



CABINET

THURSDAY, 11TH FEBRUARY, 2016

At 7.30 pm

in the

COUNCIL CHAMBER - TOWN HALL,

SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA

PART I

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>PAGE NO</u>
i.	Potential Closure of Maidenhead High Street Post Office Branch	3 - 14

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Report for: ACTION



Contains Confidential or Exempt Information	NO - Part I
Title	Maidenhead High Street Post Office
Responsible Officer(s)	Russell O'Keefe, Strategic Director of Corporate and Community Services
Contact officer, job title and phone number	Kevin Mist, Head of Communities & Economic Development
Member reporting	Cllr Wilson, Lead Member for Planning and Cllr Ms Stretton, Principal Member for Culture and Communities
For Consideration By	Cabinet
Date to be Considered	11 February 2016
Implementation Date if Not Called In	Immediately
Affected Wards	All Maidenhead Wards

REPORT SUMMARY

1. This report details the recent announcements made by Post Office Ltd to make changes to 42 of its 314 directly-managed Crown Post Offices as part of its network modernisation programme.
2. Subject to local consultation (details to be released) 39 of those branches including the Post Office located at 14 High Street Maidenhead are to be offered for a franchise to takeover and run.
3. This report recommends the Council should initiate activity to ensure that Post Office Ltd recognise that there should not be any dilution of service to the local community when making their decision on the future of the branch, that the current level of service offered to the local community is maintained and that local communities are aware of the opportunities to express their views on the proposed changes.

If recommendations are adopted, how will residents benefit?

Benefits to residents and reasons why they will benefit	Dates by which they can expect to notice a difference
Communities, residents and local businesses will potentially continue to have access to and benefit from the existing level and quality of local post office services.	31 March 2016

1. DETAILS OF RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION: That Cabinet agrees:

- i. **Post Office Ltd should be requested to provide assurances that the level and quality of existing services available to the local residents and businesses of Maidenhead will not be reduced.**
- ii. **Post Office Ltd should be requested to outline what would happen in the event that a franchise partner could not be found.**
- iii. **That the Council publicises the opportunities available to residents and businesses to express their views on the proposed planned changes to the branch.**

2. REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION(S) AND OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 Post Office Ltd has released a list of 42 Branches it considers to be loss making with some identified for possible closure and the remaining 39 to be offered up for franchise for a private company to take over and run.
- 2.2 Post Office Ltd have confirmed that the Maidenhead Crown Post Office is a branch that has been identified for possible franchising and will therefore be advertised as an opportunity for a potential franchise partner to apply and take on the branch. In the event of a suitable partner being found, any changes to Maidenhead Post Office would be subject to a public consultation.
- 2.3 The Post Office have not made public the information used in its decision to include the Maidenhead High Street Post Office in the list of branches affected nor that there will be safeguards in place to ensure that the current level of services and facilities are maintained. A formal request for such information has been made by the Council to ensure residents can have greater confidence in the process.
- 2.4 Branches considered for franchise will go out to tender for 28 days, after which the franchise offers will be reviewed and a public consultation will be undertaken. In practice, this often means the current buildings are closed and the services moved into a nearby newsagent, for example WH Smith, which currently has 82 Post Offices within its stores.
- 2.5 The Maidenhead High Street Post Office provides an important community service essential to many local residents and for those communities that do not have access to the Internet or want to use the Internet. The range of services include:

Mail

Drop & Go
Collectibles
Parcelforce Express Services
Post & Go

Driving

DVLA Photocard Renewal
Vehicle Tax

Identity & Licences

Passport Check & Send
Document Certification Service
SIA Licence Application*
CQC CRB ID Verification Service*
CRB & ID Verification Service*

Your Finances

Current Account - Servicing
Current Account - Application
Savings application forms

Travel

Foreign Currency
Travel Insurance
Travel Money Card Plus
National Express - Tickets
National Express - Coachcards

Care Quality Commission (CQC) DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) application checked at the Post Office to verify your identity, Security Industry Authority licence application.

- 2.6 A number of smaller Post Offices around Maidenhead have been moved to a franchise arrangement (Furze Platt, Holyport, Cox Green) or have remained in operation for a short period (Bridge Road, Maidenhead) offering a reduced range of services with the full range of services only available at main post office branches.
- 2.7 The Co- operative Bank has announced its decision to close the branch located at 91 High Street Maidenhead (detailed at appendix B). Although this will result in no other branch located in the area, the Bank plans make alternative options available for residents to continue to access services including enabling customers to undertake most day to day transactions at their local post office. The proposed changes to the Maidenhead Crown Post Office may result in this facility not being available.
- 2.8 In addition, some local concerns have been raised where franchise proposals considered by the Post Office Ltd have resulted in branches being relocated to smaller outlets or not on ground floor locations. The Communications Workers Union have raised their concerns in terms of the access of older persons and people with disabilities at the Maidenhead Post Office.
- 2.8 An e-petition is available at <http://petitions.rbwm.gov.uk/Post-Office/> to allow residents to register their support to protect services that are currently available at the Maidenhead High Street Crown Post Office. Post Office Ltd can be contacted at comments@postoffice.co.uk for information, raise specific issues or provide clarification and say they aim to reply within 10 working days.

Option	Comments
The Council relies on Post Office Ltd to consult with and inform local communities on its proposed changes to the availability of local Post Office services and criteria used.	Post Office Ltd has confirmed that it proposes to consult local communities once its plans for the Maidenhead Post Office have been established however have not provided any details of how it proposes to do so or the criteria used .
The Council initiates activity to ensure that local communities and their residents are aware of the opportunities available to them to express their views on the proposed changes to Maidenhead Post Office and of the rationale used to make these changes.	Local communities may not aware of the local changes proposed by Post Office Ltd or the opportunities express their views on what is being proposed.

Defined Outcomes	Unmet	Met	Exceeded	Significantly Exceeded	Date they should be delivered by
Number of opportunities for residents and businesses to express their views publicised by the Council	0	1-2	3-4	Above 4	31/03/16

3.1 The decision regarding the provision of future local postal service will be determined by Post Office Ltd.

4. FINANCIAL DETAILS

Financial impact on the budget

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
	Revenue £'000	Revenue £'000	Revenue £'000
Addition	£0	£0	£0
Reduction	£0	£0	£0

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
	Capital £'000	Capital £'000	Capital £'000
Addition	£0	£0	£0
Reduction	£0	£0	£0

4.1 There are no financial implications issues arising from this report

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no direct legal issues arising from this report.

6. VALUE FOR MONEY

6.1 N/A

7. SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT APPRAISAL

7.1 N/A

8. RISK MANAGEMENT

8.1

Risks	Uncontrolled Risk	Controls	Controlled Risk
Local communities, residents, and businesses are	Low/Medium	Ensure that the council uses it's communication channels to ensure	Low

Risks	Uncontrolled Risk	Controls	Controlled Risk
not aware of the proposed changes to local post office services and their opportunities to express their views on the proposed changes are		residents and local communities are made aware of the proposed changes and opportunity to feedback their views for example the Post Office Limited consultation when available and petition.	

9. LINKS TO STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

9.1 Residents First

- Support Children and Young People
- Improve the Environment, Economy and Transport
- Work for safer and stronger communities

Value for Money

- Deliver Economic Services
- Improve the use of technology

Delivering Together

- Deliver Effective Services
- Strengthen Partnerships

10. EQUALITIES, HUMAN RIGHTS AND COMMUNITY COHESION

10.1 None

11. STAFFING/WORKFORCE AND ACCOMMODATION IMPLICATIONS

11.1 None.

12. PROPERTY AND ASSETS

12.1 None

13. ANY OTHER IMPLICATIONS

13.1 None.

14. CONSULTATION

14.1 None

15. TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

11 February 2016	Report to Cabinet
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16. APPENDICES

16.1 Appendix A, Post Office branches located within Maidenhead and services available.

16.2 Appendix B, Co-operative Bank letter.

17. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

17.1 None

18. CONSULTATION

Name of consultee	Post held and Department	Date sent	Date received	See comments in paragraph:
Internal				
Cllr D Burbage	Leader of the Council	03/02/16	04/02/16	Approved
Russell O'Keefe	Strategic Director of Corporate and Community Services	02/02/16	03/02/16	Section 2.5, 2.8
Kevin Mist	Head of Communities and Economic Development	02/10/16	02/03/16	
Cllr Wilson	Cabinet Member for Planning	02/02/16	03/02/13	To include details of the proposed closure the Maidenhead Co-operative Bank in Maidenhead.(section 2.7)
Cllr Claire Stretton	Principal Member for Culture and Communities	02/02/16	02/02/16	To include details of the Post Office services available in other local branches (appendix A)
Michael Llewelyn	Cabinet Policy Assistant	02/02/16	02/02/16	Section 3 and Changes made through out reports And
External				

19 REPORT HISTORY

Decision type:	Urgency item?
Non-key decision	Yes. Cabinet report requested to urgently establish and agree the Council's response to the proposed closure and/ or relocation of the Maidenhead High Street Post Office so as to challenge any decision taken by Post Office Ltd to close the branch or reduce the current level of services provided to the local community.

Full name of report author	Job title	Full contact no:
Harjit Hunjan	Community and Business Partnerships Manager	01628 796947

Appendix A

Post Office branches located within Maidenhead and services available

1. Furze Platt, 84-86 Furze Platt Rd, Maidenhead.

Services available:

Mail

Drop & Go

Parcelforce Express Services

Travel

Foreign Currency - Euros only

Travel Insurance

National Express - Tickets

Your Finances

Current Account - Servicing

Savings application forms

Lotto prize payments

Lotto ticket sales

2. Cox Green, c/o Eastern Co op, Cox Green Lane, Maidenhead.

Services Available:

Mail

Parcelforce Express Services

Driving

Vehicle Tax

Travel

Foreign Currency

Travel Insurance

Travel Money Card Plus

National Express - Tickets

Your Finances

Current Account - Servicing

Savings application forms

Lotto prize payments

Lotto ticket sales

3. Holyport Bargain Booze, Holyport Road, Holyport, Maidenhead, Berkshire.

Services Available:

Mail

Drop & Go

Parcelforce Express Services

Travel

Foreign Currency - Euros only

Travel Money Card Plus

4. Highway 8 Highway Avenue, Maidenhead.

Available Services:

Mail

Drop & Go

Parcelforce Express Services

Travel

Foreign Currency - Euros only

National Express - Tickets

Your Finances

Current Account - Servicing

Savings application forms

Lotto prize payments

Lotto ticket sales

The **co-operative** bank

Paul Denton
Head of Branch Network
The Co-operative Bank
Miller Street
Manchester
M60 0AL

Mr David Burbage
Leader of the Council
The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead
Town Hall
St Ives Road
Maidenhead
SL6 1RF

29th January 2016

Dear Mr Burbage

The Co-operative Bank Maidenhead, 91 High Street

I am writing to tell you about some changes to The Co-operative Bank's branch network. These changes form part of the Bank's business plan to return us to a position of strength as we restructure and modernise into a simpler, more efficient business.

As part of these changes we have taken the decision to close our Maidenhead branch at 91 High Street. I want to reassure you that this decision has not been taken lightly and our customers are our main priority. Although there are no other Co-operative Bank branches in the local area we are taking a number of steps to ensure our customers can continue to access their accounts and receive the high levels of service that they expect from us.

We are writing to our customers to let them know about the changes and to invite them to come into the Maidenhead branch to speak with us. We will also be letting them know about the alternative options available to them; alongside our online and mobile banking facilities, our customers can undertake most day-to-day banking transactions in their local Post Office.

As we rebuild and reshape the Bank we are focused on responding to the changes in the way customers are choosing to bank. While our branch network remains an integral part of our overall customer service offer, we are investing in our digital offering to provide customers with new, innovative ways to service their accounts as the trend for consumers to move their day-to-day transactions online accelerates.

As part of our commitment to the Access to Banking Protocol we will publish an Impact Assessment of our decision shortly before closure, which will be available from our Maidenhead branch. Please do not hesitate to contact my colleague Richard Bassford, Public Affairs Manager, via email: Richard.bassford@cfs.coop, if you would like any further information or to feed into the Impact Assessment process.

Yours sincerely,



Paul Denton
Head of Branch Network
The Co-operative Bank

The Co-operative Bank is authorised by the Prudential Regulation Authority and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority and the Prudential Regulation Authority (No. 121885), subscribes to the Lending Code and the Financial Ombudsman Service and is licensed by the Office of Fair Trading (No. 006110). Registered Office: The Co-operative Bank p.l.c., PO Box 101, 1 Balloon Street, Manchester M60 4EP. Registered in England & Wales No: 990937.



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