

HALESOWEN AREA COMMITTEE – 15 SEPTEMBER 2004

POST OFFICE – PROPOSED BRANCH CLOSURES

REPORT OF THE AREA LIAISON OFFICER

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To consider and comment on the proposal documents following a comprehensive review of the network of Post Office branches in relation to proposed branch closures.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 A letter was received from the Head of Area Post Office Ltd on 21 July 2004, setting out five proposal documents giving details of branches that have been put forward as potential closures and of the improvements agreed to surrounding branches.
- 2.2 The proposals made are within the framework of the Network Reinvention Programme and undertaken in order to stabilise provision of service to customers. The current urban network is too vast for the amount of custom received despite ongoing work to increase the handling of business and consequently, Post Office branches are being reduced to ensure future viability.
- 2.3 The review only considers those branches in the urban network, of which there are fifteen in the Halesowen and Rowley Regis areas. There are no branches classified as being rural. Following changes to the Post Office network, Gorsty Hill branch closed on 7 August 2003 and, as a result of the review, and in agreement with the sub-postmasters concerned, the following closures of a further seven branches are proposed:-
- Colley Lane branch, 85 Colley Lane, Halesowen, B63 2UD
 - Haden Cross branch, 503 Halesowen Road, Cradley Heath, Warley, B64 7JE
 - Hurst Green branch, 2 Fairfield Road, Halesowen, B62 9HZ
 - Rowley Regis branch, 29 Rowley Village, Rowley Regis, Warley, B65 9AS
 - Thornhill Road branch, 31 Thornhill Road, Halesowen, B63 1AU
 - Valley Road branch, 84 Valley Road, Cradley Heath, Warley, B64 7LR
 - Wynall Lane branch, 54 Wynall Lane, Cradley and Foxcote, Halesowen, DY9 9AG

- 2.4 The proposals to close Post Offices in Colley Lane, Haden Cross, Valley Road, Thornhill Road and Wynnall Lane branches are owing to the poor locality and use of the premises and having a limited retail offer. There are direct bus routes that connect these branches to at least one of the alternative branches, which are all within one mile and are also located in much busier shopping locations.
- 2.5 The Post Office Hurst Green branch is located within a convenience store, however it suffers from relatively low levels of usage and has seen a decline in custom over the past three years. There are direct bus services to each of the alternative branches including Post Office Blackheath branch, which is situated within a vibrant retail area.
- 2.6 The final closure of Post Office Rowley Regis branch is currently operated by Tesco under the T&S brand. Tesco have given notice that they intend to cease operating a Post Office branch from this location on 7 August 2004 and their decision has been factored in the review of the area. This branch is situated within a convenience store and has seen a decline in custom over the last three years. There are two alternative branches located within one mile, both of which are on a direct bus route from Rowley Regis branch. The main receiving branch is located in the vibrant shopping area of Blackheath approximately 0.5 miles away and the sub-postmaster at this branch has confirmed a commitment to invest in excess of £13,000 for improvements to benefit customers.
- 2.7 In addition to considering the effect the proposed closures would have on customers, the review has taken into account the potential impact infrastructure developments within the constituency would have on the long-term viability of branches in the area. The investments by David Wilson Homes Britannia Park development, housing development off King Street in Old Hill, housing development near to the station in the Old Hill area, the Barratt Homes development in Highfield Lane and potential housing sites in Halesowen town centre have been considered and it is believed that the proposed branch closures would not have a positive impact on these plans. However, in the longer term these schemes are predicted to impact on Blackheath, Halesowen and Old Hill Post Office branches, which are not being proposed for closure.
- 2.8 If proposals are given the go ahead, customer advisors will be placed in the closing branches to help customers choose the most convenient option for them. Full details of all Post Office branches can be obtained by contacting the customer helpline on 0845 22 33 44 or by visiting the website at www.postoffice.co.uk.

3.0 PROPOSALS

- 3.1 That the Halesowen Area Committee considers and comments on the proposed Post Office branch closures for the Halesowen and Rowley Regis area and that comments be submitted to the National Consultation Team by 15 September 2004.

4.0 FINANCE

4.1 This report has no direct financial implications.

5.0 LAW

5.1 This report has no direct legal requirements.

6.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

6.1 This report complies with the Council's Equal Opportunities Policies.

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 That approval be given to the proposals set out in paragraph 3.1 above.

8.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

8.1 Proposed Branch Closure Letter from Post Office dated 21 July 2004

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AREA LIAISON OFFICER

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