

CORPORATE RESOURCES POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP

MEETING, 18TH JULY, 2008

Present – Councillors Morris (Chairman), Mrs. Thomas (Vice-Chairman), Adia, P. Allen (as deputy for Councillor Shaw), R. Allen, Hayes, Iqbal, and J. Walsh.

Also in Attendance

Mr. S. Harriss	-	Chief Executive
Mr. S. Arnfield	-	Director of Corporate Resources
Mr. A. Walker	-	Head of Service (Enterprise, Employment and Skills)
Mr. K. Durkin	-	Head of Older People Strategy and Involvement
Ms. N. Connell	-	Manager, Neighbourhood Renewal Team
Mrs. V. Ridge	-	Principal Democratic Services Officer

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Councillor Shaw.

Councillor Morris in the Chair.

5. MINUTES

The minutes of the proceedings of the meeting of the Policy Development Group held on 20th June, 2008 were submitted and signed as a correct record.

6. SUMMARY OF THE POTENTIAL IMPACT OF THE PROPOSED POST OFFICE CLOSURES IN BOLTON

Further to the Council's meeting on 23rd April, 2008 and the Executive's meeting on 2nd June, 2008 the Director of Corporate Resources submitted a report which provided a summary of the potential impact of the proposed closure of seven Post Offices in Bolton and focussed on the impact on deprived neighbourhoods.

The branches proposed for closure were Astley Bridge, Ainsworth Lane, Morris Green, Moses Gate, Daisy Hill, Hart Common and Higher Chorley Old Road.

It was stated that the Area Plan for Greater Manchester and High Peak was published on 10th June, 2008 and there had been a six week public consultation period for the public to comment on the specific branch closures.

The report examined possible outcomes of the local Post Office branch closing in a deprived neighbourhood and that the closure of a local branch could lead

to a greater social exclusion for some members of the communities.

The report also examined the potential problems with accessing alternative branches.

Following the Council resolution the Director of Corporate Resources had contacted the Post Office to seek information on how Council's might be able to support Post Offices. Owing to several requests for such guidance it was only received on 10th July, 2008 and was appended to the report. The Guidance provided advice to Local Authorities who were considering supporting the retention of Post Offices which planned to be closed. In particular, the Executive Member was informed of the following:-

- Post Office limited costs must be covered;
- The establishment of services in these locations must not impact on surrounding outlets;
- Stability, liability and guarantee of funding; and
- State aid compliance.

Members were advised that the Council would also need to carefully consider the financial commitment required to support the retention of any Post Offices and the longer term viability and responsibilities that would be involved.

The report considered the impact of the proposed individual branch closures.

Members views were sought as to whether the Council should make representations to the Post Office on the proposed closures and, if so, these would need to be made by 21st July, 2008.

A discussion ensued regarding the proposals and it was felt the Council should, as a matter of general principle, object to the proposed closures, however, in addition specific objections should be made in relation to the closure of the following post offices:-

- Morris Green;
- Daisy Hill;
- Ainsworth Lane; and
- Higher Chorley Old Road

It was agreed that:-

(i) The Executive Member for Strategy and External Relationships be recommended to use his emergency powers to ensure that the Council's representations in relation to the proposed closures of post offices in Bolton be received by the Post Office by 21st July, 2008 and that this be ratified by the Executive at it's meeting on 25th July, 2008; and

(ii) A report on the outcome of the consultation exercise be submitted to a future meeting of the Policy Development Group once the outcome is known.

(The meeting started at 10.30 a.m. and finished at 11.00 a.m.)