

Area North Committee – 26^h March 2008

9. Post Office Network Change Programme – Implications for Area North

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Purpose of the Report

To update Members on the recently published proposals for Post Office Network changes and the implications for Area North and to seek Members views on the Network Change proposals in order to form the District response to the consultation.

Recommendation

That Members note and comment on the closure proposals as they affect Area North, to form the District Council response to Post Office Limited.

Background

Members will recall that this Council opposed the Government's proposals for a review of the national Post Office network early last year and challenged many of the criteria used to identify potential Post Offices for closure.

Despite strong opposition, notably from rural areas, the Government continued to progress to the next stage and instructed Post Office Limited to implement the review against agreed national criteria.

A briefing note regarding the consultation process has been produced and was previously sent to all Members, information is also available on our website. However, some details have become clearer as a result of the Area Plan publication.

The Review Plan for South Somerset

The Area Plan detailing the proposals for Bristol and Somerset has been published and includes a total of 65 closures (just under 17% of defined area) and 7 new outreach services. **There are 11 post office branch closures proposed in South Somerset and 2 branches to be replaced by an outreach service.**

A summary including ward and county members is in the table below

Place	SSDC Ward	SSDC Ward Member	SCC Member
Barwick	Coker	Lesley Boucher Hannah Lefeuve	Dave Greene Cathy Bakewell
Bayford	Tower	Maili Felton	Justin Robinson
Bower Hinton, Martock	Martock	Patrick Palmer. Ann Campbell	Doug Campbell
East Coker	Coker	Lesley Boucher Hannah Lefeuve	Dave Greene Cathy Bakewell
Goldcroft, Yeovil	Yeovil Central	John Vincent Chainey Peter Gubbins Andy Kendall	Peter Gubbins

Haselbury Plucknett	Parrett	Ric Pallister	Cathy Bakewell
Keinton Mandeville	Northstone	John Calvert	Pauline Clarke
Kingsdon	Northstone	John Calvert	Pauline Clarke
Mudford	Ivelchester	Tony Capozzoli	Sam Crabb
Sparkford	Camelot	Mike Lewis	Henry Hobhouse
Yeovilton	Ivelchester	Tony Capozzoli	Sam Crabb
Change to mobile / outreach			
Charlton Horethorne	Blackmore Vale	Tim Inglefield William Wallace	William Wallace
North Cadbury	Cary	John Crossley Henry Hobhouse	Henry Hobhouse

Implications for Area North

In Area North, Post Office Limited proposes to close the Post Office in Bower Hinton, Martock. There has been an understandable local reaction to strongly object to the closure, and the Parish Council is considering the criteria used for closure against any known local circumstances, which might support a different decision at the end of the consultation period.

The Consultation

The consultation period began on 26th February and the deadline for responses is the **9th April 2008**. Information about successful campaigns in other areas indicates that a combination of demonstrating strong local opposition and **providing local technical information not already taken into account** in developing the proposals will be needed to change the status of an individual branch.

As stated in the Members' briefing, it is likely that if one Post Office is 'saved' another will be identified for closure (within the Bristol and Somerset Area) and a further six-week consultation will take place.

Following support to each community affected, ensuring that sufficient information is made available to build a local case, the District Council will also make a corporate response.

Working together in Somerset

A group of local authorities and retail / PO support organisations are working together – and are in regular contact with Post Office Ltd. Further information is available from the Head of Area Development (North).

Short, medium and longer term plans are being considered to a) support communities during the current consultation b) develop longer term solutions to preserve and enhance the remaining post offices – and the shops they often support.

Financial Implications

None from this report

Implications for Corporate Priorities

The Post Office Network Change programme will have implications for the following Corporate Aims:

Economic vitality and prosperity of the area

- The possible closure of businesses in rural areas.

Ensure safe, sustainable and cohesive communities

- Supporting and encouraging local people to engage with the consultation process.
- Impact on people satisfied with their neighbourhoods as a place to live.

Other Implications

Support for local shops, post offices and small to medium size businesses is identified as a priority in the Area North Development Plan.

Background Papers: *Post Office Limited Network Change Programme – Area Plan Proposal for Bristol and Somerset Members briefing*
