

Item 9

Proposed closure of Frimley Road Post Office

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL'S LOCAL COMMITTEE IN
SURREY HEATH

22nd July 2004

KEY ISSUE:

Report to inform Members of the proposed closure of the Frimley Road post office.

SUMMARY:

The Post Office is proposing to close its Branch on the Frimley Road, Camberley, but is first consulting on the proposal. Comments are due back to the Post Office by 5th August 2004. The proposal has caused considerable public concern, and the Committee is recommended to advise against the closure.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Surrey Heath Local Committee

- 1) objects to the proposed closure of the Frimley Road Post Office, on the grounds outlined below,
- 2) that this view is confirmed formally back to the Post Office's Head of Area.

ANALYSIS AND COMMENTARY

Rationale for Closure

1. The consultation explains that:

"Due to the restructuring and modernisation of our urban network to address falling customer numbers and increasing running costs, we have undertaken a comprehensive review of the 14 urban Post Office branches in the Surrey Heath area. We are confident that we can continue to provide the current level of service with fewer branches. In agreement with the subpostmaster concerned we are therefore proposing to permanently close one branch in the area".

"If the decision is taken to permanently close this branch, we expect that would take place in October 2004".

2. No figures have been adduced to justify this view. The consultation details other “suitably located “ Post Offices in Camberley, and the only apparent justification seems to be that these can be used as an alternative.

Grounds for Objection

3. Post Offices are key community resources that older people in particular need to be able to access for easy access to pensions and other services. Furthermore the loss of one key service is likely to be to the detriment of other shopping facilities nearby.
4. The suggestion that the public go to Frimley, Yorktown or Camberley main post office is not tenable as this will increase journey times making the situation more difficult for older people and parents with young children, and is subject to the irregularity and cost of a bus service. Many parents use this post office on the way back from dropping children off at local schools so it is very convenient for them and queues frequently form outside the post office in the mornings.
5. However the fundamental objection is that the Post Office is deploying a process of attrition whereby a series of local post offices is initially at risk, and then subsequently subject to closure. Members may recall a similar report to this being brought to the Local committee on 27th November 2003 detailing the proposed closure of Mytchett post office.

CONSULTATION

6. The post office is consulting widely on this issue.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7. There are no financial implications.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

8. The loss of a local facility will inevitably increase the amount of car journeys to the other post offices.

CRIME & DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

9. There are no crime and disorder implications.

EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

10. This will increase difficulties for those without a bank or building society account and who rely upon post office savings accounts. This post office serves both the St Michael’s and Watchetts wards where car ownership is lower than in other areas of Surrey Heath.

CONCLUSION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

That the Surrey Heath Local Committee

1. objects to the proposed closure of the Frimley Road Post Office, on the grounds outlined below,
2. that this view is confirmed formally back to the Post office's Head of Area.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS: None