

22 March 2012

Item 5

Post offices

Purpose of report

This report updates the Board on the strategic engagement between the post office and a group of 25 councils (listed at the end of the report).

Summary

Norman Lamb MP, Minister for Postal Affairs and Paula Vennells, Managing Director Post Office Limited met with representatives of 25 council leaders who are having a conversation about becoming a “strategic partner” with Post Office Limited (POL). The meeting was chaired by Cllr Peter Box and follows a meeting early in the New Year with the then Minister Ed Davey MP.

Recommendation

The Board are invited to comment on the update.

Action

Officers to take forward members’ views.

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Post offices

1. Representatives of 25 “pilot” councils met with officials from POL and the Business, Innovation and Skills Department (BIS) to discuss the strategic engagement taking place between them.
2. The meeting heard from Norman Lamb MP, the new Minister for Postal Affairs and Paula Vennells the Managing Director of Post Office Limited.
3. They delivered a number of key messages:
 - 3.1. firstly that there is a commitment to no further post office closures but to the modernisation of the network into “mains” and post office “locals”. The post office locals model will see the service move from a post office counter to the till point and extended opening hours
 - 3.2. secondly that the post office is keen to become a strategic partner of local government and to have a dialogue with local councils. This is a conversation about both network modernisation and a commercial relationship
 - 3.3. thirdly that the post office sees itself as having a key enabling role in helping local people access online channels for public services – “assisted digital” in the jargon.
4. The discussions between the post office and the 25 councils are at an early stage – in some cases councils have had a single preliminary meeting with representatives of the post office.
5. A number of themes are being explored including co-location with libraries and other community services, customer contact where councils are rationalising their own customer contact points and enabling local people to undertake transactions for council’s services across the post office counter.
6. The LGA will re-convene the forum before the summer break to explore the emerging themes in more detail and will bring together the learning in the autumn.

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The 25 “pilot” councils

**Barnsley
Birmingham
Devon
Doncaster
Durham
East Devon
Essex
Hammersmith & Fulham
Hertfordshire
Hounslow
Kent
Kingston Upon Thames
Lancashire
Lancaster
Leeds
Liverpool
Maidstone
Neath Port Talbot
Northumberland
Oxfordshire
Reading
Rotherham
Ryedale
Sheffield
Wakefield**