

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by Chief Executive

Council Meeting: 26 September 2007

Subject: The Post Office Network Change Programme

1. Purpose

This report is to inform members of the proposed programme of post office closures in West Dunbartonshire.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Government has agreed a programme of 12,500 closures of post offices throughout the U.K., approximately 17.5% of the existing number. In Scotland this means that almost 300 Post Offices can be expected to close.
- 2.2 The Government expects Post Office Ltd., to implement these network changes within the next 18 months. To do this Post Office Ltd have established a programme which divides the U.K. into 50 districts and a local area plan will be developed for each area. The local area plan for the area which includes West Dunbartonshire is currently being developed. A programme of consultation will follow with West Dunbartonshire's plan being announced in October, 2007.
- 2.3 The public consultation for this area which will follow the release of the area plan will not address the need to close post offices, as this has been agreed by the Government. Instead consultation will be seeking views on the most effective way in which the Government's policy can be implemented. No final decisions on the implementation of the programme will be made until the public consultation has been conducted and responses considered.
- 2.4 As part of the Post Office Urban Re-invention programme, post offices in Duntocher Clydebank, Fleming Avenue Clydebank, and Haldane Vale of Leven closed between 2004 and 2006.

3. Main Issues

- 3.1 The criteria to be used by Post Office Ltd. in considering closures

Access Criteria

- Nationally 99% of the population to be within 3 miles and 90% to be within 1 mile of a post office
- In deprived urban areas, 99% of the population to be within 1 mile of a post office
- In urban areas 95% of the population to be within 1 mile of a post office

Other Criteria

- Regeneration and development plans for this area
- Details of any proposed new settlements

- Any major road schemes likely to have a material impact on accessibility between communities
 - Any significant public transport changes including enhancements, new provisions and likely withdrawal of key services
 - Information on practical issues involved in accessing alternative branches e.g. topography, barriers to access.
 - Details of any negative economic impacts in terms of associated business, services, and especially one person enterprises.
- 3.2 Currently within West Dunbartonshire 100% of the population live within 3 miles and around 99% within 1 mile of a Post Office. In a number of locations there are up to 3-4 Post Offices within a 1 mile radius. The current position can be seen on Map numbers 1a and 1b.
- 3.3 On the assumption that the Government will close around 300 Post Offices in Scotland, it appears reasonable that the Council's efforts should be directed towards retaining those Post Offices that fit with the Access and other Criteria indicated above, and that the Council's regeneration initiatives are also used to reinforce those Post Offices that the Council wish to retain as a priority.
- 3.4 Currently only Milton, and some properties on Russell Road, Duntocher and some remote farms are not within 1 mile of a Post Office, this is around 1,100 people or around 1% of the population. In all other areas within West Dunbartonshire residents are within 1 mile of at least 1 Post Office.
- 3.5 Much of the Council's regeneration efforts have been focussed on the town centres of Clydebank, Dumbarton and Alexandria, and their related waterfront areas. These areas form the heart of the communities they serve and it is the place where a number of retail, business, office and cultural activities are located. Considerable sums of money have been expended within these areas over the recent past both in the private and public sector. In addition there are plans to undertake further regeneration projects within these areas. These Post Offices also collect significant amounts of Council Tax and are important sources of revenue for the Council. Therefore as a starting point it is recommended that those Post Offices located within the town centres of Clydebank, Dumbarton and Alexandria are retained as a priority.
- 3.6 The West Dunbartonshire Local Plan sets out the regeneration priorities for the area. In addition to the three town centres and related waterfront areas, the waterfront at Bowling and Strathleven are identified as regeneration priorities. It is likely that in the foreseeable future there will be considerable investment to these areas. and therefore the Council should ensure that these areas are within 1 mile of a Post Office.
- 3.7 West Dunbartonshire also experiences high levels of deprivation as evidenced through the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation, and therefore it is essential that those areas that are currently identified as being deprived should not suffer further loss of services, it is therefore recommended that all areas within the 15%

most deprived data zones should be within 1 mile of a Post Office. The areas that are identified as being within the 15% most deprived data zones are Dumbarton West, Bellsmyre, Renton, New Bonhill, Central Alexandria, Jamestown, Rosshead and Haldane. It is vital therefore that these areas retain a Post Office that is within 1 mile of them.

There are 19 Post Offices within West Dunbartonshire

Clydebank Town Centre	Hardgate	Parkhall
Dalmuir	Radnor Park	Old Kilpatrick
Bowling	Silverton	Dumbarton East
Dumbarton Town Centre	Bellsmyre	Brucehill
Ladyton	Alexandria Town Centre	Levenvale
Balloch	Renton	Gartocharn
Tullichewan		

- 3.8 In terms of the Council's regeneration priorities it is recommended that the Post Offices at Clydebank Town Centre, Dumbarton Town Centre, Alexandria Town Centre and Bowling should be a priority for retention. To ensure that the most deprived parts of West Dunbartonshire are within 1 mile of a Post Office then it is recommended Hardgate, Dalmuir, Brucehill, Bellsmyre, Renton and Balloch should be also be retained. This leaves substantial parts of the community in excess of 1 mile from a Post Office. However if Old Kilpatrick, Silverton, Ladyton and Gartocharn are also retained then the existing level of 99% of the population of West Dunbartonshire being located within 1 mile of a Post Office remains. However, there is a strong argument to retain the post office at Tulliechewan to provide an alternative option to Balloch for the communities of Rosshead, Levenvale and Haldane. Similarly there is a good argument to retain the post office in Radnor Park, to serve the very elderly community of Parkhall and North Kilbowie whose post office has been destroyed by fire and is unlikely to be rebuilt.

4. Personnel Issues

- 4.1 There are no personnel implications.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 There are no financial implications.

6. Risk Analysis

- 6.1 Without the Council co-ordinating a response, it is likely that Post Office Ltd., will impose closures across West Dunbartonshire over which the Council will have no control.

7. Recommendation

- 7.1 That Council agree one of the following options, all of which provide a post office service within 1 mile to 99% of the population of West Dunbartonshire. These 3 options also protect current investment in regeneration priorities and provide a service to people living in the most deprived communities across West Dunbartonshire.

7.2 Option 1

The Council seeks to retain the following 14 Post Offices: The 3 Town Centre Post Offices at Clydebank Town Centre, Dumbarton Town Centre and Alexandria; and 11 Local Post Offices at Hardgate, Dalmuir, Bowling, Old Kilpatrick; Silverton, Bellsmyre, and Brucehill and Renton, Ladyton, Balloch and Gartocharn. This option can be seen on Map numbers 2a and 2b.

Option 2

- 7.3 The Council seeks to retain 15 Post Offices which are the same as those listed in option 1 but provides one additional post office at Tulliechewan. The option can be seen on Map numbers 3a and 3b.

7.4 Option 3

The Council seeks to retain 16 Post Offices which are the same as those listed in option 1 but with additional post offices at Tulliechewan and Radnor Park. This option can be seen on Map numbers 4a and 4b.

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Date: 18 September 2007

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Appendix: **Maps**

Background Papers: **The Post Office Network Change Programme**

Wards Affected: **All Wards**