 3.10. POL have sought comments on their proposals by 1 September 2008 and accordingly the Committee is asked to authorise the Executive Director of Corporate Services to respond to the proposals in line with advice from other Council services and representations received.

4. **Corporate Considerations**

There are likely to be a number of considerations for Council services should the Branch Network rationalisation proposals as referred to above be implemented.

5. **Recommendations**

- 5.1. That the receipt of the Post Office Limited Branch Network Change Programme be noted, and
- 5.2. That following receipt of any submissions from any of the sources referred to above that the Executive Director of Corporate Services be authorised to respond to the proposals for this area by the due date.



Executive Director of Corporate Services

Should any Member require further information please contact Tom Gaffney on extension 2342.