

REPORT TO: Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 20 June 2007

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director – Environment

SUBJECT: Future of Halton Lea Post Office

WARDS: Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to draw Members' attention to the consultation exercise being undertaken by the Post Office regarding the future arrangements for the provision of Post Office services in Halton Lea Shopping Centre. Representatives of the Post Office have been invited to attend the meeting and to address the Board on its proposals.

2.0 RECOMMENDED that the Board:

- (1) Hears from the representative of the Post Office the details of the changes proposed for the delivery of the post office service at Halton Lea**
- (2) Comments appropriately to the Strategic Director Corporate and Policy who, in consultation with the Executive Board Member for Corporate Services, has been authorised by The Executive Board to make further comments to the Post Office.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 The Executive Board, at its meeting on 29th March 2007, considered a report which provided details of a consultation paper issued by the Department for Trade and Industry on the future of the Post Office network. The Executive Board supported the actions taken by the Chief Executive in expressing concern about any proposals that reduce the Post Office network in Halton.

3.2 The Council has now been consulted by the Post Office regarding proposals to change the arrangements for providing Post Office services in Halton Lea, Runcorn. Their proposal is to transfer the existing Post Office services from their existing location at 88 Forest Walk to the Branch of W. H. Smith within Halton Lea. This was to be have been considered by the Executive Board on 7th. June 2007.

3.3 Attached as Appendix 1 to this report is a copy of a letter received from the National Consultation Manager from Post Office Ltd. which provides more details of the proposals.

- 3.4 In order to understand better the proposals being put forward by the Post Office, the Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board has invited representatives from the Post Office to address this meeting to provide more details on the proposed changes. These will be Peter Mylchreest (Lead Project Manager - WH Smith Transfers) and Wendy Martin (Senior External Relations Manager).
- 3.5 Unfortunately, this will be after the date set by the Post Office for the receipt of comments, 14th June 2007. With this in mind the Executive Board on 7th June 2007 resolved that the Council should write in the interim period to the Post Office objecting to the proposed new arrangements. The Council also asked to see the proposed physical layout of the new facilities in W. H. Smith, given concerns that have been expressed about the capacity of the W. H. Smith premises to house such a facility.
- 3.6 An informal discussion has been held with Fordgate, the owners of Halton Lea. Their comments included:
- They are very disappointed with the move, but within the existing lease agreements they cannot do anything about it.
 - The current post office is very busy and they have concerns about how W H Smith are going to cope with the management of the additional footfall.
 - The moving of the post office will leave the existing adjacent shops there with much reduced passing footfall. The danger is that this will result in a very dead corner in Halton Lea.
 - The post office has a residue of lease left on their current premises which Fordgate had not, at that time, been contacted about.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Council needs to fully understand the impact such a change will have on the vitality and visibility of the Town Centre. Post Offices play an important role in the community beyond the provision of services. The Council will want to be reassured that there will be no reduction in services.

5.0 RISK ANALYSIS

- 5.1 There are no direct risk implications for the Council.

6.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

- 6.1 The Post Office provides an important service access point for many individuals. It is vital the service remains accessible to all who need to use it.

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

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Consultation letter	I. Leivesley's Office, 6th Floor, Municipal Building, Widnes	I. Leivesley