

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

20 NOVEMBER 2019

BT CONSULTATION ON THE REMOVAL OF TELEPHONE KIOSKS

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report sets out the details of BT's consultation on the removal of telephone kiosks within Newark & Sherwood District and seeks endorsement for the draft response prepared by Officers and the approach taken.

2.0 Background Information

- 2.1 BT are consulting with the District Council on the removal of thirteen telephone kiosks. A copy of the consultation document, including a list of the locations of the kiosks and usage levels, is attached at **Appendix A**. BT posted notices in all the kiosks on 3 September 2019 asking anyone who wished to comment on the proposals to contact the District Council by 15 October 2019.
- 2.2 District Council Officers contacted the Town and Parish Councils and Meetings in whose areas the kiosks were, as well as the relevant District Councillors, and made them aware of the details of the consultation. Some asked if they could respond later than 15 October so they could discuss the issue at their next scheduled meeting. As BT does not require a response from the District Council until 11 December 2019, Officers were able to accommodate these requests, but this does mean that some responses had not been received by the time of writing this report.
- 2.3 Town and Parish Councils and Meetings that do not agree to the removal of kiosks in their areas have two options. They can object to the proposal and request that BT maintain a telephony service to the kiosk, if they can provide reasons for their objection. They can also agree to the removal of the telephony service but ask to adopt the kiosk and repurpose it.
- 2.4 BT charge £1 only to adopt the kiosk, and will maintain the supply of electricity for free. The Adopt a Kiosk scheme is only open to certain bodies including Town and Parish Councils and Meetings, Local Authorities, charities and the owners of land on which the kiosk is situated, not other private individuals. A popular use for repurposed kiosks is to house defibrillators. The Adopt a Kiosk scheme is aimed primarily at the red heritage kiosks, but BT occasionally allow modern kiosks to be adopted in rural areas if required for specific purposes where there are no red ones available. For requests relating to modern kiosks in urban areas, BT will normally carry out an individual assessment to see if adoption is possible.
- 2.5 The District Council will respond to the consultation when responses have been received from those District Councillors, and Town and Parish Councils and Meetings, who wish to comment. Where no comment is received, it is presumed that there is no objection to the removal of the kiosk. BT will not accept responses from any individual or body other than the District Council. BT will not remove a kiosk if it has received a written objection from the District Council by 11th December 2019 – this is known as the local veto. Factors relevant to an objection, as well as requirements and criteria that consultation responses

should meet, are set out in Ofcom's guidance on procedures for the removal of public call boxes, which is attached as **Appendix B**.

3.0 Proposed Approach

3.1 It proposed that where Town and Parish Councils and Meetings wish to adopt a kiosk and repurpose it, the District Council will support this in the consultation response. It is also suggested that the District Council support Town and Parish Councils and Meetings, and District Councillors, where they object to the removal of the telephony service from a kiosk and are able to provide a valid basis for their objection. Beyond this, there are two kiosks in Newark where Newark Town Council and the Ward Members have not objected to removal, but District Council Officers recommend objecting due to relatively high levels of usage and the large number of households in the vicinities. The kiosk near the railway bridge on North Gate had 200 calls over a 12 month period, and the kiosk on the corner of Barnby Road and Cromwell Road had 78 calls over a 12 month period.

3.2 A copy of the draft District Council response is attached at **Appendix C** for approval.

4.0 Equalities Implications

4.1 None identified, it is not believed that this issue will have different implications for different groups with protected characteristics.

5.0 Financial Implications (FIN19-20/7946)

5.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

6.0 Community Plan – Alignment to Objectives

6.1 The maintenance of telephony services in certain kiosks could contribute to the reduction of crime and anti-social behaviour, and increase feelings of safety in our communities, by facilitating emergency calls. The provision of defibrillators in repurposed kiosks could contribute to improving the health and wellbeing of local residents. The maintenance or repurposing of kiosks will enhance and sustain town centres.

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS that:

- a) the report be noted and the proposed approach endorsed; and
- b) Appendix C, subject to any additional comments from Committee and outstanding comments from Town and Parish Councils and Meetings, be approved as the District Council's response to BT's consultation on the removal of telephone kiosks.

Reason for Recommendations

So that the report can be noted and the proposed approach endorsed, and so that a District Council response can be submitted to BT's consultation on the removal of telephone kiosks.

Background Papers - Nil

For further information please contact Matthew Norton on Ext 5852 or Adrian Allenbury on Ext 5862

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