

**Report of the Economic Regeneration Scrutiny Committee
Post Office Review Group**

REPORT TO EXECUTIVE



DATE	17th September 2013
PORTFOLIO	Regeneration and Economic Development
REPORT AUTHORS	Scrutiny review group members
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PURPOSE

1. To set out the recommendation of the Economic Regeneration Scrutiny Committee Post Office Review Group established to scrutinise the proposal of Post Office Ltd to transfer the Burnley Crown post office to a franchised outlet.

RECOMMENDATION

2. **That the Executive be recommended to negotiate with Post Office Ltd a move to another suitable central building, or council owned building, in the town centre as long as the Crown status is maintained**

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

3. To allow the Executive to consider the recommendation endorsed by the Economic Regeneration Scrutiny Committee with the aim to retain the Crown post office status in Burnley.

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

4. At a special meeting of the Economic Regeneration Scrutiny Committee held on 4th July 2013 consideration was given to the committee's work programme for the year
5. Members considered the announcement that Post Office Ltd proposed to seek retail partners for 70 of its Crown post office branches as part of its transformation programme and that Burnley's office was included in this programme.
6. Members reported that a public meeting had been held in the town on 2nd July 2013 to discuss the proposal at which there had been a great deal of public opposition expressed.
7. The Post Office has given a commitment to hold a further public meeting as part of the six week consultation process that is required once a retail partner has been found.

8. Members agreed that a review should be undertaken on the proposal to see if there were any alternatives which the Executive could negotiate on with Post Office Ltd.
9. Members agreed that a swift review was required if it was to report its findings to the Executive in advance of the Post Office finding a retail partner and commencing the six week public consultation exercise.
10. The summary of findings are
 - As Post Office Ltd. will not disclose any commercially sensitive information, it is the view of the Review Group that the upkeep of the building on Hargreaves Street is likely to be prohibitive due to its size and under-occupancy, and that this is likely to have been a major factor in Post Office Ltd's decision to include the Burnley office in the 70 Crown offices being offered to a retail partner.
 - The Review Group believe there is a real danger that the customer experience of post office services could suffer as a result of the change from a Crown post office to a franchise outlet. This is supported by the evidence from the mystery shopping exercise and backed up by the web-based research.
 - The Review Group wants to see the best service provided and believes this can be achieved by the Crown office relocating to a more suitable town centre location whilst retaining its Crown office status. This will protect the well-paid jobs delivered by specialist staff, it will provide an opportunity for the Post Office to maximise its growth potential by offering a wider range of services and will ensure the best possible service for its customers

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND BUDGET PROVISION

11. None

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

12. This will support the Strategic objective PE1 Strong Visible Leadership for the Council and the Borough

DETAILS OF CONSULTATION

13. No external consultations required

BACKGROUND PAPERS

14. none

FURTHER INFORMATION

PLEASE CONTACT:

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ALSO:

