

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Cabinet – 21 June 2021

Report Title

BT proposal to remove the public phone box at Canklow Road, Rotherham

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?

No, but it has been included on the Forward Plan

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Paul Woodcock, Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment

Report Author(s)

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Ward(s) Affected

Boston Castle

Report Summary

BT proposed to close the telephony service and remove the telephone kiosk on Canklow Road following two recent arson attacks. BT advised that they had been approached by residents asking for its removal. Following two periods of public consultation in line with Ofcom guidance, a delegated officer decision was taken by the Assistant Director – Planning, Regeneration and Transport to consent to the closure of the telephony service and removal of the kiosk.

Recommendations

1. That Cabinet notes the decision to consent to BT's proposal to close the telephony service and remove the kiosk at Canklow Road, Rotherham.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1 Equality – Screening

Appendix 2 Carbon Impact Assessment

Background Papers

Officer Delegated Report

<http://modgov-p-db/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=1168>

Communications Act 2003

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2003/21/contents>

Guidance on procedures for the removal of public call boxes
https://www.ofcom.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0022/28507/removals.pdf

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel
N/A

Council Approval Required
No

Exempt from the Press and Public
No

BT proposal to remove the public phone box at Canklow Road, Rotherham

1. Background

- 1.1 BT notified the Council of their proposal to close the telephony service and remove the kiosk at Canklow Road, Rotherham due to repeated arson attacks requiring complete renewal of both the kiosk and the underground services. Following public consultation in line with Ofcom requirements, a final decision was taken to consent to BT's proposal to close the telephony service and remove the kiosk.

2. Key Issues

- 2.1 That the contents of the report are noted.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 3.1 Due to the constraints of the statutory consultation procedure, the process of responding to the proposal by BT to close the telephone service and remove the kiosk at Canklow Road has now been completed.

4. Consultation on proposal

- 4.1 In line with Ofcom guidance the Council has consulted on the proposals by BT. A first public consultation was carried out from 9 February to 1 March 2021, prior to a draft decision being made. Two ward members (Cllr Taiba Yasseen and Cllr Rose McNeely) expressed support for the payphone closure. A second public consultation was carried out from Thursday 11 March - 11 April 2021. In which one ward member (Cllr Rose McNeely) had no objection to the proposal of closure and removal of the kiosk. Notifications of the public consultation were sent to: BT, relevant ward members, Sarah Champion MP, emergency services, and the Council's Neighbourhoods Team.

The final decision was taken by the Assistant Director – Planning, Regeneration and Transport, under the Council's Scheme of Delegation, consenting to BT's proposal. BT and the Secretary of State were informed of the Council's decision to agree to the removal of the kiosk..

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

- 5.1 Ofcom guidance advises on the role of the local planning authority in objecting or consenting to public phone box removal within a time frame of 90 days of the initial notice being received. The table below sets out the key dates relating to this process.

Receipt of notice from BT	18 January 2021
First consultation	9 February to 1 March 2021
Consultation on First Notification	11 March to 11 April 2021
Decision by Assistant Director on Final	14 April 2021

Notification	
Response to BT and Secretary of State	16 April 2021

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications (to be written by the relevant Head of Finance and the Head of Procurement on behalf of s151 Officer)

6.1 The consultation and associated administration costs of the public phone box removal proposals have been met within existing approved revenue budgets. Should an inspection identify any safety concerns following the phone box removal, then the Council will serve a notice on BT to make good any reinstatement and recover costs.

6.2 Procurement are satisfied with this approach; the services will be terminated by BT at no cost to the authority. Any chargeable goods or services required by the Council should be sought in accordance with section 52 of the financial and procurement procedure rules.

7. Legal Advice and Implications (to be written by Legal Officer on behalf of Assistant Director Legal Services)

7.1 The legislative and procedural requirements are set out in the body of and the appendices to the report.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

8.1 No direct human resources implications arise from this report.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

9.1 Not everyone has their own landline or mobile phone and therefore internal criteria has been used to consider this request for phone box removal.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

10.1 Equalities screening and analysis forms have been completed and are attached as appendices.

11. Implications for CO₂ Emissions and Climate Change

11.1 Climate change poses a significant threat to environments, individuals, communities, and economies on local, national, and international scales. In recognition of this the Council has aimed to be net carbon neutral as an organisation by 2030, and for Rotherham as a whole to achieve the same position by 2040.

11.2 All telephone systems and infrastructure have a carbon footprint (including landlines, mobile phones and public phone boxes).

BT advise that their public phone boxes are supplied by 100%, REGO certified, renewable electricity. However, there are carbon emissions related to the transmission and distribution of that electricity. As a result, one public phone box will emit, annually, 5kg of CO2.

- 11.3** The final decision regarding the proposal by BT is to consent to the removal of the pay phone and therefore its emissions will cease. It is unknown if the previous pay phone users now travel to alternative public pay phones owned by BT or use other private phones to make their calls. There is also potentially a very slight reduction in transport emissions from BT operations, as the phone box will no longer need to be maintained by BT. The loss of the pay phone is not considered to have a significant effect on the Council's carbon reduction ambitions.

12. Implications for Partners

- 12.1 Relevant services were consulted on the proposed phone box closures and no implications for partners or other directorates were identified.

13. Risks and Mitigation

- 13.1 There may be residents who have limited access to mobile phones and land line connections, particularly those on low incomes and elderly people. The criteria set out in the Communications Act 2003 and the Council's locally derived criteria have been used to assess the proposed phone box removal and mitigate any risks.

14. Accountable Officers

Simon Moss, Assistant Director – Planning, Regeneration and Transport

Approvals obtained on behalf of Statutory Officers:-

	Named Officer	Date
Chief Executive	Sharon Kemp	07/06/21
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	02/06/21
Head of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Stuart Fletcher	02/06/21

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