

Meeting date: 29 November 2018
Report to: Transport and Highways Cabinet



Subject/report title: **Safer Routes To School - School Crossing Patrol Service Review Update 2018**
Report from: Head of Highway Services
Report author/lead contact officer: David Keaney/Paul Tovey

Wards affected:

- All Wards | Bickenhill | Blythe | Castle Bromwich | Chelmsley Wood |
 Dorridge/Hockley Heath | Elmdon | Kingshurst/Fordbridge | Knowle |
 Lyndon | Meriden | Olton | Shirley East | Shirley South |
 Shirley West | Silhill | Smith's Wood | St Alphege

Public/private report: Public

Exempt by virtue of paragraph: Select an Exemption paragraph from the Quick Parts drop-down list

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To review performance of the School Crossing Patrol service; provide an update on the service improvement plan as approved in November 2017, and consider whether any further changes to the service are required.

2. Decision(s) recommended

2.1 Cabinet Member is asked to:

- (a) Note that the Safer Routes to School: School Crossing Patrol Service continues to provide support to thousands of school children and parents as they go about their daily journeys to and from schools across the borough. The table in Appendix A, sets out the current establishment and the associated priorities when deploying mobile staff.
- (b) Note the changes that have been made to the service in 2018, as detailed in paragraph 3.2 to 3.5 and summarised in Appendix A,
- (c) Approve the proposed policy changes relating to the Management and Creation of new school crossing patrol sites in the borough as set out in section 4.10,

- (d) Agree to disestablish the two sites at Widney Road at Mill Lane, Bentley Heath (L03) and Chester Road at New Road, Castle Bromwich (L65) from the Council's School Crossing Patrol Priority List because they no longer meet the numerical criteria and have been vacant for over 12 months.
- (e) Agree to progress Stage 2 Pedestrian Crossing Assessments at Damson Lane at Rowood Drive, Elmdon (L20) and Chelmsley Road at Marlene Croft, Chelmsley Wood (L75) to confirm the suitability, layout and form of a new pedestrian crossing facility for these locations, and to subsequently engage the local community and deliver the new facilities by the end of April 2019 utilising the Cabinet Member's Business Rate Rebate fund.
- (f) Agree the five sites set out in paragraph 5.9 should form the next phase of service improvement programme, subject to the outcome of the associated pedestrian crossing assessments and funding being available.
- (g) Note that the full MTFs saving will not be achieved by April 2020 without further changes to the service. Cabinet Member is asked to agree that officers should continue to work towards delivering the £19,000 shortfall from elsewhere within the highways portfolio.

3. What is the issue?

- 3.1 At the November 2017 Transport and Highways Cabinet Member Decision Session, a review of the Authority's School Crossing Patrol Service was approved. This sought to reshape the service in order to address a range of service pressures, aid service resilience and work towards a £100,000 savings target for 2019/20 as part of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- 3.2 The November 2017 report approved taking forward a two stage service improvement plan as follows:

Stage 1: The disestablishment of 8 School Crossing Patrol sites operating at existing permanent crossing facilities (Zebras or Pelicans). This change was completed by 1st September 2018, and resulted in the redeployment of 4 officers, 2 officers retired and the remaining 2 sites were already vacant.

Stage 2a: Construction of new Zebra Crossing facilities at 4 sites. The new crossings have now been installed. These sites were either vacant with no officer present or the site was being operated temporarily by one of our mobile patrols at:

- Sharmans Cross Road, St Alphege
- B4101 Station Road, Dorridge
- B4102 Fillongley Road, Meriden
- Widney Road, Bentley Heath

Stage 2b: Provide additional pedestrian crossing facilities; seek external funding opportunities and / or review of policy, details to be dependent subject to progress and lesson learnt from stages 1 and 2a above.

- 3.3 Over the last 12 months, officers have now implemented the first two stages of this plan. As a result, all 12 previously identified sites have been successfully disestablished in accordance with the approved plan and the Authority now provides a more robust and reliable service at the 4 new crossing facilities.
- 3.4 As part of this change process, all schools affected were advised of the changes and asked if they wished to provide/fund a member of staff to perform the function of a School Crossing Patrol Officer. Two of the schools have taken up this option and both Our Lady of the Wayside School, Stratford Road in Shirley and Castle Bromwich Infant School on Hurst Lane North, now fund the operation of a School Crossing Patrol in the afternoons only.
- 3.5 The initial impact of this change has been minimal, with large numbers of children and parents continuing to utilise the existing and new Zebra crossing facilities safely at all 12 sites. However, there are on-going concerns in respect of the two Zebra Crossings on Fillongley Road in Meriden and on Station Road in Dorridge. Officers are continuing to monitor all of these changes, with a particular emphasis on these two sites due to the concerns being raised by local residents.

4. What options have been considered and what is the evidence telling us about them?

- 4.1 Having successfully implemented Stage 1 and Stage 2a of the service review, a number of lessons have been learnt. Firstly, the change from a school crossing patrol officer to a crossing facility is not initially popular with parents, children and local residents. Stage 2a in particular, has demonstrated that introducing a Zebra crossing can work safely and overall be more efficient, robust, reliable and economic in terms of annual operating costs. Looking forward, these benefits need to be communicated clearly so that people become more comfortable with future changes.
- 4.2 Secondly, the need to build into the initial designs a more holistic approach to the detailed design process, which may need to include better signage, beacons, surface treatments and associated site improvements like the removal of obstructive vegetation.
- 4.3 Officers are now actively focusing on any opportunities that may come through Stage 2b of the review, focusing on the following three elements:
- 4.4 **Provision of additional New Pedestrian Crossing Facilities** – The 2017 report identified that it may be possible to install up to 6 new permanent pedestrian crossing facilities by April 2019; thereby enabling the disestablishment of the two further school crossing patrol sites. The two sites initially identified are at St. Bernards Road, Olton and Haslucks Green Road, Shirley.
- 4.5 Following a more detailed review of the St. Bernards Road site, unfortunately due to existing site constraints including the proximity of adjacent drives and junction it has been determined it is not feasible to install a new facility at this location.
- 4.6 In reviewing the site at Haslucks Green, officers are aware that there have and continue to be significant changes in this area as a result of recent and ongoing residential and commercial developments. It is therefore proposed to delay the

progression of this site until the impact of these developments on pedestrian movements and traffic volumes is known as this will potentially impact the type of facility needed at this location. In order to provide a short term solution to aid operation of the existing school crossing patrol on Haslucks Green Road, this location has been prioritised for inclusion as part of the 2019-20 TRO prioritisation programme.

- 4.7 The first stage of the pedestrian crossing assessment process has now been carried out at a further 12 sites across the Borough. This exercise has identified that it is likely to be technically feasible to install a pedestrian crossing facility at 9 of the 12 locations. Further details of the sites can be found in Appendix A. As set out in Appendix A, it is proposed over the next 12 months to carry out Stage 1 pedestrian crossing assessments at the remaining 13 sites which have not to date been subject of assessment. Doing so will enable officers to ascertain a prioritised list to aid future planning.
- 4.8 **External Funding** – Officers have tried to seek external sources of sustainable long-term funding to support the service. Unfortunately opportunities have been limited and whilst officers have, as referenced in section 3.4 of this report, obtained funding to support two existing crossing facilities proposed to be disestablished, such opportunities are limited. It therefore appears to be highly unlikely given the current financial climate, that external funding will significantly contribute towards the current savings target. Whilst it is unlikely to be productive, the external funding option will continue to be explored.
- 4.9 **Changes in policy** – As part of the November 2017 report it was agreed that at locations where new permanent pedestrian crossing facilities are provided in place of an existing School Crossing Patrol site, that the School Crossing Patrol will be automatically disestablished.
- 4.10 In addition a further three changes to existing policy were proposed as set out below:
- (a) That in light of the current financial pressures faced by the service that no new requests for a School Crossing Patrol should be approved unless associated with the relocation of an existing school within the borough or in the event that external funding is identified and made available to cover the full cost of running the service for a minimum of 3 years.
 - (b) That the existing School Crossing Patrol disestablishment criteria be amended so that factors including social deprivation; ability to recruit to post, recent casualty data and planned development within the area served by an SCP can be considered when determining whether it is appropriate to disestablish a site, and
 - (c) Where a site has been vacant for longer than 12 months, without any documented road safety issues, then the site could be recommended for disestablishment.
- 4.11 Having reviewed these proposed changes over the last 12 months, it has been concluded that these will assist officers moving forward in its management of the service and therefore it is recommended that these proposed changes to policy are approved.

5. Reasons for recommending preferred option

- 5.1 Over the last 12 months, Officers have taken a number of steps to implement the recommendations of the November 2017 Service Review. 13 out of the identified 22 sites savings needed to meet the identified Medium Term Financial Saving identified against the service have now been implemented. This demonstrates that changes to our existing service provision can be managed to minimise the impact on existing users, whilst at the same time providing a number of positive enhancements through the provision of a more robust and accessible service which can be used throughout the day, including weekends.
- 5.2 The remainder of this report considers opportunities to achieve the remaining 9 site reviews that would be needed to fully achieve the Medium Term Financial Savings identified for the service:
- 5.3 **Disestablishment of sites no longer meeting criteria** – It was identified in 2017 that potentially 5 existing school crossing patrol sites no longer met the criteria for a School Crossing Patrol and could be disestablished. The 5 sites are listed below.

Ref	Environment	Location	Status
L03	Traffic Calmed	Widney Road and Mill Lane	Unmanned
L27	Unclassified	Bills Lane at Portia Avenue	Manned
L65	Traffic Calmed	Chester Road at New Street	Unmanned
L20	Traffic Calmed	Damson Lane at Rowood Drive	Unmanned
L75	Traffic Calmed	Chelmsley Road at Marlene Croft	Unmanned

- 5.4 These sites have subsequently been reviewed and counts undertaken to establish the current level of use to ascertain if they still no longer meet the criteria. 4 out of 5 are unmanned and have been for over 2 years. Of the 4 unmanned, the sites at Widney Road and Mill Lane (L03) and Chester Road at New Street (L65) do not meet the criteria for a school crossing patrol and therefore it is recommended that these should be disestablished.
- 5.5 Counts undertaken at Damson Lane at Rowood Drive (L20) and Chelmsley Road at Marlene Croft (L75) have shown that both sites are currently well used, with Damson Lane showing a 400% increase (up from 10 to 44 users daily) and Chelmsley Road showing a 600% increase (up from 9 to 60 users daily).
- 5.6 The increase in usage means it would not be appropriate to seek their disestablishment without the provision of a suitable alternative facility. It is therefore suggested that these sites be prioritised for consideration for new permanent pedestrian crossing facilities which could be funded from the current budget allocation. These could be installed, subject to detailed site assessment to understand the impact on adjacent trees, during the Easter 2019 School Holidays in preparation for the commencement of the 2019 Summer Term.

- 5.7 Site L27 at Bills Lane is currently manned on a daily basis by an existing member of staff. Operating at the current location, the level of daily usage of this site is relatively low; however driver behaviour and vehicle numbers do result in a need for a facility to support and enable children to cross to school. It is however recognised, following site assessments and feedback from the local community that changes in crossing behaviour in this area generally, mean that there may be a greater need for a crossing facility at an alternative location in this area in the future. It is therefore recommended that the site is not disestablished, but Officers are authorised to carry out a full assessment of crossing need in this area to establish if there is an alternative location in this vicinity which should be prioritised above the current site.
- 5.8 The provision of these 2 additional zebra crossing facilities and the disestablishment of the 2 sites no longer meeting the service criteria will mean that the disestablishment of 16 of the identified 22 sites can be delivered by the end of 2019. An overall summary of the sites disestablished through the implementation of Stages 1 and 2a, as well as a list of all remaining School Crossing Patrol sites is shown in Appendix A.
- 5.9 **Provision of future zebra crossings** – Pedestrian crossing assessments have been carried out at 11 of the existing school crossing sites; 8 of which are capable of being upgraded to a formal crossing facility (Zebra / Puffin). With regard to the available funding it is recommended that the following 5 sites provide the best overall benefit for the service and the people they support:
- L77 - Balsall Street East, Balsall Common
 - L17 - St Bernards at Monastery Drive, Olton
 - L79 - Whitefields Road, St Alphage
 - L55 – Gilson Way o/s St. Anthonys School (Vacant)
 - L78 – Auckland Drive at Kingfisher Drive (Vacant)
- 5.10 It is noted that 3 out of the 5 sites are currently operated by a permanent member of staff and having now exhausted opportunities for redeployment within the service, it is likely these changes would result in these posts being taken through the Council's Management of Change process. It is recommended the progressing these site should form the basis of the next phase of work subject to funding becoming available.
- 5.11 Moving forward it is recommended that once a school crossing patrol site becomes vacant, a stage 1 pedestrian crossing assessment is undertaken, and if suitable for the provision of a permanent facility, is progressed to a stage 2 assessment and subsequently prioritised for implementation through the Council's Community Liveability Fund. During any period of transition the site would be considered for cover by the mobile school crossing patrol officers in line with the established prioritisation programme.

6. Implications and Considerations

6.1 Delivery of key themes in the Council Plan:

How will the options/proposals in this report contribute to the delivery of the key themes in the Council Plan? *(select which themes apply and briefly state how the options / proposals in this report contribute to their delivery):*

- Improve Health and Wellbeing -
- Managed Growth -
- Build Stronger Communities -
- Deliver Value – The implementation of the recommendations within this report are intended to contribute and ultimately delivery the MTFs savings associated against the School Crossing Patrol Service.

6.2 Implications for children and young people, vulnerable groups and particular communities:

6.2.1 The loss of a school crossing patrol will have an impact on the young children who use the facility to access local schools. Where feasible we will seek to prioritise locations where a school crossing patrol has been disestablished for the installation of new permanent crossing facilities. At the other locations parents and guardians will have to review their routes to school which has worked successfully at locations where the service has already been withdrawn.

6.3 Consultation and Scrutiny:

6.3.1 This matter was originally presented to the Stronger Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board at their meeting in September 2017.

6.3.2 In considering the report, the Board made the following observations:

6.3.3 Further detail was sought on the priority rankings for school crossing patrols that had been established a number of years ago. This explanation was given by Officers at the meeting, which included explaining factors such as road classification and historical local knowledge.

6.3.4 Members questioned how school crossing patrol vacancies were advertised. Officers explained that the most effective publicity at the present time was local publicity in and around the individual schools themselves.

6.3.5 The Board commented that the use of formal Pedestrian Crossing Facilities made sense as this would benefit other pedestrian traffic throughout the day rather than just having crossing provision limited to school start and finish times.

6.3.6 Members also took the opportunity to highlight the School Streets Pilot schemes that had commenced at three trial locations across the Borough on 4 September 2017.

6.3.7 That, subject to the preamble above, the Board made the following **UNANIMOUS RECOMMENDATIONS** to the Cabinet Member for Transport and Highways:

The Board:

- (a) Acknowledges the contributions of the Safe Routes to School service toward the delivery of the Council's Priorities, and
- (b) Support the proposed new business model, considered necessary to put the service in the best position to meet the environmental and staffing pressures and achieve the £100,000 MTFs saving required by the start of the 2019/20 financial year.

6.4 **Financial implications:**

6.4.1 The individual financial implications for the specific changes are set out within section 5 of this report and are considered within the main body of this report.

6.4.2 Overall in terms of the MTFs saving for this service area, there are now 12 fewer SCP sites which have produced an annual saving of £54,000. There are a further 4 sites proposed to be disestablished or upgraded and if approved will generate a further £18,000. It is proposed to upgrade two further sites as part of the Wild Life Ways project producing a further £9,000 saving. When all of these changes are implemented the service will have generated a total saving from the service of £81,000.

6.4.3 To achieve the remaining £19,000 saving, a further 4 sites would need to be included in the programme to upgrade SCP site to formal crossing facilities or alternative options implemented.

6.5 **Legal implications:**

6.5.1 The School Crossing Patrol service is not a statutory service. Consequently, as a discretionary service provided by the Authority there are no legal implications associated with the recommendations set out within this report.

6.6 **Risk implications:**

- (a) The Corporate Risk Management Approach has been complied with to identify and assess the significant risks associated with this decision / project. This includes (but is not limited to) political, legislation and reputation risks.
- (b) The Approach is not intended to eliminate all risks and not all the risks identified can be managed all of the time. Also, risks will still exist that have not been identified.
- (c) Based on the available information it is the officers' opinion that there are no net "Red" risks to the Council associated with the recommendation of the report.

6.7 **Statutory Equality Duty:**

6.7.1 No issues identified as part of this report.

7. List of appendices referred to:

7.1 Appendix A: Updated School Crossing Patrol Prioritisation List.

8. Background papers used to compile this report:

8.1 November 2nd Transport and Highways Cabinet Report: Safer Routes to School – A Review of School Crossing Patrols 2017.

9. List of other relevant documents:

9.1 NA