

Sustainable Development Select Committee		
Title	Post offices in Lewisham	
Contributor	Scrutiny Manager	Item 4
Class	Part 1 (open)	8 March 2017

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To provide the Committee with an update about proposed changes to post office services in Lewisham.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The Select Committee is asked to:
- Consider the contents of this report;
 - Note that invitations have been issued to representatives of the Post Office and the Communications Workers Union to attend the meeting on 8 March 2017.

3. Background

- 3.1 In January 2017, the Post Office announced plans to introduce changes to the operation of 37 of its branches, including a branch New Cross:

[Post Office Press release 10 January 2017: Post Office confirms further plans to safeguard high street branches¹](#)

- Post Office today confirmed that it would be seeking partners for 37 of its directly managed branches as part of its efforts to secure its services in communities around the UK for the long term. This is in addition to 93 previously announced during the course of the last calendar year, nearly half of which have now successfully relocated into retail stores.
- Roger Gale, Sales and Trade Marketing Director, said: “We’re committed to maintaining the Post Office’s special place on the high street and the changes we are making underpin our continued commitment to give communities in every part of the country access to essential services.
- “The Post Office’s network of more than 11,600 branches is easily the largest in the UK, with 17 million customer visits a week. The vast majority of these branches are run with partners, and in the locations announced today we believe this will also be a more sustainable approach for the long term. With consumer habits changing, and the high cost of maintaining premises in prime high street locations, franchising helps us to keep services where our customers want and need them.

¹ <http://corporate.postoffice.co.uk/our-media-centre#/pressreleases/post-office-confirms-further-plans-to-safeguard-high-street-branches-1733953>

- “We will take time to identify the right partners over the coming months and all proposals will be subject to local consultation.
- “Post Office has a strong record of supporting people through change and we will be keeping affected staff fully informed as we develop our plans.”

3.2 At its meeting on 22 February 2017, the Council adopted a motion calling for New Cross post office to remain open and for it to be operated and managed directly by the Post Office:

Lewisham Council meeting 22 February 2017: motion in the name of Councillor Dromey to be seconded by Councillor Dacres, Save New Cross Post Office²

The Council notes:

- That New Cross Post Office is under threat of closure. The Post Office announced on 10th January that it would be closing and franchising 37 Crown Post Offices across the country, including the New Cross branch.
- That these closures would lead to the loss of over 400 job nationwide, and they follow the announcement of 62 planned closures in 2016.
- That New Cross Post Office is well used by, and valued by the local community. Over a hundred people attended the demonstration and nearly 700 people have signed our petition to Save New Cross Post Office.
- Independent research shows that franchised Post Offices offer poorer disabled access, longer queuing times, worse customer service and fewer staff, often on minimum wage.

This Council believes:

- That the closure of New Cross Post Office is bad for our community. It would downgrade vital services to our local community.
- That the closure of New Cross Post Office is bad for our local economy. It would have a detrimental impact on businesses on New Cross Road and the local economy.
- That the closure of New Cross Post Office is bad for postal workers. It would lead to good quality, skilled jobs on decent pay being replaced by insecure and low-paid work.

This Council resolves:

- To affirm our opposition to the closure of New Cross Post Office.
- To offer our support to the local Save New Cross Post Office campaign, and to the CWU’s campaign against the closure of over 100 Post Offices.
- For the Mayor to write to Margot James MP, the Minister responsible for the Post Office, to raise our concerns about the potential franchise of New Cross Post Office.
- For the Mayor to write to Paula Vennells, the Chief Executive of the Post Office, calling on her to reverse the decision and protect our much-valued Post Office.”

²<http://councilmeetings.lewisham.gov.uk/documents/s47971/Motion%204%20Proposed%20Councillor%20Dromey%20Seconded%20Councillor%20Dacres.pdf>

4. Financial implications

- 4.1 There are no financial implications arising from the implementation of the recommendations in this report.

5. Legal implications

- 5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the implementation of the recommendations in this report. It should be noted that the Post Office is not a 'relevant partner authority' as defined in Chapter 1 Part 5 Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and as such is not required to send a representative to the meeting.

6. Equalities implications

- 6.1 There are no direct equalities implications arising from the implementation of the recommendation in this report.

Background documents

Meeting of Council, 22 February 2017:

<http://councilmeetings.lewisham.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=138&MId=4255&Ver=4>