

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**Report**

Committee:	Economy, Transport and Environment Select Committee
Date:	30 June 2016
Title:	School Crossing Patrols
Reference:	7621
Report From:	Director of Economy, Transport and Environment

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1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. To respond to issues raised by Councillor Jackie Porter relating to the Council Council's operation of the School Crossing Patrol (SCP) Service.
- 1.2. Councillor Porter originally raised a number of issues about the SCP through the Children and Young People Select Committee which referred the matter to the Economy, Transport and Environment Select Committee, as the SCP service is run through the Economy, Transport and Environment Department (ETE).

2. Contextual Information

- 2.1. The County Council currently operates one of the largest SCP services in the country with annual operational costs including staff salaries, uniform and equipment, currently in the region of £1.1m.
- 2.2. ETE took over running SCP in 2002 from Children's Services. The service in Hampshire is broadly run in accordance with the Road Safety GB guidelines which have been adopted by most local authorities as the national standard for operating SCP services.
- 2.3. Councillor Porter raised the following three specific points about Hampshire's SCP service:-
 - (i) *The Number of School Crossing Patrol Officers has remained constant but the criteria has allowed the County to offer and accept voluntary redundancies even though the school hasn't agreed first.*
 - (ii) *It is hard to recruit these officers in some areas, and HCC should be looking at innovative ways to deliver the service or put in other methods so Hampshire drivers know there are children crossing outside schools are the beginning and end of the school day.*
 - (iii) *What of the possibilities of a volunteer force?*

3. Officer response

3.1. Responses to Councillor Porter's specific points:-

- (i) The number of County Council School Crossing Patrol Officers fluctuates primarily as a result of new sites being commissioned, coupled with sites that no longer meet the required criteria being decommissioned. The service in Hampshire currently has in the region of 260 sites.

In 2014 all County Council staff, including SCP officers, were given the opportunity to apply for Voluntary Redundancy (VR) as part of the County Council's Transformation to 2015 programme. Under this process a total of 11 SCP Officers applied with eight applications being accepted. In many cases the successful applications came from SCP staff located at sites where alternative crossing facilities, such as zebra or traffic signal controlled crossings, were already in place. The remaining approved VR applications were from staff located at sites that did not meet the SCP criteria in relation to a combination of traffic flow and pedestrian numbers.

Schools affected by the loss of SCP's through VR were notified shortly after the crossing patrol staff themselves had been informed that their applications were successful.

- (ii) Recruitment of new SCP officers has sometimes proved difficult, particularly in parts of Winchester and a few other areas where unemployment levels are low. The Road Safety Team routinely advertise SCP vacancies via the County Council's website, a number of external recruitment sites, as well as via social media. Vacancies are also promoted through a combination of school newsletters, parish councils, local community groups, banners, flyers and the 'Take 5' school catering newsletter.

The service currently has 26 vacant sites although 10 of these have candidates that are at various stages in the recruitment process. Of the current vacancies only three fall within the Winchester district.

Alternative crossing facilities such as pedestrian refuge islands, zebra or traffic signal controlled crossings have been provided in some instances as an alternative to a SCP. Such measures, when they can be justified and funded, provide benefits for the wider community at all hours of the day.

The County Council has also introduced a number of advisory 20mph speed limit signs which have been installed in conjunction with the school Flashing Amber Lights to help raise awareness of children at higher risk locations.

Where a SCP site can no longer be justified the school will often be offered Road Safety education either through one of the established schools programmes or via training specific to the particular situation.

- (iii) Previous investigations into the use of volunteers to fill SCP roles have highlighted a number of potential difficulties. Powers enabling SCPs to stop traffic are granted under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, amended by the Transport Act 2000, and these state the Crossing Patrol Officer must be appointed by an appropriate authority. It is unlikely that a volunteer would be considered to be a formal County Council appointment.

Past discussions have suggested the use of a pool of volunteers with teaching or school back office staff being trained to fulfil the role. This would present difficulties with the provision of uniform and training and capability checks.

Other potential difficulties relate to the management of volunteers and the approach in dealing with absence and disciplinary matters as well as consistency of the service. Volunteers would also be subject to the same pre-employment checks as salaried staff including a full Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) disclosure under the County Council's Safeguarding requirements.

SCPs are required to undertake their role in all weather conditions with employees actively discouraged from taking time off during the school term. All crossing patrol staff must undertake their role in accordance with the County Council's SCP Operational Rules and Guidelines. Given the difficulties of recruiting salaried SCPs in some parts of the County it would seem unlikely that volunteers would be any easier to recruit.

We have previously considered a suggestion to create School Support Officer role with responsibility for a wide range of functions. Initially this option appeared viable. However, further investigation highlighted barriers to combining roles where the person requirements and job specifications differ considerably.

The SCP role can fit in effectively with the lunchtime assistant role, and we have several officers who already undertake both of these duties. Combining the SCP role with the Classroom Assistant role is more difficult as different skills are required. The SCP role could be coordinated with the caretaker role, however, we have had an instance recently where an SCP has had to resign when he was appointed as the caretaker, due to a clash in the hours of duty. That particular SCP was hoping to undertake both roles, but this was not a viable option for the school.

Were an entirely new role to be created the County Council would be seeking to recruit a different type of applicant to this combined post. ETE believes that a combined post may actually be unattractive to many, due to working hours, childcare and lack of the combination of the required skills to fulfil all of the roles.

CORPORATE OR LEGAL INFORMATION:**Links to the Corporate Strategy**

Hampshire safer and more secure for all:	yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
Maximising well-being:	yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
Enhancing our quality of place:	yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	

Other Significant Links

Links to previous Member decisions:		
<u>Title</u>	<u>Reference</u>	<u>Date</u>
Direct links to specific legislation or Government Directives		
<u>Title</u>		<u>Date</u>
Road Safety GB School Crossing Patrol Guidelines		2012

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

<u>Document</u>	<u>Location</u>
None	

IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:**1. Equality Duty**

- 1.1. The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:
- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act;
 - Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
 - Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:

- a) The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant characteristic connected to that characteristic;
- b) Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- c) Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

1.2. Equalities Impact Assessment:

Impact assessments are undertaken in advance of any formal executive decision. Information about those impact assessments, including equalities and impact on crime and disorder and on climate change, will be set out in the appendices to the relevant decision making reports. This report is an update to the Select Committee and is not proposing any change or decision, therefore impact assessments have not been undertaken.

2. Impact on Crime and Disorder:

- 2.1. Impact assessments are undertaken in advance of any formal executive decision. Information about those impact assessments, including equalities and impact on crime and disorder and on climate change, will be set out in the appendices to the relevant decision making reports. This report is an update to the Select Committee and is not proposing any change or decision, therefore impact assessments have not been undertaken.

3. Impact on Climate Change:

- 3.1. How does what is being proposed impact on our carbon footprint / energy consumption?
- 3.2. How does what is being proposed consider the need to adapt to climate change, and be resilient to its longer term impacts?
- Impact assessments are undertaken in advance of any formal executive decision. Information about those impact assessments, including equalities and impact on crime and disorder and on climate change, will be set out in the appendices to the relevant decision making reports. This report is an update to the Select Committee and is not proposing any change or decision, therefore impact assessments have not been undertaken.