

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

KILMARNOCK CENTRAL LOCAL COMMITTEE – 29 OCTOBER 2003

PROPOSED CLOSURE OF LOCAL POST OFFICE TITCHFIELD STREET, KILMARNOCK

Report by Director of Development Services

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1** To advise the Committee of proposals by Post Offices Ltd for the closure of the branch Post office at 48 Titchfield Street, in 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 has been scheduled for 14 November 2003 and the Council will be represented at it by John Spooner.

3 THE POST OFFICE – TITCHFIELD STREET BRANCH, KILMARNOCK

3.1 Post Office Ltd has written to the Chief Executive advising that it is proposed to close the Titchfield Street branch office on a permanent basis, with effect from an unspecified date in December 2003.

3.2 The review of the Titchfield Street Post Office was instigated by a request from the Sub-Postmaster to give up the post office. In coming to its decision to announce the proposed closure, Post Office Ltd has given “*consideration to aspects such as availability of public transport, parking facilities, topography and the ease of pedestrian access to the branches themselves*”.

3.3 Post Office Ltd has indicated that there are 10 post offices in East Ayrshire which are categorised as “urban” and that a full review of all of them will be undertaken as a single integrated exercise. This review is currently scheduled to begin in May 2004.

3.4 Post Office Ltd has undertaken to consider views or suggestions on the proposed closure of the Titchfield Street Post Office before a final decision is taken and invites written submissions before 5 November 2003.

4 OBSERVATIONS ON THE PROPOSALS

4.1 The alternative Post Office branches available to local people are at John Finnie Street and the Foregate, both of which are some distance for pedestrians from the branch at Titchfield Street.

4.2 The branch Post Office at Titchfield Street serves a local area in which there is a high proportion of elderly people – over 21% of the local residents are aged over 65, compared with a Scottish average of 16%..

4.3 The Post Office is a central facility within the Titchfield area of local shops. The ongoing viability of such a local shopping area is a key feature of the Council’s strategy for the regeneration of the town centre.

5 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The proposed closure of the Post Office at Titchfield Street would mean the loss of a valuable community facility which would not accord with the objectives of the East Ayrshire Community Plan.

6 FINANCIAL, LEGAL, AND PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no financial, legal, or personnel implications for the Council.

7. RECOMMENDATION

7.1 That the Committee :

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

STEPHEN CHORLEY
Director of Development Services

15 October 2003/jrs

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Nil

For further information please contact JOHN SPOONER, Business Development Manager at Council Headquarters on telephone 576143.

Implementation Officer : JOHN SPOONER