

Cabinet – 10 September 2014

Category 2 School Crossing Patrols

Portfolio: Councillor Nazir, Deputy Leader, Regeneration

Related portfolios: Councillor Jeavons, Environment and Transport

Service: Regeneration

Wards: All Wards

Key decision: Yes

Forward plan: Yes

1. Summary

- 1.1 On the 27 February 2014 Cabinet approved budget savings proposals for the Financial Year 2014/15 for the stopping of Council funding of £85,000 for 'Category 2' School crossing patrols, subject to further consultation.
- 1.2 Now that consultation with service users and others under Section 3 (2) of the Local Government Act 1999 has been undertaken, as set out within this Report and at **Appendix B**, Cabinet is being asked whether it wishes to confirm its previous approval of an 'in principle' decision to withdraw service of Category 2 school crossing patrols in light of the consultation feedback.

2. Recommendations

- i. That Cabinet withdraw support to the proposed budget saving in light of the consultation feedback, meaning that the Category 2 crossing patrols as defined at Appendix A will remain in place at the Council's cost; and
- ii. That Cabinet agrees to seek alternative savings to absorb the £85,000 (that has already been removed from the Property Services budget) from elsewhere in preparing budgets for 15/16 and future years, while managing the in year pressure as set out in section 6.

3. Report detail

- 3.1 The Council's Property Services team manage the School Crossing Patrol Service, which provides two types of crossings: Category 1 and Category 2.

Category 1 is for a School Crossing Patrol Warden to be on duty at specific times during the school day and is not supported by secondary crossing facilities i.e. puffin, pelican, zebra crossings.

Category 2 is for a School Crossing Patrol Warden supported by secondary crossing facilities

- 3.2 The School Crossing Patrol Service currently has 38 Category 2 schools crossings and there have been requests for further crossings within the borough. These crossings are assessed by Council Road Safety team and have to meet national criteria based primarily on the number of users and passing traffic.
- 3.3 The current staff that are employed by the Council as School Crossing Patrol Wardens are trained and managed by the Council in line with Road Safety GB guidelines and are subject to regular monitoring and refresher training. The Council has a statutory duty to ensure that anyone who is operating as a School Crossing Patrol Warden is suitably trained to perform this role. This duty would remain irrespective of who employs or pays for the Wardens.
- 3.4 At the Cabinet meeting on 19 March 2014 Cabinet approved the recharge process for the cost of the Category 2 School Crossing Patrol Wardens including associated management costs and other overhead costs such as Central Support Charges ('CSS') if any school or academy wished to buy this as traded service from the Council.
- 3.5 In order to provide further information about the proposal and to consult Head Teachers, Parents and the general public service users, between 16 May 2014 and 25 July 2014 the Council issued three separate questionnaires: (i) to Head teachers via an online survey; (ii) a letter to parents severed by category 2 crossings and postal response card; and (iii) a general public online form. The consultation was publicised in the local press, via the Council's website and via social media including Facebook and Twitter.

Ref **Appendix B** Consultation Report

4. **Council priorities**

The recommendation of this report is in line with Council priorities as expressed in the Corporate Plan.

5. **Risk management**

Risk management will be addressed as per the service plan for the continuing Crossing Patrol service.

6. **Financial implications**

- 6.1 Property Services' budget for the School Crossing Patrol Service (44 Category 1 crossings and 38 Category 2 crossings) is £498,727 (including Central Support Service charges) and is managed as a cost to the Council. This Service is forecast to break even for the 2014/15 financial year because although there will be an income shortfall of at least £64,000 against the

£85,000 target offered as a saving for 2014/15, this is being offset against vacant posts. The remaining £21,000 income target has been noted as a high risk for monitoring purposes.

- 6.2 If Cabinet do not confirm their approval of withdrawal of funding for the 38 Category 2 school crossing patrols, then there will be a pressure of up to £85,000 per annum (assuming that the vacant Category 2 posts will have to be filled to deliver the service) that Property Services will have to address by developing an action plan to offset this potential overspend.

7. Legal implications

Legal Services have advised that there is no statutory duty for a Local Authority to provide School Crossing Patrols. A Local Authority has the power to provide this service as a discretionary service (section 26 of the Road Traffic Regulations Act 1984 ('the Act)). There is, however, a statutory duty for a Local Authority to provide training to any person who operates a School Crossing Patrol and to be satisfied that the person appointed has adequate qualifications (sections 26 and 28 of the Act).

8. Property Implications

Property Services will continue to manage the School Crossing Patrol Service.

9. Health and wellbeing implications

Due to the potential impact on road safety the consultation process with Head Teachers included information about the Council's A*Stars programme that includes a range of road safety education initiatives for pupils. Four of the potentially affected schools have taken up this offer for the start of the 2014/15 academic year.

10. Staffing implications

Category 2 crossing staff have been consulted via formal 'at risk' meetings as per Council procedures, the first of these meetings was held on 17 July 2014 and the next meeting is due to take place on the 12 September 2014. At this meeting Category 2 crossing staff will be removed from this consultation since their posts will no longer be impacted by a proposal to remove or alternatively fund the service.

11. Equality implications

There are no direct equality implications arising from this proposal and an equality impact assessments has been carried out for the proposed change in line with adopted procedure.

12. Consultation

Section 3(2) of the Local Government Act 1999 obliges the Council to consult with service users and others before taking any decision to withdraw a service. Schools consultation has been carried out via the Council's Corporate Consultation officer at Head Teacher level and via direct communication with feedback from parents, carers and users of the service, as more particularly set out in the Consultation Report at **Appendix B**.

Background papers

Cabinet - 19th March 2014

Cabinet – 27th February 2014

Budget Consultation: Financial Year 2014/15

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21 August 2014



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Date

Appendix A

Category 2 crossings

Crossing Number	Ward	Schools Served
H001	Pleck	Alumwell Junior + Infant & Nursery
H005	Bentley & Darlaston North	County Bridge Primary
H008	Pleck	Birchills CE Primary
H011	Willenhall North	Beacon Primary
H014	Bloxwich East	St Peters RC Primary
H016	St Matthews	Blue Coat CE Junior + Infant
H017	St Matthews	Blue Coat CE Junior + Infant
H025	Birchills Leamore / Blakenall	Croft Community Primary
H026	Palfrey	Delves Junior + Infant & Nursery
H027	Darlaston South	Moorcroft Wood Primary
H028	Blakenall	Edgar Stammers Primary
H031	Willenhall South	Barcroft Primary
H032	Bloxwich West	Elmore Green Primary
H037	Pleck	Hillary Primary
H038	St Matthews / Paddock	Hydesville Tower
H040	Palfrey	Whitehall Infant + Fulbrook Nursery
H043	Birchills Leamore / Blakenall	Leamore Primary
H047	Bloxwich East	Lower Farm Primary
H051	Willenhall North	New Invention Junior + Infant
H053	Palfrey	Palfrey Junior & Infant
H055	Darlaston South	Pinfold St JMI + Old Church
H056	Darlaston South	Pinfold St JMI + Old Church
H060	Willenhall South	St Giles CE Primary
H067	Willenhall North	Beacon Primary + New Invention Infant & Junior
H070	Short Heath	Woodlands Primary
H082	Rushall Shelfield	Greenfield Primary
H091	Brownhills	St James Primary + St Bernadette's
H094	Pelsall	Pelsall Village
H101	Rushall Shelfield	St Francis RC Primary + Greenfield Primary
H109	Aldridge Central & South	St Mary of the Angels RC Primary
H121	Paddock	Mayfield Prep
H133	Rushall Shelfield	Greenfield's Primary
H137	Bloxwich East / Blakenall	Blakenall Heath Junior + Sunshine Infant
H139	St Matthews / Paddock	Hydesville Tower
H144	Willenhall North	New Invention Junior + Infant
H145	Willenhall North	New Invention Junior + Infant
H147	St Matthews	Butts Primary

Appendix B

Consultation Report

Below is the detail of the consultation which has been carried out by the Council Corporate Consultation officer. The consultation was to the following groups.

1. Head teachers (online survey)
2. Parents (letter and postal response card)
3. General public (online form)

Details of the affected crossing patrols were made available on the council's website, and as well as the cost and other details, included a map identifying the location of the crossing. Whilst each survey differed slightly, all respondents were asked the following question:

"What is your overall opinion on the proposal for the council to cease funding Category Two School Crossing Patrols and schools given the opportunity to fund the service themselves?"

The consultation was publicised in the local press, via the council's website and via social media including Facebook and Twitter. Anyone could give their views by email, comment via an online form or by calling a dedicated number.

- 30 head Teachers responded (77%).
- 796 responses from parents (7%).
- 10 online responses from the general public.
- No emails have been received and 14 calls of which no details were required to process.
- 3 emails from Councillors.
- A number of letters were also received; 1 from School governors and 3 from members of the public.

All parents of children attending the affected schools were sent (via the school) a letter explaining the proposal and pre-paid response postcard which asked for their views on the proposal to cease funding Category Two School Crossing Patrols and to give schools the opportunity to fund it themselves. 11,179 letters and postcards were distributed to schools on 23 June 2014. By the closing date of 25 July 2014, 796 responses had been received, a 7% response rate.

Summary of consultation

From the detailed survey information the summary of the comments and findings are detailed below with further detail in appendix 2

- There is a clear lack of support for the proposal (Head Teachers, parents and the general public).
- Head Teachers and parents alike are concerned about the safety of children, in particular the danger posed by busy roads, and in the absence of a warden, feel there is an increased risk of accidents occurring.
- Most Head teachers are unwilling to fund the crossing themselves, citing a lack of funds and it being the council's responsibility to fund such services.
- From a 7% response rate Parents do not support the proposal.

Some comments from parents included:

Safety

- *"Children's safety should be a priority not a cost cutting measure, this proposal is ridiculous." New Invention School.*
- *"There is no guarantee that the school will fund this so my child's safety would be at risk." Blue Coat Junior School.*
- *"Many drivers disregard zebra crossing, some even do so when asked to stop by wardens. I feel this move may endanger lives." Lower Farm Primary School.*

Busy roads

- *"There is an extremely busy road outside the school and drivers regularly speed, most dangerous." St Giles Primary School.*
- *"Disgusting to think they would cut our lollipop man on a road which is very dangerous even with the zebra crossing and patrol warden the cars do not stop most of the time, they go at least 40-50 mph with large lorries." Moorcroft Wood Primary School.*
- *"As the roads in question are on the public highway under the care of the local authority it's in LA'S responsibility to ensure it is safe enough without assisted crossing, I have used these road along with my children and have witnessed first hand the speed with which some drivers approach. It is a very busy road used by lots of children; you must take into account that during school crossing hours there are a lot of bodies bunched up at these crossing." Blue Coat Junior School.*

Wardens are needed

- *"I have witnessed on several occasions vehicles crossing whilst the lights are on red, many children are unattended and would take the red light as safe to cross, quite rightly so, if the crossing patrol were not in attendance many accidents would happen."* New Invention Primary School.
- *"Cars on the pedestrian crossing repeatedly drive through red lights when the lollipop lady is there, so without her it would be even worse".* Leamore Primary School.
- *"I use the warden everyday to cross the road, although it is a pedestrian crossing (zebra) I always feel safer with his help is a pleasure to cross with and children love him. Schools being forced to pay is a bad idea, roads are councils responsibility don't remove the warden."* Blakenall Heath Junior School.

Council's responsibility / Not schools responsibility

"School funding will ultimately affect my child's education through having less money. The council should uphold responsibility for child safety."

- *"I really do not think the school should have to fund this as most schools budgets are already limited and stretched."* Ryders Hayes.
- *"The funding should come out of the council tax and not school budget, £4,709.02 is a small amount when lives are at risk."* Delves Junior.

Risk of accidents

- *"Broadway north is a very busy road and traffic frequently jumps the lights without patrols presence there would be significant risk of an accident."* Hydesville Tower.

Cuts

- *"I am disgusted the council are making cut backs in this area to do with the safety of our children."* St Mary of Angels.

In support

Whilst most parents were opposed to the proposal, 12% were in support. Comments included:

- *"Don't really need a crossing patrol warden on a pelican crossing, that's what the lights are there for. They have pedestrian lights on all 4 of the crossings in question - no need for wardens!" New Invention Junior School.*
- *"Children need to learn to use crossings provided (pelican/zebra) safely themselves and not to be reliant on someone else. New Invention Junior School.*
- *"Cars stop at the crossing anyway as it is a zebra crossing so there is no need for a patrol warden to walk you across." St Francis Primary.*
- *"Most primary school children are accompanied to school by parent/adult who should take responsibility for safe crossing; money is better spent on secondary school crossing" Lower Farm Primary School.*
- *"Pelican crossing at site is no real issue" Hydesville Tower School.*
- *"There is sufficient crossing already i.e. zebra crossings and it is a primary school children should be with a parent" Leamore Primary School."*

"The council has to save money and this will have little impact because there is a zebra crossing" Lower Farm.

Petition

A petition has been received from Mr. A Orlik, Executive Head, Blue Coat Church of England, Infant and Junior schools federation.

The petition was signed by 378 persons and the wording on the petition was:

I believe that the Springhill Road crossing patrols:

- Provide a vital service which keeps safe thousands of users of Walsall's transport infrastructure (pedestrians, motorists, children travelling to many different schools in the area)
- Must be maintained and coordinated by the local authority to ensure the safe movement of the population around an extremely busy area.