

Meeting of the Executive Member for Children's  
Services and Advisory Panel

19<sup>th</sup> January 2009

Report of the Director of Learning, Culture & Children's Services

## **The School Crossing Patrol Service in York**

### **Summary**

1. This report has been prepared at the request of members to respond to queries raised regarding the recruitment of School Crossing Patrol Officers (SCPO's).
2. This report notes the number of SCPO vacant post within the city; the measures previously taken to recruit to these vacant posts; and options for filling these vacancies in the future. The report also confirms that the responsibility for delivering the School Crossing Patrol Service has transferred from Learning Culture and Children's Services to City Strategy with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2009 and sets out the reasons for this decision and the benefits this will provide to the service.

### **Background**

3. The primary duty of an SCPO is to facilitate the safe crossing of school children at a pre-designated crossing site. SCPO's are also empowered to cross any other pedestrian choosing to use their services. In order to legally stop traffic the Patrol must be properly attired and properly display the prescribed sign (the lollipop).
4. There are 35 designated school crossing patrol sites in the city (full details are at Appendix 1), 17 of these sites currently have an SCPO in post, 11 sites are vacant with steps being taken to recruit to these posts and 7 of these sites are designated as 'under review'. Under review status means that the site is currently vacant and due to a change in the circumstances at the site, for example the installation of additional road safety measures or pelican crossing, the site needs to undergo a rigorous review a process to assess future need. The review process could conclude that alternative road safety measures should be considered; that the site should be disestablished; or that further attempts should be made to recruit an SCPO to the post. The site review process is led by the SCP Service but requires detailed input of the Traffic Management Team (City Strategy), Road Safety Team (City Strategy) and North Yorkshire Police.

5. Most Local Authorities find SCPO posts difficult to recruit to and anecdotal evidence suggests that the vacancy levels in York are comparable with other local authorities. Lancashire County Council has recently reported that it has 29 vacant SCPO posts; South Tyneside has vacancies for 33 SCPO's; 19 SCPO's are needed in North Tyneside; 23 in Gateshead, 18 in Northumberland and 40 in County Durham. North Yorkshire County Council have approximately 30% of its SCPO posts vacant.
6. The job of SCPO's has not historically been perceived as appealing to many potential applicants and there have been recruitment difficulties for the service for a number of years. The role has some complex technical requirements and SCPO's must be able to follow a strict mode of operation to ensure that they operate in line with the Highway Code. They must be confident in their approach and able to communicate to both pupils and parents. By law they must wear a protective uniform.
7. On a number of occasions the SCP Supervisor has discussed with potential applicants the reasons for not pursuing an application for an SCPO vacancy and the following reasons have been given;
  - The pay is too low
  - Can't work a split shift (an SCPO may be required to work 2 or 3 times each day, often comprising of 30 minutes to an hour before and after the school day).
  - Don't want to wear the uniform
  - Don't want to work in bad weather
  - Don't want to be abused by motorists/pupils/parents.

Attempts have been made to address most of these perceived concerns.

8. Prior to the Council's Pay and Grading review process the rate of pay for SCPO's in York was £6.00 per hour. The Pay and Grading review has significantly improved this rate and the annual salary has been set at £14,250 - £15,500, which equates to hourly rates of £7.38 - £8.03 per hour. This compares to £5.72 in Derby City, £5.94 in Sheffield, £6.08 in Hull, Barnsley, Wakefield, Kirklees, Doncaster, Calderdale, Lancashire and Bradford, £6.37 in Rotherham, £6.41 in North East Lincolnshire and £6.77 in North Yorkshire.
9. As the agreement to implement the Pay and Grading proposals has only recently been finalised the vacant SCPO posts have not yet been advertised with these new rates of pay. It is hoped that the significantly improved rates will help to attract applicants to these posts. All SCPO posts are advertised so it is clear to potential applicants that the post can be taken up on a part time or job share basis. There is no upper age limit for applicants but they must just be fit to undertake the duties of the SCPO role.

### **Tackling the Recruitment Challenge**

10. Considerable efforts have been made to fill the vacant posts but

unfortunately, the traditional approach of placing an advertisement in the local press or on the Council's Internal Vacancy Bulletin (IVB), does not tend to be successful. However, advertisements have recently been placed in the City of York Council website and in the Job Centre.

11. The most successful way of filling vacant SCPO posts has been where the SCP Service has worked closely with local school communities, targeting potential applicants from that community. This approach can include advertising the vacant post in school newsletters, providing the school with flyers to be distributed to parents / carers or advertising in Parish and Ward newsletters.
12. In addition the SCP Service works hard to raise the profile of the service and the important work that the SCPO's undertake. In October 2007 the Lord Mayor hosted a reception and long service presentation for seven SCPOs who each had more than 30 years service in post, this event was covered in the local media. In March 2008, the York Times ran a very positive front-page editorial about the SCP Service, focusing on the good work of SCPO's and need for more people to undertake this work. The article provided very positive coverage for the service and was the most successful publicity to date. At the same time as the editorial piece, the York Times ran a recruitment advert. This approach attract a number of potential candidates but unfortunately only one appointment was possible.
13. More recently press releases have been prepared and the SCP Supervisor has been on a local radio interview to promote both the service and highlighting the need for more SCPO's.
14. The SCP Service is now working with the Council's recruitment advertising agency to develop a targeted recruitment campaign for early 2009. The campaign will target potential applications from within local school communities and it is likely that the campaign will include banners on School railings and postcards/business cards in community buildings. It has also been recommended that we consider advertisements on buses because of the popularity and volume of passengers on public transport in York.
15. There is a need to continue to publicise, and raise the profile of, the School Crossing Patrol Service and we will take every opportunity available to do this. Greater links could be made between the SCP Service and individual Schools in order to explore whether a number of different jobs could be combined to provide the opportunity for one person to work more hours. For example, an SCPO could also work as a School Midday Supervisor, School Caretaker or deliver pedestrian and/or cycle training in schools. This would provide SCPO's with additional working hours and additional income during term time, which may encourage recruitment or help retain existing SCPO's, as well increase the number of staff available to deliver safety related training in schools.
16. The retention of existing SCPO's does not tend to be an issue for the service and once SCPO's have been appointed turnover rates are low. Until

recently there were seven SCPO's who had each given over thirty years service to the Council, although two of these SCPO's have recently retired. Discussions with these long serving SCPO's confirms that they feel valued in the work they carry out and that they enjoy being able to make a contribution to their local community.

17. The SCP Service has previously explored the possibility of using Police Constable Special Officers (PCSO's) at the vacant Crossing Sites. The Police are very supportive of the SCP Service and help where they can however, they are clear that it is the City of York Council's responsibility to deliver the SCP Service. PCSO's are encouraged to regularly attend their local school crossing patrol sites and their presence can help to improve driver behaviour and minimise illegal parking. This works well at most sites and the PCSO is a regular presence although at some sites attendance by the PCSO can be irregular due to their other responsibilities.

### **Transfer of the service from LCCS to City Strategy**

18. The SCP Service is currently managed by the Human Resources Section of LCCS. However, the service has always had strong links with several important work areas currently being carried out within City Strategy. These include road safety training, safe routes to school and the promotion of sustainable travel. Therefore, it is thought that greater synergy could be achieved by transferring the service to City Strategy, where it would logically sit within Transport Planning as part of the Road Safety and Sustainable Travel Team. The service transfer has been agreed by the Directors of LCCS and City Strategy by Officer Decision and after careful planning the transfer will take effect from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2009.
19. The day to day management of the service will remain the responsibility of the SCP Supervisor who strongly supports the transfer, primarily because it will mean that the SCP Service will be managed by Officers who have sole responsibility for road safety.

### **Consultation**

20. This report is for information only at the specific request of EMAP. It has not as a result been subject to a discreet consultation process.

### **Analysis**

21. This is not a report which presents EMAP with specific options to consider. The analysis of the issues the paper raises are contained in the main body of the report.

### **Corporate Priorities**

22. The actions described meet the council's priorities to:
  - Increase the use of public and other environmentally friendly modes of

transport

- Increase people's skills and knowledge to improve future employment prospects
- Improve the life chances of the most disadvantaged and disaffected children, young people and families in the city

### **Implications**

23. The report is for information only. It does not as a result carry specific financial, equalities, crime and disorder, IT or property implications. The HR implications have been contained in the body of the report

#### Legal Implications

- The Statutory basis for the service comes from the Crossing Patrols Act 1953.
- The Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 gives the Council powers to provide a school crossing patrol service.
- The Council has a duty under the Road Traffic Act 1988 to promote road safety.
- The Council has a duty under the Education and Inspections Act 2006 to promote sustainable travel and transport modes on the journey to and from schools and other establishments.

### **Risk Management**

24. The report has highlighted the challenges facing York and many other authorities in recruiting SCPOs. An inability to recruit does impact on the arrangements in place to provide safe routes to schools for our children and young people. Whilst to date this has not resulted in any preventable incidents occurring we should not be complacent and the report has described the plans in place to address the problem.

### **Recommendations**

25. That the Advisory Panel advise the Executive Member to note and comment on the contents of this report.

Reason: To provide opportunity for reflection and informed debate on the issue

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Report Approved  Date *20 December 2008*

**Specialist Implications Officers:** None

**Wards Affected:** *List wards or tick box to indicate all*

All

**For further information please contact the author of the report**

**Background Papers:** None

### Annex

Annex 1 - Schools Crossing Patrols Sites and Schools