

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Chief executive

Council Meeting 30 January 2008

Subject: Post Office Network Change Area Plan Decision

1. Purpose

- 1.1** To inform members of the Final Decision of the Post Office Network Change programme for this area.

2. Background

- 2.1** The Government agreed a programme of 12,500 closures of post offices throughout the U.K., approximately 17.5% of the existing number
- 2.2** Post Office Ltd announced in its Argyll and Bute, Greater Glasgow and Central Scotland Area Plan, of which West Dunbartonshire is part, that it proposed to close 44 branches (5 in West Dunbartonshire) and to replace 3 others with outreach services.
- 2.3** The Government expects Post Office Ltd., to implement these network changes within the next 18 months, with the first closures expected in January 2008.
- 2.4** On 24 October, 2007 the Post office announced that it proposes to close five post offices in West Dunbartonshire. These are:
- Bowling, Dumbarton Road.
 - Brucehill, Brucehill Road, Dumbarton
 - Newton, Glasgow road, Dumbarton
 - Levenvale, Argyll Street, Alexandria
 - Radnor Park, Kilbowie Road, Clydebank
- 2.5** At the same time as announcing these closures the Post Office launched its formal consultation, which ran for six weeks from 23 October, 2007 until the 3 of December, 2007.
- 2.6** On 10 January, 2008 the Post Office announced its final decision for West Dunbartonshire which is to close the following Post Office branches
- Bowling, Dumbarton Road.
 - Brucehill, Brucehill road, Dumbarton.
 - Levenvale, Argyle Street, Alexandria.
 - Newtown, 107 Glasgow Road, Dumbarton.
 - Radnor Park, 379 Kilbowie Road, Clydebank.

2.7 On the same day the Post Office announced that it had decided not to proceed with the closure of the Auchenback, Cultenhove, Hyndland and Kelvindale branches. Following a further review of the area the Post Office is now proposing that the following branches should be closed instead:

- Clynder branch, Victoria Building, Helensburgh.
- Pollokshaws branch, 193 Shawbridge Street, Pollokshaws, Glasgow.
- University branch, Macroberts Centre, the University, Stirling.
- Westmuir Street branch, 8 Backcauseway, Glasgow.

2.8 This means that the total number of Post Office branches proposed to close remains unchanged at 44.

2.9 Closures will take effect not less than four weeks after the announcement of the decision. Further information will be issued to confirm the actual dates of the closures.

3. Main Issues

3.1 Post Office Ltd has provided us with the following explanation as to why they have chosen to close these five branch post offices in the West Dunbartonshire area:

3.2 Bowling branch

- The consultation feedback for this branch raised general concerns about the proposal and some respondents highlighted plans for a new housing estate.
- In considering this branch for closure, Post Office Ltd noted that there is a regular bus service to the alternative branches, which offer longer opening hours and a wider range of products. Both alternative branches have parking provision. Currently 50 new homes are under construction and options for further development are currently being explored. Both alternative branches have the capacity to cope with any additional business this development may currently deliver. Having regard to these and all other relevant factors the final decision has been made to proceed to with the closure of this branch.

3.3 Brucehill branch

- Concerns were raised about the deprived nature of the area and the impact of closure on elderly and vulnerable customer groups. Some respondents were concerned that the existing retailer would close and that the alternative branches were already busy.
- From its visits to the area, Post Office Ltd noted that Dumbarton Post Office is located less than a mile from the Brucehill Post Office branch and has regular and well used public transport which provides access to the shopping area and pedestrian precinct in Dumbarton. Parking is also available within 100 yards of the branch, with provision for disabled badge holders. Recently an ATM has been installed at Brucehill by the local retailer and this will continue to provide access to cash for customers as the store will remain open. Having regard to these and all other relevant factors, Post Office Ltd has decided to proceed with the closure of this branch.

3.4 Levensvale branch

- The common themes in response to the proposed closure of Levensvale were that the proposal would disadvantage the elderly and those with disabilities, and that the alternative branches were too far away, making access problematic.
- There are two alternative branches within just over half a mile, with a frequent bus service providing free travel to the over 60's and disabled customers. Both branches provide access for disabled customers either by level entry or a ramp. Parking is available outside both branches. Having regard to these and all other relevant factors, the final decision has been made to proceed with the closure of this branch.

3.5 Newton branch

- Concerns were raised relating to the high number of elderly and customers with disabilities and the journey to the alternative branches.
- The points raised during consultation have been noted and considered. The alternative branches are 0.5 and 0.9 of a mile away, and they offer longer opening hours and a wider range of products. There is a regular bus service with free travel for the over 60's and disabled customers. Both alternative branches are accessible by a ramp or level access and parking is available within the vicinity. Taking these and all other relevant factors into account, the final decision has been made to proceed with the closure of this branch.

3.6 Radnor Park branch

- Respondents said that the branch was essential to the local community. Some people commented on the ability of the alternative branches to cope with the additional custom, especially given the closure of Parkhall Post Office branch due to an explosion. Concern was also expressed regarding the impact of closure on elderly residents and customers with disabilities.
- Due consideration was given to the demographics of the community, proximity of nearby branches, parking provision and public transport services. From its visits to the area, Post office Ltd noted that the nearest alternative branch, Clydebank Post Office is within 0.7 of a mile and is situated within the main shopping area of the town. Parking is available behind the branch with dedicated disabled parking bays for badge holders. Post Office Ltd has carefully considered capacity at this branch and believes the branch has sufficient to absorb any additional customers. Clydebank Post Office branch provides longer opening hours and a wider range of products and services. There is a frequent bus service between the both alternative branches with free travel provided for the over 60's and disabled customers and there is access to dial a bus in the area. Both alternative branches have level access for disabled customers. Having considered these and all other relevant factors, the final decision is to proceed with the closure of this branch.

4. Personnel Issues

4.1 There are no personnel issues.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 The council receives around £300,000 in Council Tax transactions per month through the Post Office network.

6. Risk Analysis

6.1 It was not necessary to carry out a risk assessment.

7. Recommendations

7.1 **Council is being asked to consider the content of this report and decide on any further action which it might wish to take.**

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David McMillan
Chief Executive
Date: 17 January 2008

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Appendices: None

Background Papers: Post Office Ltd, Network Change Programme, Area Plan Decision Booklet.

Wards Affected: All