



**EDUCATION FOR LIFE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE –
14TH JANUARY 2014**

**SUBJECT: CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL'S SCHOOL CROSSING
PATROL SERVICE**

REPORT BY: ACTING DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide an overview of the School Crossing Patrol service within Caerphilly County Borough and to inform Members of the procedure used to review the need for School Crossing Patrol provision at a site.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 School Crossing Patrols provide a valuable service to the community and are employed primarily to help children cross the road safely on their journey to and from school. Caerphilly CBC currently employs 63 permanent School Crossing Patrols across the County Borough. The service forms part of the Transport Strategy and Road Safety Team within the Engineering Services Division.
- 2.2 Operational practices are guided by Road Safety Great Britain's School Crossing Patrol Guidelines, which is national, best practice guidance to support the management of the School Crossing Patrol service. The guidelines set down a procedure that is used by officers within the Council to assess whether the provision of a School Crossing Patrol is justified at a specific location. The assessment is based on the number of children walking to and from school and traffic flows at the site in question, and also takes into account site-specific characteristics. The procedure is followed when reviewing the ongoing need for SCP provision after a site becomes vacant and to assess whether the establishment of a new SCP site is justified.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 To work towards the Council's corporate objective of improving peoples' living environment through targeted actions, regulation, information and advice.
- 3.2 Engineering Division Objective: To work towards a safer environment through positive measures to reduce road accidents and particularly by protecting and providing for vulnerable road users.
- 3.3 Single Integrated Plan priority to 'ensure people are supported to live in their own homes and communities in safety'.

4. THE REPORT

Background to the School Crossing Patrol Service

- 4.1 The Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 gives Local Authorities the power to appoint School Crossing Patrols (SCPs), which are employed primarily to help children cross the road safely on their journey to and from school. However, the service is not a statutory requirement and, even where a SCP is provided, it is important to note that parents remain responsible for ensuring the safety of their children on the whole journey to and from school.
- 4.2 SCPs are legally empowered to stop traffic when wearing the correct uniform issued by the employing authority and using the approved 'lollipop' sign (refer to section 11.1). SCPs can stop traffic to help anyone (child or adult) to cross the road. It is an offence under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 to fail to stop when signalled to do so by a SCP.
- 4.3 Road Safety GB's School Crossing Patrol Guidelines (updated November 2013) provides national guidance for managing the SCP service and is the recognised best practice document used by local authorities that are members of Road Safety GB to support the management of SCPs. Road Safety GB is a national road safety organisation that includes representatives from groups across the UK, such as local government road safety teams, and encourages the adoption of common policies and promotion of best practice by organisations involved in road casualty reduction. Although not statutory guidance, this best practice document is used to support the management of the SCP service within Caerphilly County Borough Council.

Caerphilly County Borough Council's School Crossing Patrol Service

- 4.4 The SCP service forms part of the Transport Strategy and Road Safety team within the Council's Engineering Division. The SCP Supervisor within the team is responsible for the day-to-day management of the School Crossing Patrol service e.g. carrying out SCP on-site supervision, site assessments, risk assessments, Performance Development Reviews, sickness absence monitoring, recruitment, training etc. The SCP Supervisor also provides a point of liaison with those schools that have SCP sites e.g. in relation to any issues or concerns linked to the SCP site, to advise of SCP absences and SCP recruitment etc.
- 4.5 The Council currently employs 63 permanent SCPs at locations across the county borough operating at primary schools only. A list of the SCP sites currently operating is included as Appendix 1.
- 4.6 The location of the SCP sites across the County Borough has developed historically over a number of years. It is not the case that every primary school in the county borough currently has a SCP, as service provision reflects whether a request has historically come forward for a SCP at each school site, e.g. from the school, Members, through a School Travel Plan etc., and whether the site then warrants the provision of a SCP in terms of levels of traffic and child pedestrian activity. Not all primary schools will require the provision of a SCP due to the location of the school e.g. the school may be located in an area that has relatively low levels of traffic, the provision of traffic calming or other physical measures to improve pedestrian safety in the vicinity of a school reduces traffic speeds and the need for a SCP etc.
- 4.7 The hours of work of each SCP takes into account the local situation at each school e.g. start and finish times of the school day, whether the school has a nursery or breakfast club etc. The service provides a morning and afternoon shift to coincide with the schools' start and finish times. In addition to the morning and afternoon shift, a lunchtime shift is currently provided at 22 primary schools. These are shown in Appendix 1.

Covering SCP Absences

- 4.7 The Local Authority has no legal obligation to provide cover for SCPs who are absent from work e.g. during periods of sickness, but at the current time the service has 5 relief SCPs in place who are only available to provide cover for specific schools. In the case of planned SCP absences, e.g. medical appointments, the relevant school is given as much notice as possible of the absence so that the school is able to notify parents if deemed necessary. In the case of sudden, unexpected absences, e.g. sickness absence, in addition to the relevant school being informed, the SCP Supervisor will contact Caerphilly CBC's Community Safety Wardens who are able to assist in providing emergency SCP cover when available resources allow. Interim cover via the Community Safety Wardens will be arranged where possible, particularly at busier SCP sites, at least long enough to enable the school to inform parents of the SCP absence. This arrangement works on a partnership arrangement with Caerphilly CBC Community Safety but, it is not always possible to provide even short-term cover for SCP absences. However, whilst every effort is made to maintain the service, it remains the parents' responsibility to ensure the safety of their children on the whole journey to and from school.
- 4.8 It should be noted that there are difficulties in maintaining continuous SCP cover when a SCP site becomes vacant e.g. through retirement or resignation. This is due to timescales involved in undertaking the site review process described below and in completing the recruitment process to the site. Every effort is made to implement these processes as soon as possible after the existing SCP gives notification of their intended resignation or retirement in order to minimise the time period that a site remains without cover. However, it will inevitably be the case that such sites will remain vacant for a period of time, as the recruitment process to a SCP sites takes a minimum of 2 months to complete, whereas SCP's are only required to give a notice period of 1 month. In the past there have been difficulties in filling SCP vacancies and, although not currently considered a significant issue affecting the service, it should be noted that in such cases the SCP site will remain vacant until a suitable candidate becomes available.

Process for assessing vacant sites and requests for new sites

- 4.9 Many SCP sites have been in place for a number of years and it is important to have in place a mechanism for reviewing sites that become vacant to ensure the provision of a SCP is still warranted at that location. In addition requests for new SCP sites may come from various sources e.g. schools, Elected Members, local communities, members of the public etc. Road Safety GB's SCP Guidelines states that appraisal of a potential SCP site should be carried out objectively and be capable of withstanding challenge or criticism. The national guidelines sets down 'criteria for establishing SCP sites' which is a procedure used to determine whether a SCP is justified at a specific location. The procedure is used by CCBC officers to review the ongoing need for SCP provision at a site and to determine whether the establishment of a new SCP site is justified.
- 4.10 The guidance states that sites should be established based on the number of children walking to and from school and traffic flows at the site in question. The procedure for assessing SCP sites involves undertaking child pedestrian and vehicle counts over a 1-hour period at the beginning and/or end of the school day. The busiest 30-minute period is used to review the ongoing need for the site in line with the SCP Service Guidelines. Site characteristics, including road and footway width, speed of traffic and casualty data, are also taken into account as part of the review process. The detailed procedure set down in Road Safety GB's SCP Service Guidelines is included as Appendix 2.
- 4.11 The procedure in Appendix 2 is followed by officers each time:-

a) A School Crossing Patrol site becomes vacant e.g. through retirement or resignation

The review process should be undertaken as soon as possible after the existing SCP gives notification of their intended resignation or retirement. The recruitment process at a vacant

SCP site will not be progressed until the site review is completed and has proven the ongoing need for a SCP. The review process has to be applied consistently across the County Borough and may not always result in the reinstatement of a SCP after a site becomes vacant. It should be noted that the review process may determine that SCP provision at a site is no longer justified and may result in the disestablishment of SCP sites.

b) A request is made for a new SCP site

The site review process is undertaken each time the Transport Strategy and Road Safety team receives a request for a new SCP site e.g. from a school, Elected Member etc. Priority is given to completing reviews of existing vacant SCP sites and therefore reviews of new SCP site requests are undertaken as available resources allow. It should be noted that although the site review process may determine that a new SCP site is justified at a location, there may not be the budget available to enable recruitment to take place. In addition, prior to the provision of a new SCP site being authorised, a risk assessment would need to be undertaken to determine that the site is deemed safe for the siting of a SCP e.g. taking into account the nature of the road layout etc.

4.12 In the case of existing vacant SCP sites:

- If the site review process determines that a SCP continues to be justified, then recruitment to the position will commence in line with Caerphilly CBC's corporate recruitment policy.
- If the site review process determines that a SCP at a location is no longer justified, then the site will be disestablished as a SCP site and recruitment will not take place.

The outcome of the review process at each site is reported to the Cabinet Member for Highways, Transportation and Engineering, Ward Members, the relevant school and, in the case of new SCP site requests, the individual who made the request.

4.13 If a request is received for a SCP at a previously disestablished site, this will be treated as a request for a new SCP site and a review will be undertaken when resources allow, but not sooner than 12 months since the date of the last review.

4.14 The national guidance also states that existing SCP sites should be reviewed when circumstances change, e.g. school closure, road or traffic changes etc, and that existing sites should be reviewed once every two years. Within Caerphilly CBC, reviews in these instances will focus on whether a SCP site continues to operate safely as a result of any changes and will not result in the removal of a SCP unless for safety reasons. In such cases the SCP will be re-located to a more suitable location in the vicinity of the existing site if at all possible. It is not intended that any such review of a site while a SCP is still in post will lead to a recommendation that would result in a SCP being made redundant.

School Crossing Patrols and light-controlled crossings

4.15 SCPs and light-controlled crossings, such as puffin, pelican and toucan crossings, fulfil the same purpose (they stop traffic so pedestrians may cross the road safely) and, therefore, having both in place at the same time is a duplication of resources and may be confusing for drivers. The Road Safety GB guidance states that SCPs should not be located on light-controlled crossings unless there are exceptional circumstances such as poor driver behaviour, large groups of children crossing etc.

4.16 Within Caerphilly CBC, there are currently a small number of SCPs operating at light-controlled crossings. This is a historical arrangement and the SCPs in question have been working at existing light-controlled crossing for a number of years. Only in the case of Ystrad Mynach Primary is the arrangement the result of a new puffin crossing being installed at the existing SCP site. It is not intended the SCPs currently working at light-controlled crossings will be removed from their current location unless for safety reasons. If safety concerns do arise, every effort will be made to re-locate the SCP to a more suitable location in the vicinity of the existing site if at all possible. In line with the national guidance, in future SCPs will not be recruited to light-controlled crossings unless there are proven to be exceptional circumstances that warrant the need for a SCP. This will be considered as part of the site

review process as sites become vacant.

Infrastructure to support a School Crossing Patrol site

- 4.17 The provision of infrastructure on the highway to support SCP sites, e.g. SCP advance warning signs, varies across the county borough as a result of historical provision. Requests received for the provision of new infrastructure are considered as follows:
- 'Red carpets', which are a strip of red carriageway surfacing, have been provided at a small number of SCP sites across the County Borough to clearly distinguish the SCP crossing point. These have only been used in cases where queuing traffic extends back through the SCP site and creates a problem for the SCP operating at the site. They have been provided to highlight the area of carriageway that should be kept clear for the SCP and to discourage drivers from stopping across the SCP site. The provision of a red carpet will only be considered at SCP sites where queuing traffic extending back across the crossing point frequently causes a problem for the SCP.
 - SCP warning signs are currently in place at the majority, but not all, of SCP sites in the county borough to provide advanced warning of a SCP crossing point. The Traffic Signs Manual, which prescribes the design of warning signs on the public highway, is not prescriptive in relation to the provision of SCP warning signs i.e. it is not a requirement that they are provided to identify SCP sites. New School Crossing Patrol warning signs will be considered on a site-specific basis and will be provided where deemed necessary e.g. in areas where there are likely to be high levels of non-local traffic.
 - Flashing amber lights may be provided to give emphasis to SCP warning signs at SCP sites where the 85th percentile speed exceeds 35mph.
 - School keep clear markings will be provided at the main entrance to all schools unless there are site-specific reasons that would make the provision of the markings inappropriate. School keep clear markings will only be provided at secondary entrances to a school if they are deemed necessary due to the location of the school.
 - Green cones are currently provided at those schools that have a School Travel Plan in place and where green cones are identified as a solution to a problem of indiscriminate parking outside the school identified within the School Travel Plan. Future requests for green cones will be considered at those schools that meet the criteria for provision.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 This report is for information purposes, so the Council's Equality Impact Assessment process does not need to be applied.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Requests for new SCP sites that meet the criteria set down in Appendix 2 will require the equivalent revenue budget to be available to enable recruitment to take place.
- 6.2 Any additional infrastructure requested and subsequently provided at SCP sites will have a capital cost linked to initial implementation and an ongoing maintenance cost.
- 6.3 This service is subject to financial review via the Council's MTFP process.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 None.

8. CONSULTATIONS

8.1 The comments received from the list of consultees have been incorporated in this report.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 It is recommended that Members note the procedures and practices that are being followed in managing Caerphilly County Borough Council's School Crossing Patrol service.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 To ensure Members are fully aware of the procedures and practices being followed in order to manage the SCP service effectively.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 School Crossing SCP Act 1953
Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 (Sections 26 – 28)
Transport Act 2000 (Section 270)
SCP 'lollipop' sign – SCP Sign (England and Wales) Regulations 2006
SCP uniform – Home Office Circular No. 3/1989 SCPs Uniform
Health & Safety at Work etc Act 1974

Author: Gemma Thomas, Principal Engineer, Transport Strategy and Road Safety
Consultees: Cllr R Passmore – Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning
Cllr T Williams - Cabinet Member for Highways, Transportation & Engineering
Cllr W David, Chair of Education for Life Scrutiny Committee
Cllr D Preece, Vice Chair of Education for Life Scrutiny Committee
Sandra Aspinall – Acting Deputy Chief Executive & Director of Education
Terry Shaw – Head of Engineering Services
Clive Campbell – Transportation Engineering Manager
Dean Smith – Principal Engineer, Traffic Management
Kathryn Peters - Community Safety Manager
David Thomas - Senior Policy Officer (Equalities and Welsh Language)
Sian Phillips – HR Manager

Appendices:

- Appendix 1 Location of SCP sites within the County Borough
Appendix 2 Criteria for Establishing School Crossing Patrol Sites