



COTSWOLD

District Council

Council name	COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and date of Committee	CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITIES DECISION MEETING, 23 MAY 2025
Subject	Response to British Telecommunications Consultation on the Removal of Payphones at 16 locations across Cotswold District
Wards affected	Abbey, Campden & Vale, Chedworth and Churn Valley, Coln Valley, Ermin, Fossebridge, Grumbolds Ash, Sandywell, Stow, Tetbury East and Rural, Thameshead, Watermoor
Accountable member	Councillor Claire Bloomer, Cabinet Member for Communities Email: Claire.Bloomer@cotswold.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Joseph Walker, Head of Economic Development and Communities Email: Joseph.Walker@Cotswold.gov.uk
Report author	Joseph Walker, Head of Economic Development and Communities Email: Joseph.Walker@Cotswold.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	To agree a response to the British Telecommunications consultation on the removal of payphones from 16 locations across Cotswold District, in the light of consultation responses submitted to the Council.
Annexes	Annex A – Copy of the payphone notice Annex B – Copy of the consultation schedule, with summary responses attached. Annex C – Consultation responses.
Recommendation(s)	That the Cabinet member for Communities resolves to: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Agree the Council response for each affected kiosk2. Agree to encourage British Telecommunications Ltd to keep open the offer of community adoption for telephone kiosks retained after this process has concluded.
Corporate priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supporting Communities



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Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	<p>This decision relates to a consultation run by British Telecommunications Ltd, in line with procedures required by OFCOM. The consultation is open to all, via notices posted in affected telephone kiosks, and affected parishes are invited to comment directly or invite public response. All responses are provided at Annex C, including representation from private residents and parish councils.</p>



1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1** On 26 February 2025, British Telecommunications Ltd (BT) contacted the Council to advise that they were launching a consultation on the removal of telephony from 16 telephone kiosks across the district. This report captures the consultation response, to inform the Council's decision on its own response to BT.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1** Over the past 15 or so years, BT has sought to reduce the number of telephone kiosks in the district. As mobile phone ownership has increased, and coverage improved, there has been a significant reduction in the use of public telephones, so the network has been reduced to reflect this. The approach is governed by procedures put in place by OFCOM, the industry regulator, last revised in 2023. These procedures set out the circumstances where fixed line telephony should be protected, but also where provision may be reviewed.

3. MAIN POINTS

- 3.1** In line with the latest OFCOM procedure, BT have launched a consultation on the removal of telephony at 16 locations in Cotswold District. As part of this consultation process the local community has the option to seek to adopt the kiosk, where the local community takes on responsibility for the box (but not the telephony, which is removed). 11 of the 16 kiosks are listed, so the kiosk will be retained no matter the outcome. At the remaining 5, subject to the consultation outcome and any adoption, both the box and the telephony could be removed.
- 3.2** The Council is a statutory consultee, and is expected to provide a local response taking into account representations received from local people/organisations. The Council no longer has a veto on the removal of kiosks, but its consent is still required for community adoptions.
- 3.3** Accordingly, the Council notified the directly affected parish councils of the consultation on 10 March 2025. BT also posted a notice in the kiosks, a copy of which is attached at Annex A. The Council has received responses from the parishes of all except three of the boxes, and has received 5 public responses. These are provided at Exempt Annex C. The three parishes that have not responded contain listed kiosks, where the box will be retained in the event the telephony is removed.



- 3.4** With previous consultation of this nature, the Council has been keen to reflect the knowledge and ambitions of parish councils: requests for adoption have been supported, as this allows kiosks to be retained and continue to serve a community purpose. Similarly, where a cogent argument for retention has been made, usually reflecting local experience of mobile phone coverage, the Council has supported such cases.
- 3.5** Annex B, along with itemising the affected boxes, also contains the summarised responses, which it is recommended should form the core of the Council response.
- 3.6** In two scenarios, the telephony may be decommissioned, but listed boxes may be retained by BT, who propose to simply remove the telephone and lock the box; scenario A, where the community agrees with BT, but does not seek adoption, and scenario B, where the community objects, but BT's decision is still to decommission the box. While both are valid outcomes of the process, this leaves a situation where a box is retained but not used, with a risk that it will no longer serve a community purpose or fall into dereliction.
- 3.7** The officer recommendation is to append to the Council's response on individual boxes a request that BT hold open the offer of adoption of the kiosk on any boxes that are decommissioned but retained on site.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1** The Council does not have a legal obligation to respond to this consultation. However, the Ofcom process places the burden of collating a local response reflecting local representations upon the Council, so in the light of comments received, not responding would undermine this process

5. CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1** Most affected parishes have responded, and provided an evidence-based local perspective on the future of affected kiosks. The officer recommendation would be to support their positions, and to also request that BT hold open the offer of adoption on any retained but decommissioned kiosks.



6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1** None direct. The Council will have no obligation towards the affected kiosks. As the process rolls forward, it may be that parishes seek support on plans for any adopted boxes, such as installation of defibrillators, for which the Council currently has a small grant pot.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1** None. The Council will not take on ownership or any other obligation towards affected kiosks. Essentially, the Council role is restricted to this consultation and response.

8. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 8.1** As the Council takes on neither legal nor financial responsibilities, the sole risk would be reputational, a risk mitigated by responding to BT reflecting the local opinions expressed during the consultation.

9. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 9.1** None. The consultation process is run under the terms set by Ofcom, which consider the impact on the universal service obligation as it still applies to telecommunications providers. BT have considered social factors in identifying which boxes can be decommissioned.

10. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1** None. Telephone boxes in general are no longer essential local infrastructure, so their removal is highly unlikely to create any travel burden or other environmental cost.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

(END)