

URBAN RENEWAL POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

At a meeting of the Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board held on Thursday, 13 December 2007 at Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn

Present: Councillors Hignett (Chairman), Morley (Vice-Chairman), P. Blackmore, Leadbetter, Murray, Nolan, Rowe and Thompson

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Bradshaw and E. Cargill

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: C. Halpin, D. Sutton, I. Leivesley and A. Villiers

Also in attendance: Councillors Polhill, Bryant, Nelson, E. Ratcliffe, Wallace, Wharton and Wright and 3 Members of the Public.

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

	<i>Action</i>
URB28 MINUTES	
The Minutes of the meeting held on 21 January 2007 having been printed and circulated were signed as a correct record.	
URB29 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME	
It was confirmed that no public questions had been received.	
URB30 STANDING ORDER 34	
The Board agreed to suspend Standing Order 34 to allow the Ward Councillors and Executive Portfolio Holders present to speak in relation to the following item.	
RESOLVED; That Standing Order 34 be suspended for the duration of the meeting.	
URB31 POST OFFICE CLOSURES IN HALTON	
The Board received a report of the Strategic Director, Corporate and Policy which gave details of the Post Office's	

proposal to close three Post Offices in Halton and which gave details of the case being put forward by the Council against the closure.

At its meeting on 29th November 2007, the Executive Board considered a report which outlined the Post Office's proposals. The Board agreed that the Council should raise strong objections to the proposed closures and that the Strategic Director, Corporate and Policy, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services, submit a detailed response supporting that view to the Post Office by 17th December 2007 and prior to this Performance Board be provided with the opportunity to comment on that submission. Members were provided with a copy of the draft Council's response and asked to comment on the submission prior to it being sent to the Post Office.

It was noted that the three Post Offices identified for closure in the proposals were Appleton Village and Hale Village in Widnes, and Stenhills Crescent in Runcorn.

The Strategic Director, Corporate and Policy read out statements from both Post Office Ltd and from the Councillors for the Appleton Ward.

Arising from the discussion the following points were raised, in particular that;

- during consultation on previous Post Office closures assurances were given that no further closures would be likely, however in light of these proposals it was felt that closures were becoming a trend and the Board were concerned about potential next phases;
- the Stenhills Crescent Post Office was the only Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliant Post Office where the alternative offered were not;
- that there was a need to emphasise the impact that such closures would have on local communities;
- it would be helpful to engage community and voluntary groups such as age concern for their support and copies of the Council's Submission should be sent them and partners;
- this was unlikely to be the final closures of Post Offices, that there was a strong possibility of more closures in the future and that the Council needed to put a strong case forward against them at the present time; and
- it was felt that there was an opportunity for the Post Office to work in partnership with the Council and other partners in these areas to maintain services and

that dialogue should take place with the Council prior to any final decision being taken.

RESOLVED: That

Strategic Director,
Environment

- (1) Post Office Ltd be invited to enter into a dialogue with the Council to explore how these vital services can be saved;
- (2) the submission be amended to include:
 - (a) a stronger stand regarding the concerns raised in relation to the trend of closures and about possible future of other Post Offices in the area; and
 - (b) the importance of DDA compliance and the practical difficulties for customers in accessing non compliant Post Offices; and
- (3) Post Office Ltd be requested to defer their decision and explore the possibility of working in partnership with the Council to secure the future of the post offices.

Meeting ended at 7.10 p.m.