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<b>REPORT TO</b>	Council
<b>DATE:</b>	11 October 2006
<b>DEPARTMENT:</b>	Resources
<b>REPORTING OFFICER:</b>	Leader of the Council ( <i>Councillor Dr M Gardner</i> )
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	NOTICE OF MOTION – CLARO ROAD SORTING OFFICE
<b>WARDS AFFECTED:</b>	All those in HG1, HG2 and HG3 Areas (already affected)
<b>FORWARD PLAN REF:</b>	N/A

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 At the Council meeting held on 19 July 2006 Councillors Reg and Mrs Marsh proposed the following Notice of Motion: -

Claro Road Sorting Office previously opened from 7 am to 6 pm, Monday to Friday for the collection of undelivered mail. The Post Office has decided to drastically reduce the opening hours to 7 am to 12.30 pm, Monday to Saturday.

Taken together with the reduction in the number of local post offices in recent years, this is a totally unacceptable reduction of service.

This Council therefore asks the Chief Executive to write to the National Head of the Post Office:

- ◆ Deploring the decision to cut the opening hours at Claro Road Sorting Office;
- ◆ Asking him to consult fully with HBC and with residents about the opening hours that are actually needed by users;
- ◆ Asking him to implement the opening hours so determined.

1.2 The Notice of Motion was referred to me, as Leader of the Council. Consequently I met Councillors Reg and Mrs Marsh on 8 August 2006 to consider the Notice of Motion and discuss appropriate courses of action. The Director of Community Services, Les Williamson and Assistant

Economic Development Officer, Alan Sandy also attended.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATION**

2.1 That the Council note the position, and agree the following course of action:

The Chief Executive write to the Managing Director of Royal Mail, Mr Adam Crozier and the Sorting Office Manager, Mr Paul Wilkins, to express the Council's concern with regard to the decision to reduce the opening hours of the Collection Office to 7 am to 12.30 pm, Monday to Saturday and the subsequent impact of this decision upon a large number of the district's residents.

## **3.0 REASONS FOR MAKING THE DECISION**

3.1 To address the Notice of Motion.

## **4.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND RECOMMENDED FOR REJECTION**

4.1 None.

## **5.0 ACTION TAKEN – WHAT WAS AGREED**

5.1 A meeting was held between the Leader of the Council and Councillors R and Mrs Marsh on the 8 August 2006.

5.2 The decision focused around the levels of and reduction in customer service at Harrogate delivery office. There was general consensus that the service reduction would detrimentally impact upon local users.

5.3 The Assistant Economic Development Officer had met with the Sorting Office Manager, Mr Paul Wilkins prior to this meeting to query the reason for the reduction in service and obtain the background to the decision first hand.

5.4 The current hours for the collections office date back to the days when the sorting office had been located at East Parade in Harrogate. At the time of the move of the sorting office from East Parade to Claro Road, representations had been made by the Council to safeguard the service provision for local businesses and local users by the retention of the then collection office opening hours. The Post Office had agreed to the retention of the service to the level currently enjoyed by those living and working in HG1, 2 and 3 areas. The Post Office position is that this service level has been maintained as a concession since collection offices nationally open between 7 am and 12.30 pm. This concession benefits those homes and businesses located within the HG1, HG2 and HG3 postcodes only.

It is therefore the Post Office's intention to align the opening hours of the collection office in Harrogate by bringing it into line with opening hours operated by collection offices nationally and indeed that is now in operation. It was also acknowledged that there were issues regarding Post Office staff working hours and a shortage of staff generally that has also contributed to this issue. It was considered by the meeting that the move by the Post Office to reduce working hours was a service reduction, however the concession had for a number of years provided a service over and above that generally available across the UK.

- 5.5 Councillor R Marsh, whilst acknowledging this predicament, referred to the difficulties caused to members of the community when collecting their post, difficulties experienced in contacting the sorting office by telephone during office hours to make an appointment, or even complain about the service. The recent reduction in the number of urban and rural post offices throughout the district was also mentioned. The HG3 postcode extends as far as Nidderdale and therefore bearing in mind the distance of the sorting office itself from parts of the district together with the reduction in opening hours and the inherent public transport issues that face many of the Districts rural residents, it was considered that these changes posed real difficulties for some in terms of the collection of undelivered mail. For example people living in rural areas and working in Harrogate would find it impossible to collect mail during a working day since their lunch hour (their only opportunity) is insufficient to make the journey to the sorting office and back to work. In any event the Sorting office is unavailable to most people during the lunchtime period since it closes at 12.30pm. Therefore many residents have to make an extra journey on a Saturday morning to collect their mail. In fact anyone working would have the same problem. It was agreed that this issue should be brought to the attention of the Post Office with the suggestion that perhaps as an alternative to the new opening hours the post office consider 3 full days of opening rather than 6 half days or a variation of opening hours, some days 9 – 12 and other days 12 – 6.
- 5.6 In addition it was also acknowledged that the issues raised in paragraph 5.5 above were exacerbated by not only slower response times from staff at the collection office but also longer queuing times for those wishing to collect their mail.
- 5.7 During the course of the meeting, the Leader referred to a letter sent to the Managing Director of the Royal Mail, Mr Adam Crozier by the Harrogate Chamber of Trade and Commerce which had also referred to the reduction in customer service at the Harrogate delivery office and the response to the Chamber of Trade and Commerce by the Royal Mail. It was therefore agreed that the issues discussed by the meeting should be brought to the attention of Mr Crozier and Mr Wilkins adding the Council's concerns with regard to the service reduction and its effect on local residents across the district.

## 6.0 CONCLUSIONS

6.1 It is for Council to consider endorsing the course of action proposed by the Leader of the Council.

**Background Papers:** None.

**OFFICER CONTACT:** Please contact Mr Chris Houghton if you require any further information on the contents of this report. The officer can be contacted at Department of Resources, Council Offices, Crescent Gardens, Harrogate HG1 2SG, by telephone on 01423 556076 or by email [membserv@harrogate.gov.uk](mailto:membserv@harrogate.gov.uk)

### SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT/POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

		Implications are		
		Positive	Neutral	Negative
A	Economy		✓	
B	Environment		✓	
C	Social Equity		✓	
(i)	General		✓	
(ii)	Customer Care/People with Disabilities		✓	
(iii)	Health Implications		✓	
D	Crime and Disorder Implications		✓	

If all comments lie within the shaded areas, the proposal is sustainable.