

REPORT TO: Council

DATE: 18 April 2007

DEPARTMENT: Resources

REPORTING OFFICER: The Leader of the Council – Councillor Dr Gardner

SUBJECT: **NOTICE OF MOTION – POST OFFICE CLOSURES**

WARD/S AFFECTED: All Wards

FORWARD PLAN REF: N/A

1.0

INTRODUCTION

1.1 At the Council meeting on 7 March 2007, Councillor Pat Jones proposed the following Notice of Motion which was seconded by Councillor Fred Willis.

“This Council will lobby vigorously to oppose any further closure of post offices in the Harrogate District, bearing in mind the impact earlier axing of post offices had on the wider community.

1.2 The Notice of Motion was referred to me, as Leader of the Council. I met with Councillor Pat Jones on 22 March 2007 to consider the Notice of Motion and discuss the appropriate courses of action.

2.0

RECOMMENDATION/S

2.1 That the Council note the position and the letter sent to the Post Office network Consultation, Department of Trade and Industry on behalf of the seven district councils in North Yorkshire by the Chief Executive of Selby District Council.

3.0 RECOMMENDED REASONS FOR DECISIONS

3.1 To address the Notice of Motion.

4.0

ALTERNATIVE OPTION/S CONSIDERED AND RECOMMENDED FOR REJECTION

4.1 None – to not take any further action would mean ignoring the Notice of Motion agreed by Council.

5.0 ACTION TAKEN

5.1 A meeting was held on 22 March 2007 between the Leader of the Council and Councillor Pat Jones to discuss the Notice.

5.2 The discussion focussed upon the Post Office Network Consultation document in relation to the future of the post office network. Whilst the need to accept the pressures of financial imperatives, and the need for all organisations to adapt to changing circumstances was acknowledged the consultation document did not offer any solid evidence that the future shape of the network had been adequately thought through.

5.3 The impact of post offices closures upon the fabric of the community has given rise to concerns across the country. The consultation document fails to give adequate recognition to the social value of post offices, particularly in rural areas, and therefore draws into question the contribution which the current network makes to initiatives such as social cohesion, care in the community, sustainable neighbourhoods, reduced carbon footprints (reduced journeys by car) etc.

5.4 It will be difficult if not impossible to explain these circumstances to villagers in North Yorkshire who would lose their post office and its services to facilitate the improvement of the Crown Post Office (in Leeds).

5.5 Concern was also expressed with regard to compensation packages offered to sub-postmasters. Such packages would do little to encourage the continuation of post offices and would actually encourage their closure, when a slight increase in subsidy would retain this vital function and contribution to a stronger community.

6.0 CONCLUSION/S

6.1 In conclusion, local post offices engender unique trust and are in many places the hub of the community. The impact and damage as a result of post office closures has been clearly underestimated.

Background Papers -

OFFICER CONTACT: Please contact Mr C Houghton, Senior Member Services Officer if you require any further information on the contents of this report. The officer can be contacted at by telephone on (01423) 556076 or by Email – membserv@harrogate.gov.uk.