

Devon School Crossing Patrol Service

Report of the Head of Planning, Transportation and Environment

Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Cabinet (and confirmation under the provisions of the Council's Constitution) before taking effect.

Recommendations:

- (a) That Devon County Council ceases funding of all salaried school crossing patrol staff in order to help achieve identified budget savings;**
- (b) That a client-pays model is adopted for any Devon schools that have a salaried crossing patrol service;**
- (c) That a third party service provider is found to offer a crossing patrol service and manage the delivery of service to schools;**
- (d) That Devon County Council discharges the statutory element of school crossing patrol provision by providing quality assurance support to the service provider chosen to employ salaried patrols, school and volunteer support.**

1. Summary

This report seeks approval for changes to the funding arrangements that will affect the School Crossing Patrol (SCP) service in order to achieve identified revenue budget savings across the Planning, Transportation and Environment group. The proposal seeks to transfer the costs of each patrol to the schools, with the patrols themselves employed by a third party that would deliver the service on a full-cost recovery or commercial basis. This would enable the SCP service to continue, supported by DCC which would establish and monitor quality standards and provide training; risk assessments; infrastructure etc. needed to ensure the service is delivered in a safe and compliant fashion. In cases where the school elects not to fund the cost of their patrol, it could be run by volunteers or service provision would end at that school and DCC would take such steps as may be appropriate to mitigate the loss of the patrol if necessary.

2. Background/Introduction

In common with the majority of other UK highway authorities Devon has a School Crossing Patrol (SCP) service managed within the local authority. The SCP service is delivered under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 Chapter 27, Part III, Section 26 which permits that 'Arrangements may be made by the appropriate authority for the patrolling of places where children cross roads on their way to or from school, or from one part of a school to another by persons appointed by or on behalf of the appropriate authority'.

Provision of the SCP service is non-statutory and parents are assumed to have primary responsibility for getting their children to school irrespective of whether a service is provided, or a site is actively being covered by a patrol. However, where a service exists there are responsibilities for the highway authority, including ensuring that the service is delivered safely and compliant with the requirements of the Act.

Currently Devon's management and funding arrangement represents a blend of highway authority, school and volunteer support.

There are currently 305 primary schools and 36 secondary schools in Devon. Currently there are 102 SCP sites in Devon, of which 45 are in the eastern area, 24 in the north and 33 in the south. Of these, 11 are funded by schools or rely on a service delivered by volunteers.

In all cases DCC currently provides training, quality assurance, insurance, site assessments and personnel management. The management arrangements for back office and on-site support is 1.5 FTEs comprising 1FTE service manager supported by 0.5 FTE administrator. In addition, on-site support for patrols (supervision and training) is provided by external contractors.

3. The Proposal

In order for the budgetary reduction target of £250,000 to be met it is proposed that Devon ceases all funding for school crossing patrol staff and instead seeks a third party provider prepared to offer a service direct to schools on a client-pays commercial basis. Devon would continue to have a role in setting and ensuring operating standards for such a service, and ensuring that the required infrastructure was in place to make sites safe and compliant. Devon's role would be that of enabler, with front line provision being a matter for the school (and school community). Where appropriate demand could be satisfied by commercial service from a third party supplier, school and volunteer support.

This would end the use of the current Road Safety GB guidelines criteria for funding school crossing patrols which comprise counts of pedestrian and vehicle movements and a site inspection. Such risk assessments will remain a part of crossing patrol provision, but in future would serve to help schools decide if they wish to pay for a patrol, and help Devon establish safe systems of work etc. for a site. Their use as the final arbiter of whether or not a site could be funded would, however, end as all patrols would be discretionary.

This proposal, together with a rationalisation of the in-house management, will achieve the full reduction of approximately £250,000, although there is some flexibility in timing and savings if a number of schools opt to use school or volunteer support or provide the service themselves. The original phasing schedule would have introduced an initial £100,000 reduction from 31 March 2015 but funding was secured to delay the reduction for 12 months whilst additional consultation with schools took place. This is now complete.

4. Consultations/Representations/Technical Data

Consultations took place during January and March 2015, which suggested that schools were less open to employing patrols directly. As a result of this feedback, two separate phases of consultation have taken place since the start of the 2015/16 academic year. In the first phase, schools were approached through the Devon Association of Primary Head Teachers (DAPH), seeking their views on the principle of a client-pays service and the use of a third party provider to deliver that service. This consultation yielded too few responses to be confident that it represented a fair reflection of schools' views so a second, countywide consultation took place via the Tough Choices website between December 2015 and early January 2016. This yielded 361 responses from members of the public and 98 responses from 87 individual schools. Of the schools that responded 56 were identified as currently having patrols. There are 305 primary schools and 36 secondary schools in Devon.

A summary of the outcomes of this final consultation appears as Appendix 1 with feedback from schools and members of the public presented separately. In summary, members of the public would prefer to see no change to the current arrangements. The majority of schools that responded disagree with the proposal that schools should pay for the service, also favouring no change to the current arrangements. If schools/school communities were required to pay then the majority of those expressing an opinion would wish to see a third party employ the patrols.

When asked what alternative solutions schools might put forward various suggestions were made by schools, including sharing the funding with DCC and conducting risk assessments so that only the highest risk sites were covered. The recommendations in this report present a model in which the overall cost of provision is reduced by DCC providing essential elements of the service at no charge either to the schools or the service provider. Risk assessments are also a feature and have already been undertaken for all the existing sites. Under the recommended model these risk assessments will be used to help schools decide if they wish to purchase their crossing patrol cover.

When asked if they would be prepared to pay for the service the majority of schools responded that they would make that decision when the cost of the service is known. It is not possible to currently provide schools with a future service cost as this would be a commercial decision by the service provider.

Detailed studies have been undertaken of crossing patrol sites and collisions involving children both on and off the school journey. A summary of the five year casualty trends for children aged 0-15 years shows a decline in accidents although severity is increasing. Further general data on Devon's road collisions are included in the annual accident monitoring report.

http://www.devon.gov.uk/roadsafety_yearendreport_2014.pdf

Devon is not alone in considering changes to the level of school crossing patrol service provided using local highway authority funding. Plymouth City Council, for example, has moved its 36 sites to a school-pays model with charges covering the SCP salary and back office support costs. The national survey conducted by Road Safety Great Britain indicated this was one of the measures also being considered or undertaken by other highway authorities in the UK.

5. Financial and Resource Considerations

The revenue budget for the SCP service is currently £348,000. Of this amount, £295,000 relates to employee costs (front line and back office) with the remainder used for equipment, accommodation, contractor support and travel. The proposed target budget reduction is approximately £250,000 depending on the shape of the new service.

6. Sustainability and Equality Considerations

Where relevant to the decision, the Equality Act 2010 Public Sector Equality Duty requires decision makers to give due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other prohibited conduct;
- advance equality by encouraging participation, removing disadvantage, taking account of disabilities and meeting people's needs; and
- foster good relations between people by tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

Taking account of age, disability, race/ethnicity (includes Gypsies and Travellers), gender and gender identity, religion and belief, sexual orientation, pregnant women/new and breastfeeding mothers, marriage/civil partnership status in coming to a decision, a decision maker may also consider other relevant factors such as caring responsibilities, rural isolation or socio-economic disadvantage.

The proposals have been presented to the Equality Reference Group. A copy of the Impact Assessment has been circulated to Cabinet Members and is available alongside this report on the Council's website. <http://www.devon.gov.uk/cma.htm>

The 'school-pays model' enables an SCP service to continue; however, where schools are unable or unwilling to pay for a patrol service, either other options maybe be considered or sites may be decommissioned. The coverage of schools electing to pay may not necessarily reflect the greatest areas of need.

7. Carbon and Economic Impact Considerations

The proposals enable the SCP service to continue with management support (supervision, training etc.) from DCC. Where schools decide to withdraw the service completely, some parents may perceive the journey to school to be less safe, which may result in a shift from pedestrian to car or other motorised travel.

Reductions in the service may result in some redundancies.

Whilst schools will be expected to pay for the crossing patrols, DCC will continue to enable and support the service, providing essential quality assurance and training to the service provider.

Although the suitability of sites and the availability of capital funding for related infrastructure will always be factors for consideration, this model offers the greatest opportunity for a scalable service which reduces the likelihood that DCC will reject future requests for crossing patrols on the basis of increased supervision and training costs.

8. Legal Considerations

The Act, which enables Local Highway Authorities to deploy crossing patrol staff and give them the right to stop traffic, was drafted at a time when the landscape of educational provision was less varied. The Act allows for SCP officers to be appointed on behalf of DCC. It is therefore reasonable to assume that the arrangements that DCC would make for a third party to appoint, manage and pay SCP officers also includes the authority to stop traffic providing there is a clear and defined role for DCC in ensuring that systems of work are approved and quality assured by Devon County Council.

If the decision is taken to pursue the third party provider approach a formal arrangement would be produced which sets out that once provisionally appointed, the SCP officer will need to undergo training prescribed by DCC and for that patrol be 'signed off' by DCC as being a suitable appointment. DCC could ask the Non-Maintained Schools to pay for this training and purchase the uniform. The arrangements can also set out that, as long as the SCP officer is suitable, has been trained to DCC's satisfaction and wears the correct uniform, then DCC authorise them to stop traffic.

DCC staff would periodically monitor SCP officers and supervisory staff appointed by the service provider, to ensure that they are carrying out their duties in a safe and compliant fashion. The arrangements can reflect that if the SCP officer is not behaving appropriately then DCC can withdraw the authority for them to stop traffic. This process is aimed at

ensuring that an arm's length service delivered on behalf of, or under licence from, the local highway authority is (a) delivered safely and (b) remains compliant with the requirements of the Act.

9. Risk Management Considerations

Each site subject to review has been examined for potential capital investment in more permanent crossing facilities or improvements to existing infrastructure.

Risk assessments will be reviewed for sites subject to decommissioning and for sites where patrols continue to operate. Support will be made available to schools that are considering a crossing patrol and who require a professional and objective assessment of risk.

Collision and injury numbers will be monitored by age, journey type and crossing patrol location, including those locations where the SCP has been decommissioned. Injury collision numbers and locations related to school sites will be monitored and made available to schools. This will enable the schools to make year-on-year judgements.

The School Travel Plan support service, where available, will be used to monitor and assess concerns from schools, parents and children about safety on the school journey and the school's response to those concerns. Customer service complaints and comments will be monitored.

10. Public Health Impacts

Where schools decide not to meet the costs of the patrol, the site may be decommissioned. The loss of a service may see an increase in traffic where parents perceive the 'walk-to-school' alternative less safe. This could see risk increase in two ways: firstly, at the decommissioned site for children attending the school on foot; secondly, those children who consequently travel to school by bus or car will reduce their skills and experience of independent travel.

Reduced daily activity may have an impact on childhood obesity and associated health.

11. Options/Alternatives

As this is a non-statutory service, the service could be discontinued entirely. This would achieve a saving in excess of the budget reductions currently set for the service and would include ending Devon's capability for training, risk assessing and monitoring patrols, as well as ending the funding of the patrols themselves. An option that blocked any attempt at school or community self-help is neither desirable nor recommended.

An alternative option would be to support a very small number of schools showing the highest level of need against the current, nationally accepted criteria for patrol funding or perhaps more stringent and restrictive criteria set locally by Devon. This could have two undesirable outcomes however. Firstly, the support costs are likely to be disproportionate to the cost of front line provision. Secondly, there would be considerable demand to be one of the selected schools, resulting in lobbying and re-assessments of sites each year which may in turn lead to a regular decommissioning of sites in favour of new, more deserving ones. This will lead to uncertainty and lack of stability for both staff and customers.

12. Reason for Recommendation/Conclusion

It is recommended that Cabinet approve the new funding model for the SCP service - ending funding for patrols but maintaining a flexible commitment to enabling and supporting the service. Service provision would be offered on a commercial basis with prices set by the provider. The recommendation allows the budget reduction targets for revenue funding to be met, there is some flexibility in timing and savings if a number of schools opt to use school or volunteer support or provide the service themselves. Some capital expenditure and/or maintenance funding will be required to support sites which will lose their crossing patrol cover.

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Head of Planning, Transportation and Environment

Electoral Divisions: All

Cabinet Member for Highway Management and Flood Prevention: Councillor Stuart Hughes

Strategic Director, Place: Heather Barnes

Local Government Act 1972: List of Background Papers

Contact for enquiries: Jeremy Phillips

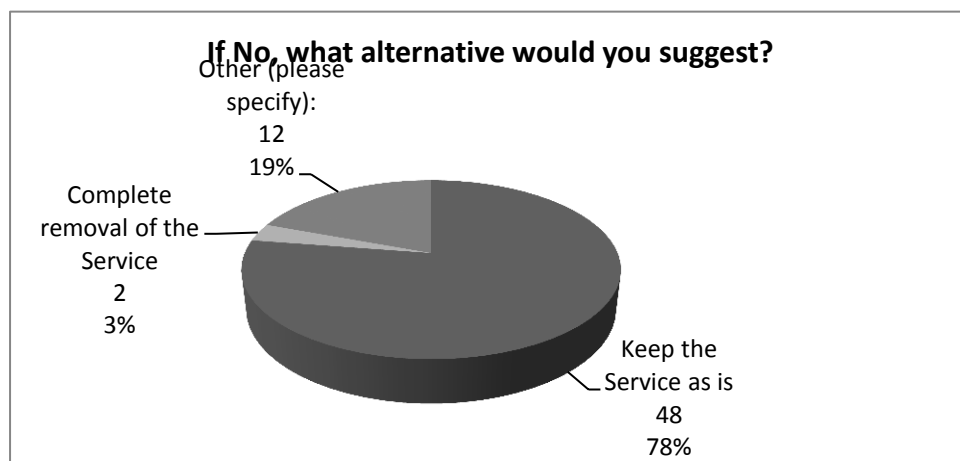
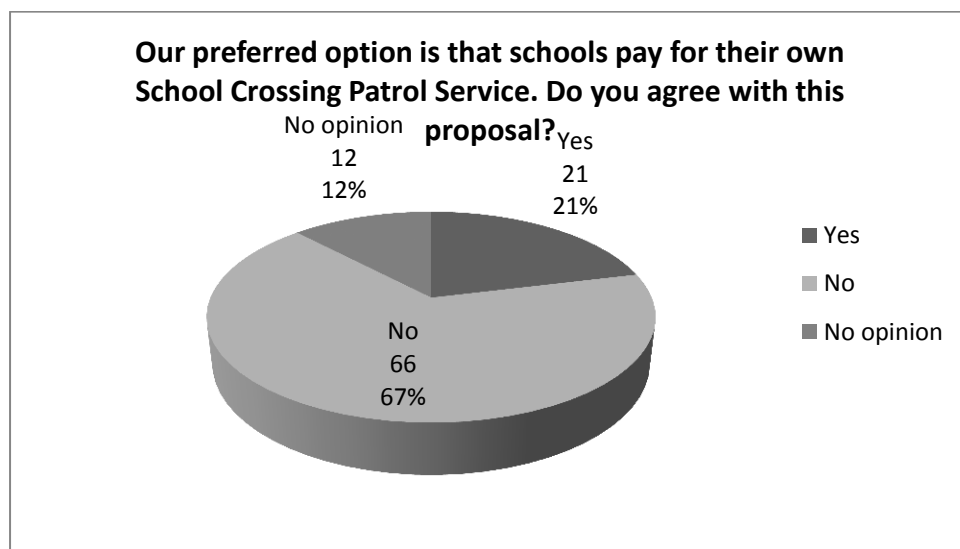
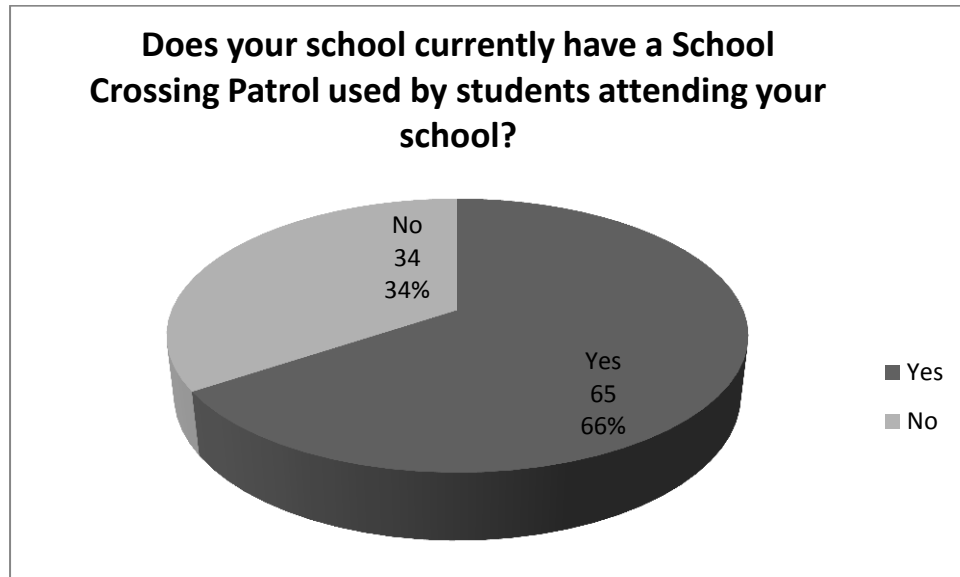
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Background Paper	Date	File Reference
1. Impact Assessment	28 January 2016	https://new.devon.gov.uk/impact/school-crossing-patrol-budget-reductions-2016/

jp270116cab Devon School Crossing Patrol Service
hk 03 020216

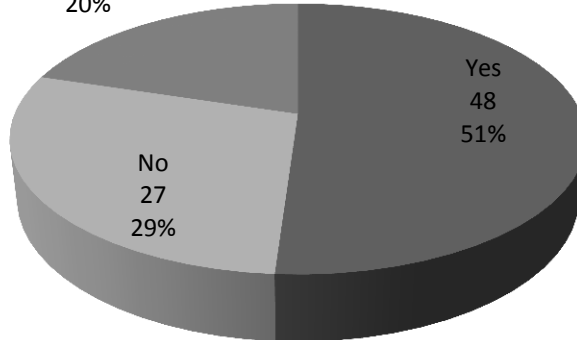
Consultation responses December 2015/January 2016
Schools



If schools were to pay for their School Crossing Patrol Service it is then our preferred option that the administration and Patrols are employed by a separate organisation that would supply the service to the school.

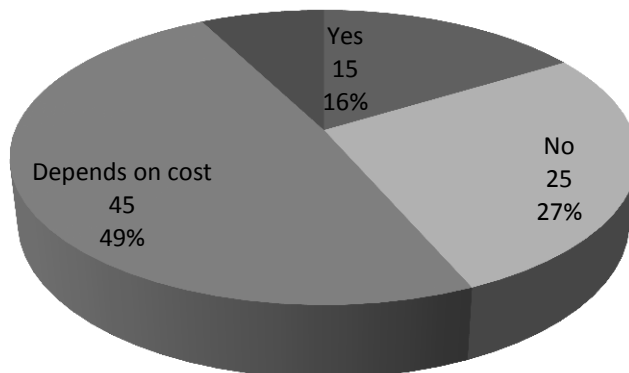
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19
20%

Do you agree with this proposal?

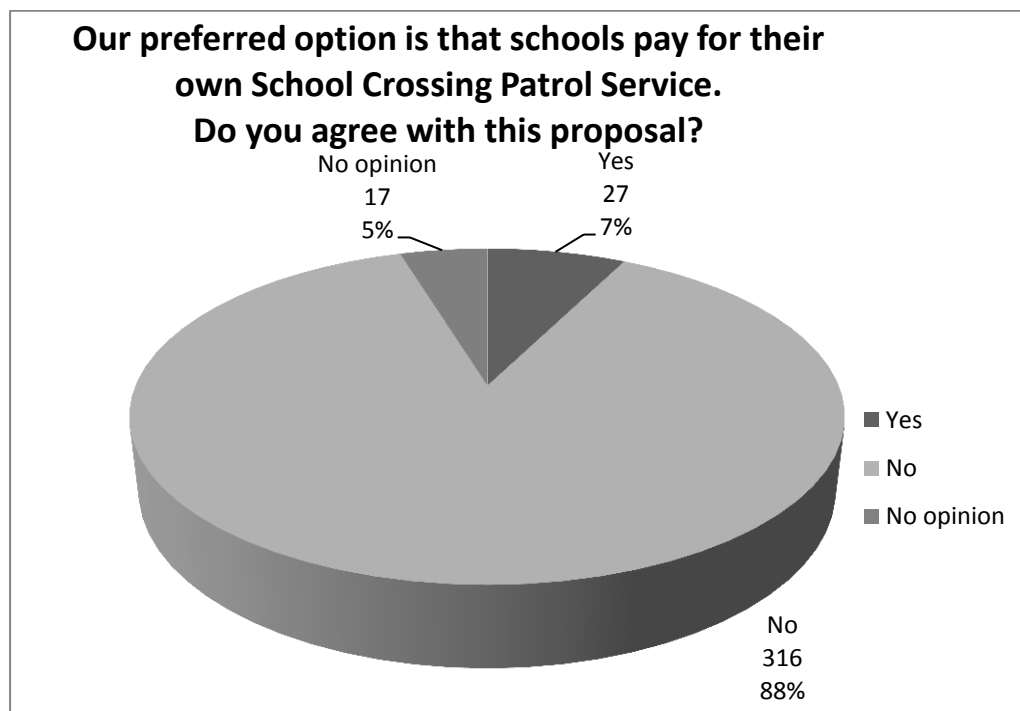
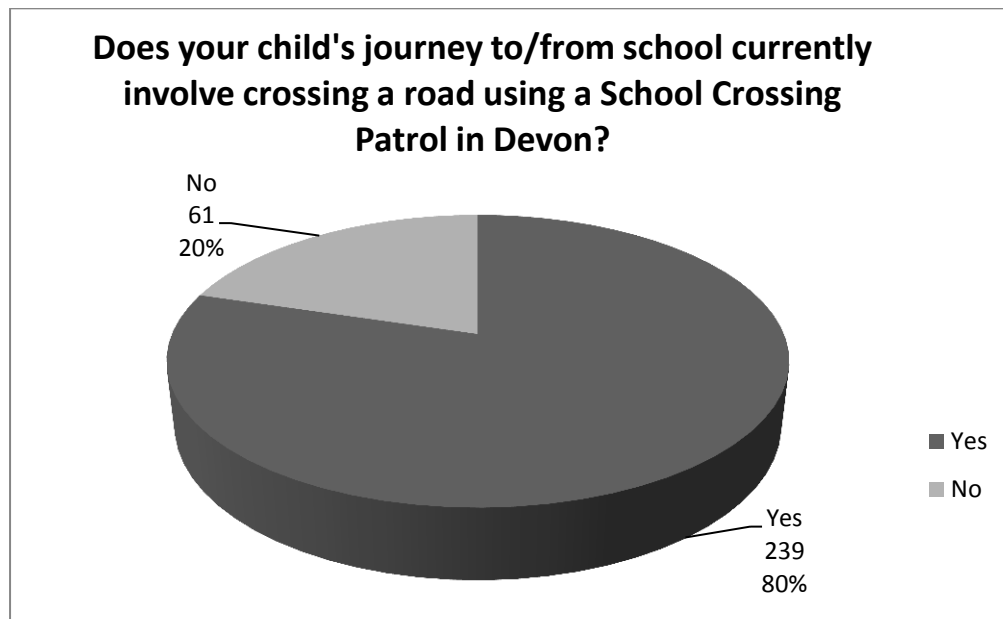


If your school requires a School Crossing Patrol now, or in the future, would your school be prepared to pay for this service?

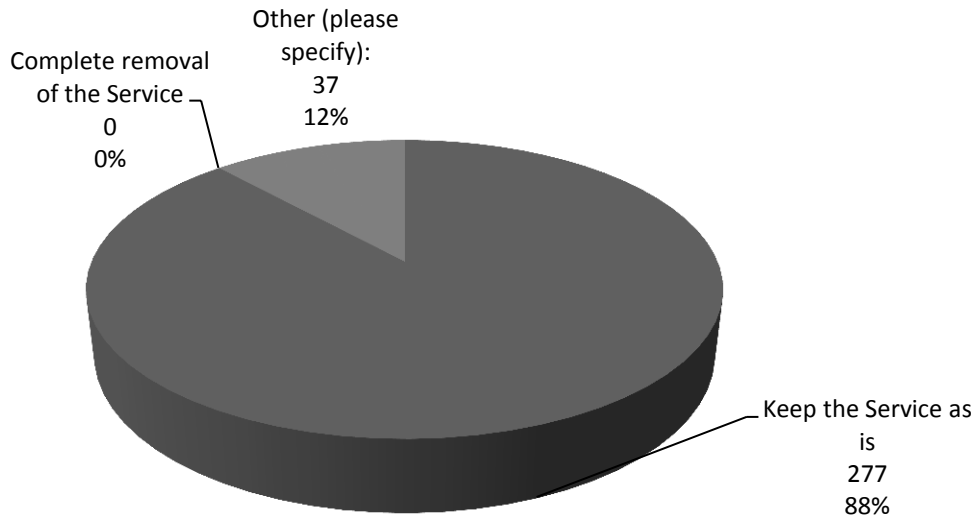
Not applicable
7
8%



**Consultation responses December 2015/January 2016
Public**



If No, what alternative would you suggest?



If schools were to pay for their School Crossing Patrol Service it is then our preferred option that the administration and Patrols are employed by a separate organisation that would supply the service to the school. Do you agree with this proposal?

