

Note of the IMG group to discuss KCC's response to consultation on the Kent Area Plan for Post Office closures.

30th October 2007

Present:

Roger Gough

Roger Truelove

Charles Hibberd

Liz Harrison, Rural Regeneration Manager

Apologies:

Bill Hayton

Ian Chittenden

Members asked that the following key areas were highlighted in the KCC response:

- The lack of transparency
 - There is a lack of information in the public domain concerning the data that had been used to judge which post offices should close e.g. the precise scoring criteria, footfall etc
 - This makes it difficult for all to scrutinise.
 - Concern was also raised about the lack of transparency concerning where the £4 million a week losses for Post Office Ltd are coming from.
 - It was felt that Post Office should make further information publicly available for scrutiny to ensure that a sound and robust rationale exists to justify the proposed changes and the wider Network Change Programme.
- Data deficit and gaps
 - Gaps in readily available data has made it difficult for certain impacts to be taken on board, especially concerning the impact on the local economy.
 - The six week consultation period and short timescale for implementing closures does not provide sufficient time for a robust analysis to be undertaken to address these gaps (by any party)
 - The Analysis and Information Team are reviewing data sets to see what can be obtained from existing data.
- Failure to identify any outreach provision for Kent
 - There is great concern that no additional outreach provision has been identified for Kent within the area plan – or additional funding/ an adequate timescale for communities or local authorities to develop alternative delivery arrangements.

- Cash Access
 - The impacts regarding cash access for those living in areas where the Post Office represents the sole means of withdrawing cash free need to be highlighted – both in rural and suburban areas.
 - Closure of a post office in rural areas often leads to the withdrawal of financial services from rural areas as many banks have already closed rural branches.

Actions

- To ensure fairness to all communities affected, it was proposed that KCC's response should focus on the overarching concerns, with the feedback and correspondence from communities documented in an accompanying appendix. All members are to be contacted by Roger Gough to encourage them to supply additional evidence by the 5th November and ensure the most inclusive approach.