

Meeting of:	Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee
Date of Meeting:	Tuesday, 18 June 2024
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Environment and Regeneration
Report Title:	Petition Submission – School Crossing Supervisors
Purpose of Report:	To allow the Scrutiny Committee to consider a public petition submitted relating to Council proposals for the removal of School Crossing Supervisors
Report Owner:	Tom Bowring, Director of Corporate Resources
Responsible Officer:	Gareth Davies, Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	As the report is Council wide, no Elected Members were consulted. Democratic Services
Policy Framework:	This is a matter outside of the Policy Framework and Budget and is a matter for Council.
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council's new petition scheme was agreed by Full Council on 7th March, 2022, and the scheme was implemented on 5th May, 2022. • The scheme sets out how members of the public may submit a petition (including e-petitions) and how the Council would respond to any submissions. • On 1st May 2024, a petition from a P. King was received by the Council titled - "Save our Lollipop Lady". • The petition states: "VOG Council plan cutbacks. Removal of 11 Lollipop ladies' jobs. Making cutbacks in child safety is unacceptable. This is a vital service being provided that families around the Vale require". • As Lead Petition, P. King has been invited to present the petition at the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee meeting on 18th June, 2024, and in line with the Council's petition scheme, will be afforded 3 minutes speaking time in which to address the Committee. • The Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny is therefore being asked to debate the matter and refer any recommendations onto Cabinet. • The report also includes information from the Director of Environment and Housing setting out the Council's current position and proposals. 	

Recommendation

1. That the Environment and Regeneration Committee considers the petition submitted by P. King on 1st May, 2024 relating to School Crossing Supervisors, and refers any recommendations onto Cabinet.

Reason for Recommendation

1. To allow the Scrutiny Committee to consider the petition and for any recommendations to be referred to Cabinet.

1. Background

- 1.1 Section 42 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, placed a legal duty on principal Councils in Wales to make and publish a petition scheme setting out how the Council would handle and respond to petitions, including electronic petitions (e-petitions).
- 1.2 There was a duty for the petition scheme to set out:
 - (a) how a petition may be submitted to the Council;
 - (b) how and by when the Council would acknowledge receipt of a petition;
 - (c) the steps the Council may take in response to a petition received by it;
 - (d) the circumstances (if any) in which the Council may take no further action in response to a petition; and
 - (e) how and by when the Council would make available its response to a petition to the person who submitted the petition and to the public.
- 1.3 The Council's new petition scheme was agreed by Full Council on 7th March, 2022, and the scheme was implemented on 5th May, 2022. It can be viewed via the following link - [22-03-07 - Petition Scheme \(valeofglamorgan.gov.uk\)](https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/22-03-07-Petition-Scheme)
- 1.4 The Scheme sets out:
 - 1) That all petitions will be managed through Democratic Services.
 - 2) The specific information and details that the petition and e-petition should contain.
 - 3) Details of the process for the creation of an e-petition and information required from the Lead Petitioner.
 - 4) The issues that a petition can or cannot relate to.
 - 5) That Democratic and Legal Services will carry out an initial check to ensure that a petition is admissible and respond within 7 working days to all petitions submitted and requests to create an e-petition.

6) If a petition or e-petition meets the threshold of 100 signatories, then depending on the subject matter and advice from the Monitoring Officer/Deputy Monitoring Officer, this will be presented to a meeting of the Council, the Cabinet or a Scrutiny Committee.

2. Key Issues for Consideration

- 2.1** On 1st May, 2024, a petition from a P. King was received by the Council titled – “Save our Lollipop Lady”.
- 2.2** The petition states: “VOG Council plan cutbacks. Removal of 11 Lollipop ladies’ jobs. Making cutbacks in child safety is unacceptable. This is a vital service being provided that families around the Vale require”.
- 2.3** The petition received a total of 116 signatures.
- 2.4** As Lead Petition, P. King has been invited to present the petition at the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee meeting on 18th June, 2024, and in line with the Council’s petition scheme, will be afforded 3 minutes speaking time in which to address the Committee.
- 2.5** The Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny is therefore being asked to debate the matter and refer any recommendations onto Cabinet.
- 2.6** In response to the petition, the Director of Environment and Housing has been requested to provide information regarding the Council’s position and proposals. These are set out in the following paragraphs.
- 2.7** Setting a balanced budget for the Council for 2024/25 has been extremely challenging. Following considerable work by officers of all departments, Council agreed the budget for 2024/25 at its meeting of 6th March, 2024, and this included savings and income generation for the Directorate of Environment and Housing to the value of £1.898m.
- 2.8** In setting the budget every attempt was made to protect Education and Social Care services. This was also the case for housing and public protection, thereby assisting in continuing to support the most vulnerable in our society.
- 2.9** There are three large service areas in the Directorate of Environment and Housing, Shared Regulatory Services (where savings of 3% were agreed), Housing and Building Services (where no savings were made due to the wish to support public housing and to seek to continue to address homelessness), and Neighbourhood Services and Transport, where most of the Council’s main front-line services sit.
- 2.10** The inability to levy proportionate savings / income demands across the Directorate, meant that much of the savings / income demands for the Environment and Housing Directorate fell on the Neighbourhood Services and Transport Division, with these representing circa 7% of this Division’s overall budget.
- 2.11** All the services provided by this Division are important to our residents and many are immediately visible front-line functions. Several of the services provided,

such as Highway Maintenance, Waste Management and Traffic Management are statutory services, meaning that the Council has a legal duty to provide them.

- 2.12** The Budget agreed by the Council meeting on 6th March, 2024 featured 34 individual projects for savings and income within the Neighbourhood Services and Transport Division (33 of these savings and income project lines were agreed as part of the budget process). None of the projects identified were straightforward and all of them will have some form of impact either on our residents or visitors, or both.
- 2.13** The numbers of staff involved in the school crossing patrol service has reduced over the past 15 years, with many posts not being replaced when staff have retired or otherwise left the Council's employment. At the time of the reviews there were 11 officers in post at various sites.
- 2.14** School Crossing Patrol services are non-statutory, which means that the Council does not have a legal duty to provide them. Whilst the importance of this service to parents and schools is recognised, the budget decisions were so difficult that the Council agreed to put this service forward for review, with a potential saving of £100k per annum, should the service not be directly provided by the Neighbourhood Services and Transport Division.
- 2.15** Officers wrote to the 11 staff affected by the review and to the Headteachers of the schools, where the staff provided school crossing patrol services.
- 2.16** Staff were advised of the review process, whilst Headteachers were asked, considering the budget challenges for the Neighbourhood Services and Transport Division, whether there was any capacity or wish to directly employ and fund the School Crossing Patrol, should the service review determine that the service could no longer be funded.
- 2.17** None of the schools that responded indicated a willingness to take on the service, though some did request additional information on the services provided and the costs associated.
- 2.18** The review into the service will continue as there remains a possibility that improvements in pedestrian safety arrangements outside the schools concerned could reduce the reliance on manual crossing patrols, there is also the possibility over time of certain schools taking on the service or the service being supplemented by an element of suitably trained and experienced voluntary labour.
- 2.19** There are no plans to progress any actions to forcibly reduce staffing numbers at any of the currently patrolled schools and the Division will now need to find an additional source of income or a saving opportunity equivalent to the £100k sum indicated in the budget report.
- 2.20** The staff concerned were advised of the current situation as regards their future employment at a meeting on 24th May, 2024.

3. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?

- 3.1** The Petition Scheme contributes to the achievement of several aspects of the Council's Corporate Plan and Annual Delivery Plan.

The Petition Scheme and subsequent Guide therefore sit under the continued 'Open' value and Objective 1: To work with and for our communities of the new plan which sets out that activities will reflect the importance of effective involvement, communication and engagement to understand and respond to the diverse needs of the community.

4. Climate Change and Nature Implications

- 4.1** There are no climate change or nature implications as a result of this report.

5. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

- 5.1** As set out in the body of the report.

Employment

- 5.2** None

Legal (Including Equalities)

- 5.3** None as direct consequence of this report.

6. Background Papers