

CENTRAL DUDLEY AREA COMMITTEE: 2ND SEPTEMBER 2004

POST OFFICE - POTENTIAL BRANCH CLOSURE

REPORT OF THE AREA LIAISON OFFICER

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To consider a response to the Post Office in respect of a proposal to close the three Post Office branches within the Central Dudley Area.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1. The Post Office is currently undertaking public consultation with regard to a number of potential branch closures throughout the Borough.
- 2.2. Within the area covered by the Central Dudley Area Committee, they are proposing to close the branches at 29 Wellington Road Dudley, 91-93 Watsons Green, Kates Hill and 93 Priory Road Dudley. The proposal has been made within the framework of the Post Office's Network Reinvention programme, which they are undertaking in order to stabilise provision of services to their customers. The Post Office states that the current urban network is too vast for the amount of custom that they receive despite ongoing work to increase the business that they handle. Accordingly, the Post Office is having to reduce the number of branches to ensure future viability. However, they state that there will still be a significantly large urban network with continuing access for customers.
- 2.3. With regard to the Wellington Road branch, the Post Office state that the branch is located in premises that are poorly used and it has a high quality branch within 1 mile.
- 2.4. With regard to the Kate's Hill branch, the Post Office has stated that this branch is situated within a convenience store which suffers from relatively low levels of usage, given its proximity to the main branch in Dudley and the nearby superstore. Two of the alternatives are within 0.7 miles, the nearest being 0.5 miles away and there are direct bus services from Kate's Hill branch with concessionary schemes. The sub postmasters at Post Office Tivdale Road and Dixons Green have indicated that if the proposed closure goes ahead there is in excess of £33,000 to make improvements to the Tivdale Road and Dixons Green Post Offices.
- 2.5. With regard to the Priory Branch, the Post Office has stated that this branch is located in premises that are poorly used, have a limited retail offer and have suffered from under investment. The Priory branch has seen a continued decline in custom over the past 3 years. The alternatives identified by the Post Office are Post Office Dudley and Wren's Nest branches, both of which are located 0.7 miles away in much more vibrant shopping locations. The Postmistress at Post Office Wren's Nest branch has committed to invest £15,000 to improve her branch for the benefit of customers, should the proposal

to close The Priory proceed. The main branch in Dudley benefits from a direct bus service.

- 2.6. Public consultation on the proposal began on the 22nd July 2004 and will end on the 15th September 2004. After the consultation, the Post Office say that they will carefully consider all of the feedback before any final decision is taken. However, if the decision is taken to proceed with the closure, this process will start in November 2004.

3.0 PROPOSAL

- 3.1. It is proposed that the Area Committee consider the proposed closure of the 91-93 Watsons Green Road Kate's Hill; 29 Wellington Road Dudley and 93 Priory Road Dudley and submit its views to the Post Office.

4.0 FINANCE

- 4.1. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

5. LAW

- 5.1. Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 enables the Council to do any thing that is calculated to facilitate or is conducive or incidental to the discharge of its functions.

6.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND DIVERSITY

- 6.1. This report complies fully with the Council's policies on equal opportunities and diversity.

7.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 7.1. It is recommended that the Area Committee consider the proposed closure of the Post Offices in the area covered by Central Dudley Area Committee and submit its views to the Post Office.

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L. WARREN

Area Liaison Officer.

Contact Officer: Joan Rees Ext: 5242.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Consultation documents from the Post Office dated the 21st July 2004.