

Cabinet

25 September 2008



**School Crossing Patrol
Service Review**

**Report of Roger Elphick, Acting Corporate Director, Environment
Cabinet Portfolio Member for Environment – Councillor Bob Young**

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To inform Cabinet of the changes in the management of the School Crossing Patrol Service (SCPS); to report on a review of the SCPS; and to recommend a number of policies to ensure that the optimum service can be provided.

Background

- 2 On 1st April 2008, the full management of the SCPS was handed over from Children and Young People's Services to the Environment Service. The service had been under resourced for a number of years and it was recognised that the service could only be delivered to its full potential if sufficient resources and appropriate management procedures and operational policies were put in place. The Road Safety Section was identified as having the necessary previous experience, skills and knowledge within the team to rebuild, and produce a high performing SCPS.
- 3 It was considered that a full review of the service be undertaken to ensure that the Council can deliver the best service possible. The Local Authority Road Safety Officers' Association (LARSOA) has recently issued the revised 'School Crossing Patrol Service – Guidelines 2008' and, using the document as a basis, the review is now complete.
- 4 The review includes recommendations for a rationalisation of the service and is set out in Appendix B. It should be noted that no change will take place which will introduce a hazardous journey to school as defined in the existing County Council policy on Unsafe Walking Routes.
- 5 A number of other proposed policies have been developed throughout the review, which it is recommended should be adopted.

Proposed Policies

- 6 The proposed policies, which were devised following a thorough examination of the previous management system, set out a framework within the Environment Quality Assurance system which will improve the management of the service considerably, and provide a cost effective service to the public. The policies will form the basis of improved procedures to ensure that all staff are adequately

trained and supervised, that risks to staff and the public are minimised as far as it is practical, and that the service can be managed not only economically but effectively.

- 7 The policy statements are set out below with fuller descriptions set out as appendices at the end of the report.
 - I. **National Guidelines** ~ Formally adopt the LARSOA 'School Crossing Patrol Service Guidelines 2008'. (Appendix A)
 - II. **Review of the Service** ~ The County Council to rationalise the SCPS through a review process, which will result in a small reduction in the number of sites. (Appendix B)
 - III. **Establishment of New Sites** ~ The Road Safety Section Manager be given delegated powers to establish requested new sites, following the national criteria. (Appendix C)
 - IV. **Provision of Cover for Absences** ~ The Road Safety Section Manager or his delegated assistant to agree the number of sites that a 'relief', or 'mobile patrol' will cover on commencement of employment. (Appendix D)
 - V. **Relocation of SCP Staff** ~ The Road Safety Section Manager be authorised to relocate SCP's to sites other than their own that present a higher risk. (Appendix E)

Summary

- 8 The service has undergone a complete review to enhance the service provision and a number of issues have arisen from the review, necessitating the implementation of a number of policies and procedures to ensure the service complies with health and safety regulations and County Council policies.
- 9 Revised management procedures will enhance the internal processes and streamline the activities of the service, thereby improving service delivery to the end user.
- 10 This report seeks approval to implement a number of policies and procedures that will enable the Council to provide an excellent service to the residents of County Durham.

Recommendation and Reasons

- 11 Cabinet are asked to approve the five policies as set out in the body of the report and in detail in Appendices A to E.

Background Papers

Local Authority Road Safety Officers' Association - School Crossing Patrol Guidelines 2008

Cabinet report dated 6/2/03 – Guidelines on Unsafe Walking Routes to School

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Appendix 1: Implications

Local Government Reorganisation (Does the decision impact upon a future Unitary Council)

None

Finance

Rationalisation will create savings within the service, which in turn will provide an enhanced level of cover at other sites. Such an improvement in service provision will be dependant upon the rationalisation of sites being achieved.

Staffing

Staff numbers will be reduced over time.

Equality and Diversity

Improved training for staff in equalities.

Accommodation

None

Crime and Disorder

Enhanced service will reduce the number of 'fail to stop' incidents at SCP sites.

Sustainability

Enhanced service will improve staff recruitment and retention.

Human Rights

None

Localities and Rurality

None

Young People

The enhanced service will ensure that busier sites offer a more robust and reliable crossing service.

Consultation

Consultation has taken place with Unison and GMB who are in agreement with the proposals and a framework has been agreed to compensate those whose lunchtime cover has been reduced.

Health

None

APPENDIX A

National Guidelines

Proposed Policy: Formally adopt the LARSOA 'School Crossing Patrol Service Guidelines 2008'.

- a. The Local Authority Road Safety Officers Association introduced the 'School Crossing Patrol Guidelines' many years ago and there are regular updates to the document.

- b. The guidelines, which are based on existing legislation, best practice, health and safety and case law, are adopted by the vast majority of local authorities across the UK and form the basis for a sound SCPS. The County Council recognises the guidelines and follows a number of the recommendations. However the guidelines have never been formally adopted. To ensure the Council can provide the optimum service it will be necessary to adopt the national guidelines document in its entirety.

APPENDIX B

Review of the Service

Proposed Policy: The County Council to rationalise the SCPS through a review process, which will result in a small reduction in the number of sites.

A. Evaluation of School Crossing Patrol Sites – Current Status

- a. The Local Authority Road Safety Officer's Association's 'School Crossing Patrol Service – Guidelines 2008' set out the criteria for the establishment and dis-establishment of School Crossing Patrol (SCP) sites. The guidelines were developed incorporating elements from the proven and widely adopted criteria for the assessment of potential zebra and light controlled crossings. The SCP criteria uses the PV^2 formula as its basis (P=Number of pedestrians V=Number of vehicles). Other factors and multipliers are applied to the survey and the final result must reach a figure of 4 million to justify the establishment of a new site, or to maintain an existing site.
- b. The sites that currently do not meet the required criteria represent 29% of the total service. Clearly a reduction of this magnitude would be unacceptable to the service users. However, a compromise of discontinuing those sites which meet less than 50% of the criteria (2 million), and through natural wastage, would be far more acceptable. The sites which are vacant and do not meet the criteria, could be discontinued at an early opportunity following a period of consultation with schools and parents.
- c. There are currently 239 SCP sites across the County. Of these, only 168 meet the required minimum criteria of 4 million. This may largely be the result of changing patterns in the journey to school, more children being transported by car, and in some cases where by-passes have been introduced taking traffic away from the sites.
- d. Rationalisation will take place through the following methods in consultation with the Cabinet Member:
 - i. Discontinue service provision at light controlled crossing sites when the posts become vacant or if the SCP can be relocated to another standard site that meets the criteria, within the vicinity.
 - ii. Discontinue sites that are less than a PV^2 value of 2 million when the posts become vacant.
 - iii. Discontinue those sites that are currently vacant and are less than a PV^2 value of 2 million.
 - iv. To cease lunchtime payments at those sites where SCP cover is not required and compensate staff under the agreed compensation package.

It should be noted that any sites which will no longer be supported will be the subject of consultation with the schools involved.

B. Budget Re-allocation

- a. Rationalisation will inevitably create budgetary savings within the Service, and these savings will be utilised to improve the service through the introduction of Supervisory staff. This will enhance the service to the public and improve working conditions for staff. The savings will also enable the service to provide improved 'cover' for absences through the recruitment of more mobile and reserve patrol staff. Currently there are 7 mobile and 12 reserve staff. It is intended to increase the pool to 12 and 18 respectively.
- b. Recruitment has traditionally been difficult, however, through the many improvements to the Service, especially for staff, it is considered that an enhanced recruitment programme will be rewarding.

C. Improving the Service for School Crossing Patrol Staff

- a. The Review has identified a number of areas of the service where adjustments will improve working for staff, and these are:
 - Salary Payments - Move to 'equated pay';
 - Uniforms - Introduction of a new 'National' uniform;
 - Supervision - To provide support and improve performance;
 - Corporate Training - Improving performance and understanding.

APPENDIX C

Establishment of New Sites

Proposed Policy: The Road Safety Section Manager be given delegated powers to establish requested new sites, following the national criteria.

- a. The establishment of new posts are largely instigated through a request by a school, a member of the public, or through the School Travel Plan process. It is essential that the decision to establish a new site is based on the empirical formula PV^2 following a full survey, and not established through a subjective approach.
- b. In order to progress requests for new sites swiftly, it is recommended that the Road Safety Section Manager be given delegated powers to establish new sites and to recruit staff to fill the posts in consultation with the Cabinet Member. This will speed up the establishment process. It must be noted that a new site would not be established until a suitable person has been recruited to fill the post.

APPENDIX D

Provision of Cover for Absences

Proposed Policy: The Road Safety Section Manager or his delegated assistant to agree the number of sites that a 'reserve', or 'mobile' patrol will cover on commencement of employment.

- a. The SCPS employs a pool of 'reserve' and 'mobile' patrol staff who are used to provide cover at crossing sites when a permanent patrol is absent due to sickness, or when a site is vacant due to a resignation. However, it is difficult to recruit sufficient numbers of 'reserves' to the pool. If there are too few in the pool, many points go uncovered, and if there are too many in the pool, reserve staff are offered less work and cannot be retained.
- b. Currently, there are 12 'reserves' and 7 'mobiles' employed. 'Reserve' staff do not use transport and provide cover within a reasonable distance from their home. 'Mobile' staff are required to use a vehicle and provide cover over greater distances. They are intended for first session emergency cover only, but can be used for longer periods.
- c. Currently, staff do not have identified sites which they have agreed they will cover, and this causes some operational difficulties. In future, the policy will enable the Road Safety Section Manager to contractually agree the number of crossing sites that reserve and mobile staff will cover on commencement of employment.

APPENDIX E

Relocation of SCP Staff

Proposed Policy: The Road Safety Section Manager be authorised to relocate SCP's to other operational sites, other than their own, that present a higher risk.

- a. As there are currently 40 vacancies, it is clear that not all crossing sites can be covered at any one time, and at present, there are 19 crossing locations unmanned.
 - b. The national guidelines recommend that local authorities should prioritise SCP sites so that cover can be provided at those sites with a higher PV² and therefore presenting a higher risk. This minimises the risk to children on their way to and from school as the highest risk factor will have been addressed.
 - c. The 239 crossing sites are listed in PV² order and will be set out in a number of 'bands' for example Band A = 1st priority; Band B = 2nd priority and so on. There are also various types of School Crossing Patrol site, which must be treated in priority order.
 - Standard Crossings are sites where there are no special facilities with only a SCP to stop traffic. When a point is unmanned there is no 'facility' for aided crossing. This is deemed the highest risk 'type'.
 - Zebra Crossings (ZC) are user operated, in that traffic must stop when pedestrians present themselves at the facility. This gives added protection.
 - Light Controlled Crossings (LCC's) such as Puffin and Pelican crossings are fully user operated and require no assistance from a SCP. Pedestrians stop traffic using a push button traffic light facility and can cross safely on a 'green man' phase. Other facilities such as traffic lights often have pedestrian phases built in. This type of crossing is deemed the lowest risk 'type'.
 - d. It is considered that the covering of unmanned sites should follow a clear decision making process, based on priorities, to maximise safety and minimise risk. When a site becomes unmanned, cover should first be sought from:
 - a mobile patrol;
 - if this is not available, then a reserve patrol within the area;
 - if this is not available, then a patrol from a LCC;
 - if this is not available, then from a patrol from ZC;
 - the final source would be to relocate a patrol from a standard crossing from a lower risk band, if one is available within the vicinity.
- This will provide a clear decision making process for the Section Manager or his assistants when they are required to find cover for unmanned sites.
- e. Where cover cannot be sourced, schools will be informed by telephone or fax and if the absence is to be lengthy, letters will be provided for children to take home to parents informing them of the absence.