

## **AGENDA ITEM NO.**

**REPORT TO:** Executive Board

**DATE:** 29th November 2007

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director – Corporate and Policy

**SUBJECT:** Post Office Closures in Halton

**WARDS:** Borough-wide

### **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to draw members' attention to the recent announcement from the Post Office which proposes the closure of three Post Offices in Halton.
- 1.2 The report also invites the Executive Board to respond formally to the Post Office on those proposals.

### **2.0 RECOMMENDED: That**

- (1) the Council raises strong objections to the proposed closure of Post Offices in Halton; and**
- (2) the Strategic Director – Corporate and Policy, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services, produces a detailed response to the Post Office by the 17th December 2007 deadline for submissions.**

### **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 3.1 Earlier this year the Post Office announced that there were likely to be 2,500 Post Office closures as a result of their Network Change Programme. The Council raised concerns at that time about the impact the closure of a Post Office has for local communities and made a strong case to support the retention of the existing Post Office provision in the Borough.
- 3.2 On 6th November 2007 the Post Office published its Area Plan Proposal for Merseyside, Wirral and Cheshire with Wigan, Leigh and Makerfield. Those proposals show that the following three Post Offices in Halton are proposed for closure:
  - Appleton Village, Appleton, Widnes
  - Hale Road, Halebank, Widnes
  - Stenhills, Picton Avenue, Runcorn

- 3.3 Following that announcement, all members of the Council were informed and invited to provide their own views and comments on the proposed closure given their local knowledge of the area. Local members are actively working with their local communities in raising strong objections to the proposals and are part of the process of developing a strong case for their retention.
- 3.4 Working with local members and the local community, a detailed case is being prepared for submission to the Post Office by 17th December 2007.
- 3.5 The case will emphasise and build upon the following key points:
- these closures follow on from previous closure programmes and make easy access to services for many of the Borough's residents more and more challenging;
  - the Post Office plays a vital role in community life, helping to break down some of the isolation felt by those who live alone;
  - in an area classified by Government as having higher than average levels of deprivation, many of the population affected:
    - are more likely to be in receipt of benefits;
    - less likely to have a high street bank account;
    - less likely to own a car;
    - more likely to suffer from ill-health;
    - less likely to be able to afford public transport;
    - more likely to have caring responsibilities.
- 3.6 For these reasons it is vital people have easy access to a Post Office. This is particularly so for the elderly and infirm and people with young children.
- 3.7 Given that the consultation period runs until 17th December 2007, and that information is still being received and collated to support the case against closure, it is suggested that the Executive Board support:
- strong objections being raised to all three proposed closures;
  - agrees to a detailed case being submitted against closure to the Post Office by the 17th December 2007 deadline; and

- authorises the Strategic Director – Corporate and Policy, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services, working with local members, to finalise that submission.

#### **4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 Post Offices play a key role in community life.

#### **5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 None.

#### **6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

##### **6.1 Children and Young People in Halton**

None.

##### **6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton**

The Post Office provides employment opportunities for local people which may be lost if these closures go ahead.

##### **6.3 A Healthy Halton**

None.

##### **6.4 A Safer Halton**

People feel a sense of safety in using their local Post Office and develop and trust and understanding with the staff who work there. Travelling further afield will affect that relationship.

##### **6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal**

None.

#### **7.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 There are no direct risks associated with this report.

#### **8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 Close access to Post Offices provides an important role in preventing isolation. This is particularly important for those who live alone or who do not have access to their own transport.

**9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D  
OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

<b>Document</b>	<b>Place of Inspection</b>	<b>Contact Officer</b>
Post Office Consultation document	6th Floor, Municipal Building	Ian Leivesley