
Shadow Executive

14th May 2008

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

School Crossing Patrol - Vacancies

Summary

1. This report has been prepared at the request of the Shadow Executive to respond to a number of specific queries raised regarding the recruitment and retention of School Crossing Patrol Officers (SCPOs).

Background

2. This report notes the number of SCPO vacancies within the city, the measures previously taken to recruit to these posts and possible options for filling these vacancies in the future.

Current Vacancies

3. There are 35 school crossing patrol sites within the city, 20 (57%) of which currently have a SCPO in place and 9 (26%) of which are vacant. Full details at Appendix 1. There are a further 6 sites (17%), which are also vacant, but due to a change in the circumstances at the site will need to undergo a rigorous site review a process. The review process is led by the SCP Service and involves the Traffic Management Team (City Strategy), Road Safety Team (City Strategy) and the Police. The process needs to be completed and the findings considered before the vacancies can be filled.

Comparator Authority Vacancies

4. It has not been possible to obtain the details of the precise vacancy rate in each of the authorities mentioned below, however anecdotal evidence suggests that the vacancy rate is similar to that in York. It is known that North Yorkshire County Council currently has a 30% vacancy rate for SCPO posts.

Rate of Pay

5. The current rate of pay for SCPOs in York is £6.00 per hour. If agreed, the Council's Pay and Grading proposals will significantly improve this to an hourly rate of £7.38 per hour rising, over time, to £8.03 per hour. This compares to, for example, £5.72 in Derby City, £5.94 in Sheffield, £6.08 in Hull, Barnsley, Wakefield, Kirklees, Doncaster, Calderdale and Bradford, £6.37 in Rotherham, £6.41 in North East Lincolnshire and £6.77 in North Yorkshire.

Recruitment Issues

6. Members are asked to appreciate that a SCPO's job is not a particularly appealing one to many potential applicants and that there have been recruitment difficulties for the service for a number of years.
7. The role has some complex technical requirements and SCPOs are required to follow a strict mode of operation in line with the Highway Code and wear a protective uniform.
8. When the service has tried to understand the reasons for potential applicants not wishing to submit an application, the following reasons have been given;
 - The pay is too low
 - Can't work a split shift (each SCPO is 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 like the uniform
 - Don't want to work in bad weather
 - I don't want to be abused by motorists/pupils/parents.

Retention of SCPO's

9. The retention of SCPOs is not as much of an issue for the service once appointed turnover rates are relatively low. There are currently seven SCPOs who have given over thirty years service to the Council. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the SCPO's employed by the service feel valued and that they enjoy being able to make a contribution to their local community.

Steps Taken to Reduce Vacancy Levels

10. Whilst every effort has been made to fill these vacancies, the traditional route of placing an advertisement in the local press or on the Internal Vacancy Bulletin (IVB), has proved unsuccessful. More recently, advertisements have been placed in the York Times (a new free newspaper in York, distributed to all households), on the City of York Council website and in the Job Centre, however, these have proved equally unsuccessful.
11. The most successful way of filling vacant posts has been where the School Crossing Patrol Service has work closely with school communities, advertising vacant posts in school newsletters, providing schools with flyers to be distributed to parents/carers and advertising in Parish and Ward newsletters.
12. At the same time, the authority has endeavoured to raise the profile of the School Crossing Patrol Service. In October 2007 the Lord Mayor hosted a presentation to the seven SCPOs who each had more than 30 years service, and this was covered in the local media.
13. In March 2008 the York Times included a very positive front-page editorial about the service, focusing heavily on the good work of, and need for more, School Crossing Patrols. The article provided very positive coverage for the

service, succeeded in raising its profile and was the most successful publicity to date. At the same time as the editorial, the paper also ran a recruitment advertisement and a number of applications were received as a result.

Additional Steps that Could be Taken to Further Reduce Vacancies

14. There is a need to continue to publicise, and raise the profile of, the School Crossing Patrol Service.
15. Greater links could be made between the School Crossing Patrol Service and the Transport Planning Team (City Strategy) in order to explore whether SCPOs could deliver pedestrian and/or cycle training in schools. This would provide SCPOs with additional working hours during term time, which may encourage recruitment and improve retention still further, as well increase the number of staff available to deliver safety related training in schools.
16. It is not uncommon for SCPOs to have additional paid employment within a school, for example, one SCPO is also a midday supervisor and another is a school caretaker. However, a SCPOs split shift can, some times, limit such opportunities. Greater links could be established between the School Crossing Patrol Service and schools in order to further explore such opportunities.
17. The authority has previously explored the option of using Police Constable Special Officers (PCSOs) as SCPOs, however, whilst the Police are always very supportive of the service they are clear that it is the City of York Council's responsibility to run the sites.
18. PCSO have been encouraged to regularly attend their local school crossing patrol sites and their presence has been a deterrent to red light jumping, speeding and illegal parking. However, their attendance can be irregular due to their other responsibilities.

Consultation

19. None – the report is for information only.

Analysis

20. None – the report is for information only.

Corporate Priorities

21. 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

Implications

22. None – the report is for information only.

Risk Management

23. Not applicable, the report is for information only.

Recommendations

24. Members are asked to note the contents of this report.

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Report Approved

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Specialist Implications Officer(s) *None*

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

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Annexes

Annex One – A list of School Crossing Patrol Schools and Sites