

# **Council**

**Thursday, 12 July 2018**

**Statement in relation to Petition**

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### Statement

“Thank you for submitting the petition following the resignation of the School Crossing Patrol Officer for Eastcott Road serving predominantly King William Street School. Children's safety is important to myself, and all Councillors on Swindon Borough Council.

The decision at Full Council on 23 February 2017 (Council Budget 17/18) was to reduce the costs of the school crossing patrol service as opportunities arose, so as crossing patrol staff retired or left employment then they would not be replaced. The decision to not replace School Crossing Patrols is due to the huge financial pressures facing the Council and the need to balance the budget and protect statutory services.

I think it is important to note that even where a crossing patrol is in place, the council has never guaranteed that they will attend every day - as we have never provided relief cover - so if a patrol officer is off work for any reason, the site will not be staffed.

I would expect all schools to have their own Travel Plan and to talk to children about all aspects of safety, including road safety. I believe a lot of Swindon Schools have successfully implemented alternatives to Council funded patrols, such as walking buses, 5 minute walk to school zones and appointing pupils as School Travel Ambassadors to improve local solutions and raise children and parent awareness. The majority of Swindon Schools operate without a School Crossing Patrol.

Several Swindon schools have been recognised for their efforts in sustainable travel and road safety at the National School Travel Awards. Covingham Primary, Haydonleigh Primary, Peatmoor Primary and Kingsdown School have all received top awards in recent years. For example, Haydonleigh Primary won the South West School of the year in 2015 for providing sustainable travel initiatives for their pupils including a walking bus, “blinged up bikes” scheme and cycle training and maintenance sessions. I would encourage King William CE Primary School and all other schools to participate fully in these type of schemes.

It is important to highlight that Swindon Borough Council has no statutory responsibility to provide School Crossing Patrol Officers, and since the decision was made in 2017, there has been no budget amendment proposed by any political party to change it.

I have discussed Eastcott Road with our Highway Officers and I believe that more can be done by the Council to support local children crossing this road safely and I am pleased to confirm that the Council will be installing a second School sign imminently to ensure that drivers are fully aware in both directions, and ‘SLOW’ markings on the road will be in place before the end of the month.

An engineer is also exploring whether the Council could install dropped kerbs to improve the crossing point, though there has not been a specific member request for a crossing point on Eastcott road so further discussion is needed.

Due to the nature of this particular section of Eastcott Road, the speed of vehicles is relatively low. We will continue to monitor traffic speeds, volume of traffic and the number of pedestrians at this location and as stated above we are currently looking to see if improvements could be made to provide even greater warning to motorists that there is a School in the area. I would welcome Ward councillor involvement.

I will ask the Head of Highways, via schools on line, to ask Schools that they kindly consider School Travels plans, that governors and local councillors could support, and that schools encourage activities like walking bus and 5-minute walk to school zones to raise safety awareness.

Councillors also have a role in supporting their local schools. I know several Councillors have actively worked on school crossing issues, and helped to secure 106 from housing developments or grants from Parish Councils to setup, and continue, safety initiatives. I urge ward councillors to consider this.

I am sorry that I cannot support the reintroduction of a School Crossing Patrol in this location, as I strongly believe other schools have successfully implemented alternatives to council funded patrols.

Thank you."

Cllr Fionuala Foley  
Cabinet Member Streetsmart & the Environment  
Cllr Chiseldon & Lawn Ward  
12 July 2018