REVIEW OF THE SCHOOL CROSSING PATROL SERVICE

WARDS AFFECTED

All

EXEMPT/CONFIDENTIAL ITEM

NO

1. PROPOSED DECISION

Cabinet is requested to:

1.1 Note that the outcome of the consultation indicates that the School Crossing Patrol (SCP) service is highly regarded by respondents;

1.2 Note that the Council’s financial position is such that significant savings must be identified to enable statutory responsibilities to be met within cash limits;

1.3 Authorise the Strategic Director to continue to seek alternative sources of funding for the SCP from schools which may be affected or from external sponsors;

1.4 Agree that, in the event that alternative sources of funding can be identified for individual SCP’s, the Strategic Director be authorised to enter into appropriate agreements for external funding enabling the provision of SCP’s at those sites;

1.5 Agree that the Council’s funding for school crossing patrols will cease on 31 August 2018 and appropriate consultation be carried out with those staff affected in accordance with the Council’s employment policies.

2. RATIONALE FOR THE DECISION

2.1 The Council needs to make significant savings and make unprecedented changes to services in light of the substantial government funding reductions.

2.2 The 2017-2020 budget is based on meeting the challenges of continuing Central Government imposed austerity, whilst meeting the Council’s statutory responsibilities. It requires the delivery of £20.6m of savings over three years and service plans for portfolios were set to achieve these savings by 2020.
2.3 The Cabinet, at its meeting on 19 July 2017, requested that Portfolios should specify how they will operate within the agreed cash limits, agreed by Council for the three years 2017-2020.

2.4 The provisionally agreed cash limits for the Environmental and Trading Services Directorate and its portfolios: Green Smart and Sustainable Borough, Growth (including Planning) and Libraries and Leisure are as follows:-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Cash Limit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2017-18</td>
<td>£22.606m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018-19</td>
<td>£20.556m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019-20</td>
<td>£18.761m</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each Portfolio has considered current and emerging budget pressures and the savings are required to remain within provisional cash limits. The Department has identified a total of £6.642m savings to be achieved over the three year period 2017-2020. Of this, £2.499m has already been achieved with £4.143m to be implemented by 2020. In respect of SCP’s the details of the savings proposed are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Review of School Crossing Patrol (SCP)</th>
<th>Possible reduction or cessation of SCP, transfer to Schools, or other options arising from consultation</th>
<th>£130k</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nil 2017-18, £75k 2018-19, £55k 2019-20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.5 School Crossing Patrols (SCP) were established by the School Crossing Patrol Act 1953 and implemented through the School Crossing Patrol Order 1954. The Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 gave Local Authorities the power to appoint SCPs to help children cross the road on their route to and from school between the hours of 8:00am and 5:30pm. The Transport Act 2000, which came into force in 2001, amended the 1984 Act to permit Patrols to operate “at such times as the authority thinks fit”, and to stop traffic, to help all pedestrians to cross the road, whether or not they are travelling to or from school.

2.6 St Helens SCP service currently operates at 39 sites throughout St Helen's, albeit 9 are currently vacant. Many sites are directly outside schools (usually servicing an individual school). Other sites are on the route to schools and may cover a number of schools in the area. A list of sites of SCP’s is included at Appendix B.

2.7 Recruitment of staff into this service is recognised nationally as challenging. The age profile of the current staff group shows an average age is 63 years. The majority of staff are predominately over the age of 65. The typical working day offers a very unattractive prospect for employees, as it places a demand across the entire day, for a cumulatively small number of paid hours. The term time delivery nature of the service also has some disadvantages in terms of attractiveness.

2.8 There is guidance from (ROSPA), on where the provision of a crossing patrol may have the most significant benefit. Typically, this is where the traffic and pedestrian flows have significant conflict, i.e. there is severance of community from the school asset. At some locations engineering solutions for crossing points have been
provided such as Zebra and Pelican Crossing Points. Factors like this determine the current provision in terms of School Crossing Patrol locations.

2.9 There is no statutory duty on the Council to provide this function. The Council remains committed to working with schools and parents/carers to protect children’s safety and promote road safety. Both locally and nationally most local authorities have already reviewed the SCP service, due to budgetary pressures. The range of decisions already taken elsewhere include:-

- Cease to offer a service
- Disestablish all low risk sites, (where pedestrian and car flows are lowest)
- Disestablish where traffic calming measures are in place, (or the Engineering measures exist)
- Transfer responsibility of the SCP to others, Schools, or 3rd parties.

3. THE CONSULTATION AND RESPONSES

3.1 At its meeting on the 26th April 2017 Cabinet gave approval for the Department to carry out a twelve-week consultation on the proposal to change the SCP service from its traditional format.

3.2 Due to subsequent calling of a General Election and the purdah period, the consultation actually took place from the 12 June to 3 September 2017.

3.3 Schools were also specifically asked for their view on proposals for school communities to pay for their own crossing patrol. The feedback on this direct consultation was unanimous, in that, schools did not wish to see the SCP dis-established, but neither did they want to fund the service provision (as per the model at Oldham Council, for example).

3.4 Consultation was held directly with schools and also with the wider community through a variety of mediums including consultation through the Council website. The responses have been compiled and are attached for Members’ consideration.

The Council received a total of 780 responses, 496 on line and 284 in hard copy, see Appendix A.

A further nineteen hard copy consultations were received after the deadline for responses and were linked to a specific site. (Lyme County Primary School – Newton).

The Council also received one petition (542 signatures) from Grange Valley School together with supporting documents (photographs and letters – Blackbrook St.Mary’s and Ashurst Primary).

Head Teachers and Governors responses are also included.

3.5 Appendix A identifies that the largest group of respondents to the consultation were parent/guardians, with two schools having greater than 50 responses.
In respect of the option to cease the service in its traditional form over 8 out of 10 did not want to use other alternative safety measures.

A key issue raised was the volume of traffic, parent’s careless parking and general poor driving (both speed and carelessness). The insight here being that the pickup and drop off activity by private cars at school by parents / guardians was a significant element of concern. The suggested improvements to education and enforcement in relation to school sites were viewed extremely positively by those consulted. They were regarded as adding significant value. The Council currently deliver all of these elements in some form through dedicated officers and teams.

Typically, 9 out of 10 respondents indicated that:-

- Child pedestrian training
- Cycle training
- Parking enforcement at schools sites
- The ‘Think’ road safety initiative

were viewed favourably, (ie rated between OK to Excellent). The website resources available from the Council were rated at about 75% between OK to Excellent and the use of visual signage to increase awareness, satisfying about 8 out of 10 respondents. The significant positive impact for users was noted by a large number of responders.

It is perhaps not surprising that those who highly valued these ‘soft service’ improvements, also rated the traditional service highly too.

3.6 Members will note from the responses received that this is a highly regarded service which most respondents wish to maintain for a variety of reasons. Members will also note that some suggestions are made regarding alternative savings which respondents feel could be made instead of savings to the SCP service. The position is such that, where it is appropriate to make savings elsewhere, the Council has already taken the saving or is in the process of taking the saving to meet ongoing budget pressures. The budget strategy of the Council is to provide for all of its statutory functions as a priority, over its non-statutory services. This is a strategy being repeated across all Councils in response to reduced central government funding. There is no statutory duty on the Council to provide school crossing patrols. It remains the case that the responsibility of a child’s safety on the journey to and from school rests with the parents or carers.

3.7 The Council has requested schools to consider funding their own SCP. Unfortunately, to date, no school has agreed to do so. Efforts will continue to be made in this regard and, in addition, the possibility of external sponsorship will be pursued.

4. IMPLICATIONS / RELEVANCE TO MEETING SAVINGS TARGET / PLANNING FOR 2020

4.1 If Cabinet approves the recommendations in this report, a number of actions will be taken to continue to promote road safety.
4.2 Investment in the highway infrastructure adjacent to school crossing points will enhance the crossing points themselves. These crossing points can be used throughout the year and, unlike a SCP officer, they are in place 24/7 hours, 365 days per year, for the wider community use. The intention of such provision being to reinforce the safest crossing points, and to highlight these to both drivers and pedestrians.

4.3 A number of crossings are on existing zebra crossing or traffic light controlled crossings. Some infrastructure changes are being progressed due to developer agreements and the installation of new cycling facilities. The Road Safety Team will continue to work with the schools and communities to assist in all safety matters and advice.

4.4 The Council will also continue its investment in a range of road safety training and education initiatives for schools. A programme of engagement will be undertaken between now and the end of the school year to ensure support is provided to schools, parents and carers in advance of the removal of these patrols. The Road Safety Team will continue to work with interested parties who wish to support the school crossing patrol service and road safety initiatives.

4.5 The Council understands that the withdrawal of this valued service will be a concern, and this has been clear through the feedback received through consultation. The council has excellent relationships with schools regarding road safety, providing training to children of all ages, liaising on highways. It will build and maintain those relationships.

5. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Legal – Provision of the School Crossing Patrol is a non-statutory function.


Human Resources – If the SCP service were to cease, all school crossing patrol staff would potentially be at risk of redundancy. All staff would be offered redeployment and support in accordance with the Council’s redeployment policy.

School Crossing Patrol officers have been kept informed of the consultation. Two meetings have been held to date, 17th May 2017 & 21st July 2017.

Land and Property (Asset) – None

Anti-Poverty – None

Effects on existing Council Policy – None

Effects on other Council Activities – None

Human Rights – None
Equalities – An Equality Impact Assessment is attached to this report

Asset Management – None

Health – None at this stage

6. **RISKS**

   **Risks Associated with the Proposed Decision**

6.1 No accidents have occurred at designated School Crossing Patrol sites in the last five years, involving children under the age of 16 during school hours. It is, and remains the responsibility of, parents and guardians to ensure the safe transport of children to and from schools.

6.2 **Should this Risk be added to the Corporate Risk Register?**

   No

7. **OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 The most likely treatment for each crossing point will be warning signs and visual impact from renewed road markings. The investment in capital works to ensure each site is improved in terms of visibility of use is approximately £50,000, to be funded from Transport Capital. The adjustment to locations will be made in advance of September 2018, if required.

8. **PREVIOUS APPROVAL/CONSULTATION**

   No previous consultations had been carried out.

9. **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS THEREOF**

9.1 Cabinet is recommended to disestablish all sites with effect from commencement of the 2018/19 Academic Year, i.e. by 31 August 2018.

   The alternative option identified is to still pursue the acquisition of alternative funding from schools or sponsors.

10. **APPENDICES**

    Appendices A – School Crossing Patrol Consultation Report

    A1. Question 5 Responses (Please say how the removal of this service would affect you, your family or your school)

    A2. Question 7 Responses (We would like your views on these suggested changes and or any alternatives you can suggest. We would also be interested to know how you feel the service could be funded differently)
A3 Question 4 Responses (Do you agree with the proposals to cease the service in its traditional form (i.e. a crosser on the site) and use of other alternative safety measures?)

A4. Correspondence (letters/emails) from members of the public

A5. Feedback from Head Teachers, Governors & Councillors (Ref: Option 1)

A6. Late Correspondence – School Crossing Patrol Surveys

Appendix B - List of current SCP’s

Appendix C - Community Impact Assessment

PAUL SANDERSON
Strategic Director of Environmental and Trading Services

The contact officer for this report is Rachel Esmat, Service Manager, Schools, Depot & Care Services, Hardshaw Brook Depot
Tel. (01744) 674357

BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following list of documents was used to complete this report and they are available for public inspection for four years from the date of the meeting, from the Contact Officer named above:

None