

**NOTICE OF DECISION OF CABINET MEMBER**

Pursuant Section 15(4) of the Local Government Act 2000, as amended by section 63 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, the senior executive member may discharge any of the functions that are the responsibility of the Cabinet or may arrange for them to be discharged by another member of the Cabinet or Officer. On 1<sup>st</sup> December 2010, the Council adopted the Strong Leader Model for Corporate Governance 2011 as required under Part 3 of The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (The 2007 Act).

In accordance with the authority delegated to me, I have made the following decision:

Subject	Decision	Reason for decision	Date for Decision to be taken
Kidderminster Crown Post Office branch, Crown House, Bull Ring, Kidderminster – Proposed move to new premises and branch modernisation	To approve the representations included in the attached report for submission by 25 <sup>th</sup> November	To support the Post Office with their proposals to provide a modernised branch in Kidderminster Town Centre.	25 <sup>th</sup> November 2013

**I confirm that the appropriate statutory officer consultation has taken place with regard to this decision.**

Dated: 11/11/13  
 Signed:   
 Councillor: SP C. Wilson Leader

To: Leader of Council

From: Mike Parker, Director Economic Prosperity and Place

Date: 24/10/2013

**Kidderminster Crown Post Office branch, Crown House, Bull Ring, Kidderminster – Proposed move to new premises and branch modernisation**

**1. PURPOSE**

1.1 To seek approval from the Leader of the Council to submit representations to the Post Office regarding their proposed relocation of the central Kidderminster branch, currently located in Crown House, to premises within the WHSmith store in Vicar Street.

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

2.1 To agree that the comments attached at Appendix 1 to this report be submitted to the Post Office as part of their consultation process on proposed relocation of the Crown House unit to WHSmith in Kidderminster.

**3. BACKGROUND**

3.1 The Post Office is proposing to relocate their current premises in Kidderminster town centre and share premises with WHSmith High St Ltd. The move is part of their programme to transform and modernise the Post Office network to help create a network of branches that are modern, sustainable, profitable and no longer reliant on Government funding.

3.2 The branch is currently one of the 369 which are directly owned by Post Office Limited. A far greater number (approx 10,000) are successfully run by third parties within retail premises.

3.3 The Post Office believe that the best approach to retaining the branch in Kidderminster town centre is to change the way it operates so that if the move goes ahead the branch will be run by WHSmith High Street Limited.

3.4 The consultation process began on 14<sup>th</sup> October 2013 and closes on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2013. If the proposals contained in the consultation are approved then the relocation would occur in February 2014 and the Post Office would be run by WHSmith High Street Limited.

**4. KEY ISSUES**

4.1 The key elements of the proposals are as follows:

- Relocation of premises from Crown House to WHSmith on Vicar Street;
- Change of management of the branch from Post Office to WHSmith
- Longer opening hours;
- A reduction in serving positions to a total of five. This number has been based by the Post Office on current and future predicted business levels;
- The proposed new location is only 110 metres from the current unit and access is along level terrain; and
- Access to the unit is fairly similar in nature, due to the central location of the store.

4.2 The relocation will ensure the continued presence of the Post Office within the centre of Kidderminster. It is considered that there is good synergy with the selected partner for the

proposal as WHSmith already successfully runs over 80 Post Office branches nationwide. Local examples of this include the Post Office in Worcester City Centre.

- 4.3 The consultation letter from the Post Office makes clear that the decision to change the way the Post Office operates the branch is not for public consultation and therefore the focus should be on the appropriateness, or otherwise, of the proposed new store.
- 4.4 It is also important to note that the plans outlined in this consultation will mean that, subject to approval, the premises at Crown House will be vacated in February 2014. This proposal has clear synergy with the Council's plans to demolish Crown House and will enable this process to be undertaken sooner rather than later. If the Post Office were to remain in situ in Crown House then it is likely this would delay the proposals to regenerate this part of the town, as envisaged by the Public Realm work that has recently been undertaken by the Council.
- 4.5 Given that the proposals would help the Council realise the plans for regeneration at the Bull Ring, coupled with the fact that the proposals would ensure that the Post Office retained a central presence in the District's main town in a modernised branch, it is considered that the proposed relocation should be fully supported.

## **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 There are no financial implications to the Council as a result of this report.

## **6. LEGAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 There are no legal or policy implications for the Council as a result of this report.

## **7. RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 7.1 The continued presence of a centrally located Post Office in Kidderminster town centre is fully supported. There is a risk that by not supporting the proposals the Post Office will close operations temporarily until an alternative is found. Alternatively, there is a risk that by not supporting the proposals they may take the decision to close this particular branch permanently.

## **8. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 8.1 The Post Office will have undertaken an Equality Impact Assessment of their proposals.

## **9. CONCLUSION**

- 9.1 The plans outlined in this consultation are fully supported. The proposals will ensure that the Post Office retains a central presence within the main town in the District and will also allow for the demolition of Crown House to be undertaken in a timely fashion.

## **10. CONSULTEES**

- 10.1 None

## **11. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 11.1 Post Office consultation letter – attached at Appendix 2.

## **Appendix 1**

### **Kidderminster Crown Post Office Branch – Proposed move to new premises and branch modernisation**

#### **General Comments:**

Wyre Forest District Council fully supports the plans to relocate and modernise the central Kidderminster Post Office branch to WHSmith on Vicar Street. The proposed new unit is centrally located within the town and only 110 metres away from the current branch. The proposed relocation will ensure that the Post Office retains a central presence in the District's largest town. Furthermore, the proposals help to ensure that the Council's plans for the regeneration of the Bullring area of the town will be able to continue without undue delay.

#### **Response to specific consultation questions:**

##### **How suitable you think the new location and premises are and how easy it is to get there?**

The District Council believe that the proposed new location and premises are suitable to meet the needs of residents wanting to access the Post Office services. The proposed location is still within the centre of Kidderminster which means that there are a number of transport options available to residents to access the services.

##### **Are the new premises easy for you to get into and is the inside easily accessible?**

As an already established retail unit within the town it is considered that the proposed new location is easy to access.

##### **Do you have any concerns about the new location or premises? (If so, do you have any suggestions that could help us make it better for you?)**

The only concern raised by the District Council in relation to the new premises is the proposed reduction in serving positions that will be available. This could cause longer delays for people accessing the service and cause congestion within the existing store. One way this could be resolved is to provide more than the scheduled five serving positions.

##### **Any local community issues which you think could be affected by the proposed move?**

No comment.

##### **Anything you particularly like about the proposed change?**

The proposed relocation will tie in with wider regeneration plans for the Bullring area, where the current facility is located. This proposed relocation will therefore provide a dual benefit of retaining the Post Office presence within the town centre, whilst allowing redevelopment plans at the Bullring to be undertaken in a timely manner.

## Appendix 2 – Consultation Letter



Dear Customer

Kidderminster Crown Post Office®  
branch  
Crown House, Bull Ring, Kidderminster, DY10  
2DS

### Proposed move to new premises & branch modernisation

I'm writing to let you know that we are proposing to move Kidderminster Post Office to a new location – WHSmith, 19-20 Vicar Street, Kidderminster, DY10 1DD. If the move goes ahead the branch will be run by WHSmith High Street Limited.

This move is part of our programme to transform and modernise the Post Office network to help create a network of branches that are modern, sustainable, profitable and no longer reliant on Government funding. This branch is currently one of 369 which are directly owned by Post Office Limited. A far greater number of our Post Office branches – more than 10,000 – are successfully run by carefully selected third parties within their retail premises. We believe the best approach to retaining this branch, so it can continue to serve its community, is to change the way we operate it, so that if the move goes ahead it will be run by WHSmith rather than by us directly.

Our priority is to ensure that we provide the services that will meet customer needs, both now and into the future, and secure the long-term viability of Post Office services in this community.

WHSmith is one of the UK's largest booksellers, stationers and newsagents, operating more than 1,200 stores, with an extensive reach across the UK and a presence on nearly every significant UK high street. WHSmith has been successfully operating Post Offices within its stores since 2007 and currently runs over 80 branches. Throughout this extended period they have satisfied us that they will be able to successfully run the branch in Kidderminster, by showing that they can deliver excellent standards of customer service, with trained staff promoting products and services in a modern environment, over extended opening hours.

What will this mean for customers?

- A modern open plan branch
- Longer opening hours
- The same wide range of products and services including a Post & Go machine
- Improved accessibility, access would be level

[www.postoffice.co.uk](http://www.postoffice.co.uk)

## Consulting on the proposed new location

We're now starting a 6-week local public consultation and would like you to tell us what you think about the suitability of the proposed new location. Although the decision to change the way we operate the branch is not a matter for public consultation, before we finalise our plans, we would really like to hear your views, particularly on the following areas:

- How suitable you think the new location and premises are and how easy it is to get there?
- Are the new premises easy for you to get into and is the inside easily accessible?
- Do you have any concerns about the new location or premises
- If so, do you have any suggestions that could help us make it better for you?
- Any local community issues which you think could be affected by the proposed move
- Anything you particularly like about the proposed change

I've enclosed an information sheet that provides more details about the new location. If you have any comments or questions, please email or write to me via our Communication and Consultation team, whose contact details are below. Any information we receive will be considered as we finalise our plans for the new branch.

You can share your views on the proposed move through our easy and convenient new online questionnaire via the link below. When entering the site you will be asked to enter the code for this branch: 004208

[postofficeviews.co.uk](http://postofficeviews.co.uk)

Dates for local public consultation:

Local Public Consultation starts	14 October 2013
Local Public Consultation ends	25 November 2013
Proposed month of change	February 2014


Posters and leaflets will now be displayed in branch to let customers know about the changes and to ask their views. I've included information about the Code of Practice over the page and a full copy of the Code will also be available in branch.

Thank you for considering our proposal.


Yours sincerely



Sally Buchanan  
Franchise Project Manager

 [postofficeviews.co.uk](http://postofficeviews.co.uk)

 Customer Helpline: 08457 22 33 44

 [comments@postoffice.co.uk](mailto:comments@postoffice.co.uk)

Textphone: 08457 22 33 55

 FREEPOST Your Comments

Items sent by Freepost take 2 working days to arrive. Therefore, responses by Freepost should be sent in sufficient time to arrive before the end of the consultation period. Working days do not include Saturdays or Sundays. Responses received after the deadline will not be considered.

Kidderminster Post Office information sheet						
	Current location			Proposed new location (subject to local public consultation)		
Address	Crown House Bull Ring Kidderminster DY10 2DS			WHSmith 19-20 Vicar Street Kidderminster DY10 1DD		
Post Office Opening hours	Mon	09:00 – 17:30		Mon	09:00 – 17:30	
	Tue	09:30 – 17:30		Tue	09:00 – 17:30	
	Wed	09:00 – 17:30		Wed	09:00 – 17:30	
	Thu	09:00 – 17:30		Thu	09:00 – 17:30	
	Fri	09:00 – 17:30		Fri	09:00 – 17:30	
	Sat	09:00 – 16:00		Sat	09:00 – 17:30	
	Sun	Closed		Sun	10:00 – 14:00	
Products & Services	The same wide range of products and services will still be available. Although the WHSmith store has an external cash machine, this is for personal banking use only and Post Office Card Account users will need to collect cash from the Post Office within the store					
Serving positions	There will be five serving positions in total, which will be made up of three screened and two open plan, (the total number of serving positions has been based on current and future predicted business levels),					
Additional Facilities	A private consultation room for appointment based discussions around our extensive range of financial and telephony services.					
Access and facilities	Access would be level and automatic doors would be installed at the entrance to the proposed premises. Low level serving counters, a low level writing desk and hearing loops would be available at the proposed premises.					
How far away is it?	110 metres away from the current branch, along level terrain.					
Transport & parking at the proposed new premises	Public transport services are available to and from the surrounding areas, with a bus stop approximately 60 metres from the proposed new site which is served by a regular bus service.  There is roadside parking available within 50 metres of the proposed new premises, a public car park within 150 metres and 3 designated disabled spaces within 50 metres.					
Retail	Stationery, books and news					
Local Public Consultation starts	14 October 2013					
Local Public Consultation ends	25 November 2013					
Proposed month of change	February 2014					