

## **EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**

**KILMARNOCK SOUTH LOCAL COMMITTEE – 22 OCTOBER 2004**

### **PROPOSED CLOSURE OF LOCAL POST OFFICES WHATRIGGS ROAD, KILMARNOCK LINDSAY DRIVE, NEW FARM LOCH, KILMARNOCK**

#### **Report by Executive Director of Development and Property Services**

## **1 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1** To advise the Committee of proposals by Post Offices Ltd for the closure of branch Post offices at 81 Whattriggs Road, Kilmarnock and 18 Lindsay Drive, New Farm Loch, Kilmarnock and to invite the Committee to make appropriate representations to Post Offices Ltd.

## **2 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1** In recent years, the Royal Mail Group plc has experienced significant trading difficulties which have resulted in substantial losses being incurred. Following a major review of all aspects of its operation, the Royal Mail Group has developed a “three year renewal plan” which has the following strategic objectives :

- to improve customer service;
- to restore profitability;
- to deliver positive cash flows in the mails business; and
- to make Royal Mail a great place to work.

- 2.2** The plan is nearing the end of its first year of operation and is on track and delivering its objectives, with costs having been controlled, overheads reduced and finances stabilised with an expectation of the Group returning to profitability within the current trading year.

- 2.3** The “three year renewal programme” has six key themes :

- one mail delivery per day;
- automating and restructuring the mails business;
- restructure of UK parcels;
- a streamlined transport network;
- outsourcing / streamlining of non-core activities; and
- development of a viable and sustainable branch post office network.

- 2.4** The Royal Mail Group is currently involved in a nationwide programme of consultation about the “three year renewal plan”. A lunchtime seminar was held at the Park Suite on 5 September 2003, at which the Council was represented by Councillor McIntyre, Councillor Cree and John Spooner. The seminar was also attended by the local MP and MSP, a representative of Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire and other local interests.
- 2.5** At the seminar, it was explained that the “development of a viable and sustainable branch post office network” means the closure of urban post offices where there is an overprovision on a local basis. Post Office Ltd is also seeking opportunities for the imaginative development of the network of rural post offices to strengthen rural communities.
- 2.6** At the seminar, a commitment was given to form a local working group to help develop and secure the network of rural post offices in East Ayrshire. The first meeting of this Group was held on 14 November 2003.
- 2.7** Representative from the Local Committee made written representations and met with the Post Office to share local concerns about the proposed closure. The views expressed were noted but in the context of the trading position and financial viability of the post office operation at Titchfield Street, the proposed closure proceeded and was implemented in January 2004.

### **3 THE POST OFFICE – WHATRIGGS ROAD AND LINDSAY DRIVE, KILMARNOCK**

- 3.1** Post Office Ltd began a comprehensive review of the Post Office branches in Kilmarnock and Loudoun in May 2004 and this has now been completed. There are currently 17 Post Office branches in the Kilmarnock and Loudoun constituency. The review only considers those branches in the urban network, of which, there are 9 in this area.
- 3.2** As a result of the review the Post Office Ltd has written to the Chief Executive advising that it is proposing to close the branches at Whatriggs Road and Lindsay Drive on a permanent basis, with effect from an unspecified date in January 2005.
- 3.3** It is the view of the Post Office that both branches are located in small, poorly used premises and the subpostmasters have found it increasingly difficult to generate enough profit to allow for reinvestment. As a result, standards in both the Post Office and associated retail are very poor. The investment required to bring these branches up to an acceptable standard cannot be supported with the current business levels.
- 3.4** In considering the effect of the proposed closures on customers the review considered the availability of public transport, parking facilities, topography and ease of pedestrian access to the branches themselves.
- 3.5** The existing post boxes located just outside New Farm Loch and Whatriggs Road Branches will remain sited.

**3.6** In January 2004, as part of the initial review of the area, the Post Office closed the branch at Titchfield Street. The Post Office have claimed that customers have successfully migrated to the nominated receiving branches, where business has been absorbed without difficulty.

**3.7** Post Office Ltd has undertaken to consider views or suggestions on the proposed closure of the two branches before a final decision is taken and invites written submissions before 28<sup>th</sup> October 2004.

#### **4 OBSERVATIONS ON THE PROPOSALS – LINDSAY DRIVE**

**4.1** The main alternative Post Office branch available to local people is MacPhail Drive Kilmarnock, which is less than a mile walking distance from the branch at Lindsay Road. Other branches available are The Foregate, Kilmarnock and John Finnie Kilmarnock, both of which are some distance from Lindsay Drive.

#### **5 OBSERVATIONS ON THE PROPOSALS – WHATRIGGS ROAD**

**5.1** The main alternative Post Office branch available to local people is Central Avenue, Shortlees, Kilmarnock, which is less than a mile walking distance from the branch at Whatriggs Road. Other branches available are The Foregate, Kilmarnock and John Finnie Kilmarnock, both of which are some distance from Whatriggs Road.

#### **6 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

**6.1** The proposed closure of the Post Offices at Lindsay Drive and Whatriggs Road would mean the loss of a valuable community facility which would not accord with the objectives of the East Ayrshire Community Plan.

#### **7 FINANCIAL, LEGAL, AND PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

**7.1** There are no financial, legal, or personnel implications for the Council.

#### **8. RECOMMENDATION**

**8.1** That the Committee :

- 1. develops its view of the proposed closure of the Lindsay Street and Whatriggs Road Post Offices; and**
- 2. requests an early meeting with appropriate representatives of Post Offices Ltd for the Chair, Vice Chair, Local Member and 3 community representatives to put forward the view of the Kilmarnock South Local Committee.**

**JAMES LAVERY**  
**Executive Director of Development and Property Services**

18 October 2004/rp

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

**Nil**

**For further information please contact ROBER PATON, Head of Economic Development and Property at Council Headquarters on telephone 576142.**

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