



*Basingstoke  
and Deane*

**Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council**

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Mrs Jos Robson  
HSBC Bank  
Second Floor  
Midlands House  
Feacourt, West Way  
Botley  
Oxford  
OX2 0PL

Our Ref: NW/AF

10 November 2009

Dear Jos

**Closure of Branch, Whitchurch, Hampshire**

I am writing to you on behalf of Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council regarding the closure of the Whitchurch Branch of HSBC.

Whitchurch is a small rural market town and there has recently been significant investment to try and make its economy as sustainable and competitive as possible. Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council has been working in partnership with other key organisations and local business representatives to increase the economic activity of the town. The council has recently been supporting the local community through funding some key projects which focus on increasing footfall in Whitchurch.

The HSBC bank in Whitchurch is the only remaining bank in the town, and has the only 24 hour ATM facility. I have been advised by local residents that the bank currently opens from 10am to 3.30pm three days a week and is staffed by two people. I also understand that the branch was a sub-branch of Andover branch until three years ago when it became a branch in its own right.

Your letter to Sir George Young MP (26 October 2009) says that HSBC have carried out a study of customer activity and an assessment as to whether the branch could be restored to commercial feasibility by changing its opening hours or operational model. You state in this letter that the branch just isn't achieving the type of custom it needs to make it commercially sustainable.

Local residents have advised me that as the branch was previously part of the Andover branch until three years ago many people have retained their accounts at the Andover branch and kept its sort code, even though they are doing all their banking through the Whitchurch branch. I would hope that any investigation into the commercial viability of the Whitchurch branch took this into account. I have also been informed that appointments regarding product sales have to be made in Andover or other branches and that Whitchurch will therefore not be competitive in terms of sales targets, but this does not mean that there is not the potential for it to do so.



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Chief Executive **Tony Curtis**  
Corporate Director and Returning Officer **Dorcas Bunton**  
Corporate Director **Karen Brimacombe**

We are trying to encourage trade in the Whitchurch town centre and I am concerned that if the HSBC branch closes, people will go elsewhere to do their shopping and the businesses that Whitchurch have fought so hard to keep will fail.

Your letter to Sir George Young refers to limited HSBC services being available in Overton, but does not specify what these services are? Does this branch include a 24 hour cash machine, regular and business banking services and any sales staff? It would also be useful you could confirm the opening hours for this branch because if the Whitchurch branch does close it will be the nearest branch for most residents.

I understand the need for commercial viability, but I believe that this can often be found by using different models or premises. I would be keen to discuss options with you to see if the council can help by providing alternative premises, perhaps in a community run venue, which has proved very successful for Post Offices. Although it is unlikely that a full service may be maintained in this way it may be possible to run some of the essential services such as a cash machine or a deposit safe.

The council may also be able to help you in other ways such as finding out views of the local people or working with the Whitchurch Town Centre Improvement Project Steering Group to raise the profile of the branch with local businesses.

I would very much like the bank to remain open, however if this proves to be impossible I believe that there are options we could look at to retain some level of service in the town and I would be very keen to discuss these with you.

Lastly, may I bring to your attention a planning matter concerning the property. You may be aware that the building is a Listed Building. Planning permission was granted for the installation of the ATM to the front of the property in March 1999. The permission was subject to a specific condition which required that the material removed from the building be retained and in the event of the ATM being subsequently removed, the building shall be restored to its previous condition (using the preserved materials). May I ask you to update the Planning Development Manager, Giorgio Framalocco (01256 845440 or [giorgio.framalocco@basingstoke.gov.uk](mailto:giorgio.framalocco@basingstoke.gov.uk)), with your confirmation that such works will be carried out and as to when such action will be implemented. I would advise that contact is made prior to the commencement of the works so that there is agreement as to the detail of the restoration.

Please contact Natalie Wigman, Business Relationships Manager on 01256 845692 or email [natalie.wigman@basingstoke.gov.uk](mailto:natalie.wigman@basingstoke.gov.uk) with any questions or queries or to talk over any of the options suggested in this letter.

Yours Sincerely



Cllr Andrew Finney  
Leader, Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council

