



## Belfast City Council

<b>Report to:</b>	Strategic Policy & Resources Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>CONSULTATION – POST OFFICE NETWORK CHANGE PROGRAMME NORTHERN IRELAND</b>
<b>Date:</b>	Tuesday 10th June 2008
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Gerry Millar, Director of Improvement, ext 6217
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Patricia Flynn, Strategic Planning and Policy Officer, ext 6204

### Relevant Background Information

#### Purpose

To bring to the attention of the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee details of the results of a consultation by Post Office Ltd on its Network Change Programme – Area Plan Proposal Northern Ireland. This programme is to implement measures proposed by the Government to modernise and reshape the network of Post Office branches. The consultation ran from 1st April 2008 to 12th May 2008. The results were published on 2<sup>nd</sup> June.

#### Background

The Report to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on Friday 18<sup>th</sup> April detailed the background to the Network Change Programme, the restrictions and minimum access criteria imposed by the Government with regard to the branches to close and the types of Outreach Services suggested in place of some of the branches to close.

#### Summary of the Results of the Consultation on Local Area Plan Proposals

During the local public consultation period in Northern Ireland, Post Office Ltd attended 97 meetings with customers and their representatives to generate feedback and received in excess of 4400 pieces of correspondence in relation to their proposals.

In conclusion to the consultation process, Post Office Ltd has decided to retain a total of 496 branches across Northern Ireland and to precede with 38 of the closures and 53 of the replacement Outreach Services in the Area Plan Proposal. The announcement concerning one branch has been postponed; however this branch is not in the Belfast City Council area.

### Key Issues

#### Implications for Belfast

- There are 38 Post Office branches proposed for closure, 9 of which are in the Belfast City Council area (24% of planned closures).
- The branches to close in the Belfast City Council area are:
  - Belmont, 1 Campbell Park Avenue, Belfast BT4 3FH, Victoria Electoral Area.
  - Blacks Road, 120 Blacks Road, Belfast BT10 0NF, Upper Falls Electoral Area.
  - Carlisle Circus, 14 Antrim Road, Belfast BT15 2AA, Oldpark Electoral Area.
  - Cave Hill, 634 Antrim Road, Belfast BT15 5GP, Castle Electoral Area.
  - Grosvenor Street, 263 Grosvenor Road, Belfast BT12 4LL, Lower Falls Electoral Area.
  - Lisburn Road, 217 Lisburn Road, Belfast BT9 7EJ, Balmoral Electoral Area.
  - Orangefield, 276 Castlereagh Road, Belfast BT5 6AD, Pottinger Electoral Area.
  - Ormeau Road, 160 Ormeau Road, Belfast BT7 2ED, Laganbank Electoral Area.
  - Summerhill, 3 Summerhill Avenue, Belfast BT5 7HD, Victoria Electoral Area.

- There is one branch in the Belfast City area that will not close following the consultation:
  - The Throne, The Throne Centre, Whitewell Road, Belfast BT36 7EX, Castle Electoral Area.
- None of the branches to close in the Belfast City area will be replaced with an Outreach Service.
- Within the Belfast City Council area, 52 Post Office branches will remain in the Network, this equates to 10.6% of the total number branches within the Northern Ireland Network, and almost 34.4% of the proposed future Network available within urban towns and cities across the province.

During the consultation process BCC sent correspondence to Postwatch, NILGA and the Northern Ireland Assembly Ad hoc Committee on Local Postal services outlining the Council's position concerning post office branch closures. Postwatch sent the Council a copy of their submission to Post Office Ltd for information. NILGA included a summary of individual council responses in their submission to Post Office Ltd. The NI Assembly Ad Hoc Committee on Local Postal Services submitted its report to the Assembly on 2<sup>nd</sup> June and agreed it should be submitted to the Secretary of State for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform as a report of the Northern Ireland Assembly. The full report is available on the Assembly website and several points that are contained within the report are points raised by the Council. Belfast City Council and Down Council appear to be the only councils to respond directly to the Assembly and these submissions are contained in the appendix of the Committee's report. The NILGA response is also included.

#### Further Details

The original public consultation document carried out by the Post Office on the Network (December 2006) and the Government's subsequent response to the consultation (May 2007) that has led to the Network Change Programme can be found on the Department for Business Enterprise & Regulatory Reform website in the consultations section, [www.berr.gov.uk/consultations](http://www.berr.gov.uk/consultations).

Post Office Ltd Local Area Plan Proposal for Northern Ireland which provided the basis for the consultation process in Northern Ireland from 1<sup>st</sup> April to 12<sup>th</sup> May 2008 is available from the Post Office website. Copies of the information relating to the branches affected in the Belfast City Council area have previously been provided to all party groups.

The Area Plan Decision booklet containing the results of the consultation process can be accessed from the websites below:-

[ftp://ftp.royalmail.com/Downloads/public/ctf/po/Northern\\_Ireland\\_decision\\_booklet.pdf](ftp://ftp.royalmail.com/Downloads/public/ctf/po/Northern_Ireland_decision_booklet.pdf)

[ftp://ftp.royalmail.com/Downloads/public/ctf/po/Northern\\_Ireland\\_Supplementary\\_Decision\\_booklet.pdf](ftp://ftp.royalmail.com/Downloads/public/ctf/po/Northern_Ireland_Supplementary_Decision_booklet.pdf)

<b>Resource Implications</b>
n/a

<b>Recommendations</b>
Members are asked to review this document for their information.

<b>Key to Abbreviations</b>

<b>Documents Attached</b>
N/A