

STOURBRIDGE AREA COMMITTEE – 16th June, 2008

British Telecom – Consultation on Proposed Public Payphone Removals

Purpose Of Report

1. To consider British Telecom's (BT) current programme of proposed public payphone removals, in the area of this Committee, and to comment accordingly.

Background

2. As part of BT's Universal Service Obligation, they are required to provide adequate coverage of public payphones.
3. BT have written stating that, owing to the changes in the communications culture in recent years, mainly through the increase in mobile phone ownership, they have had to strike a balance between the provision of an effective payphone service and financial viability issues, and that they are constantly needing to review payphone usage and, on occasions, to look to realign public payphone provision more closely to the reducing demand that exists.
4. In compliance with the obligations placed on them by the Office of Communications (Ofcom), BT have written to the Council as part of a formal consultation process regarding their proposals to remove a total 19 public payphones within the Borough, these being indicated in Appendix 1 to this report.
5. In addition, BT have pointed out that they no longer have a requirement to consult on the removal of a public payphone which has another payphone within 400 metres and that, out of courtesy, they advise the Council that there are a number of these payphones within Dudley District that they will be addressing over the forthcoming months.
6. Notice of BT's proposals will be posted on or before 8th June, 2008, on which the formal consultation period will start. BT state that further that Ofcom place responsibility to initiate its own consultation process and canvas the views of local community, with the Local Authority.

Finance

7. There are no direct financial implications for the Council.

Law

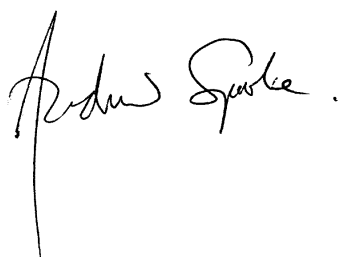
8. The letter from BT states that on, 14th March, 2006, OFCOM published a statement following their 2005 review of Universal Service in the Telecommunications market. Part of that statement (which may be viewed at www.ofcom.org.uk/consult/condocs/uso/uso_statement/) amended BT's obligations with the regard to the removal of payphone services. The effect of the amended obligations is described in paragraphs 4 and 5 above.
9. The terms of reference of Area Committees, as set out in Article 10 of the Council's Constitution, provide for consultation on issues of local relevance.

Equality Impact

10. The proposals of BT will impact on persons who do not have access to a home or mobile telephone. Therefore it is possible that certain disadvantaged sectors of the community may be particularly adversely affected..

Recommendation

11. That BT's proposals regarding the public payphones proposed for removal in the area of the Committee be noted and that, if it so wishes, the Committee make comments for submission to BT.



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A SPARKE
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

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List of Background Papers

Letter from BT payphones dated 12th May, 2008 (attached as Appendix 2)