

From: Councillor Caroline Shiers

Sent: 31 January 2019 23:19

To: 'kinrossprimaryparentcouncil@gmail.com'

Subject: From Cllr Caroline Shiers

Dear Kinross Primary Parent Council,

Thank you very much for taking the time to get in touch with me in relation to this week's Lifelong Learning Committee meeting.

At the meeting, the committee agreed to go ahead with the proposals, which included removing the school crossing patrollers from Springfield Road and Station Road.

This decision was not taken lightly by the committee. You may be aware that the funding received by the council from the Scottish Government is falling. This means that we are forced to review all areas of spending with a view to making savings wherever possible.

The review of school crossing patrollers was actually undertaken to achieve a saving of £463,000 on facilities management as a whole. This budget saving was agreed in February 2017, before I was Convener of Lifelong Learning. Following much discussion, it became clear that funding is unavailable to reverse that savings decision.

The harsh reality is that school crossing patrols aren't required by law and therefore councils don't have to provide them.

Having school crossing patrollers where there are already pedestrian crossings in place is not a cost we can continue to justify in the current financial climate.

As you are aware, the committee heard this paper in private. The reason for this is that information contained in the paper could allow the identity of individuals and/or salaries to become public. You will appreciate that we have a duty to protect this information. It is therefore standard practice at the Council, that such discussions are held in private.

I want to reassure all parents that the safety of all pupils remains a key priority for the Council, however, ensuring pupils know how to cross the road safely, including the proper use of pedestrian crossings, is an important life skill.

In the run up to the school crossing patrols being removed from these two sites, the school will be looking at opportunities to specifically focus on ensuring all children know how to properly use the crossings. During this time, we will also look at whether there are any additional works which could further improve the existing pedestrian crossing arrangements on these sites. This may include things like reviewing traffic calming measures. Kinross Primary School's travel plan will also be updated in light of this decision and further instruction will be provided to pupils.

Please be assured that the school crossing patrols will not be removed from Springfield Road and Station Road until this process is complete.

As Convenor I will keep myself updated on progress of all of these works in each of the sites considered in the paper yesterday. The exact dates for when the school crossing patrols will end will be advised through the school, but it's not likely to be before the summer holidays.

Thank you again for getting in touch. I know my colleague Cllr Purves has also been in contact with you and offered to meet to discuss further.

Yours faithfully,

Caroline Shiers

Dear Councillor Shiers

Thank you for your email, but we are not prepared to accept your undemocratic response. Your statement that savings were agreed without a specific breakdown two years ago, so your hands are tied, is unacceptable.

Kinross Primary Parent Council feel that individuals in current office are not being held to account for the past decisions of that same office and are looking to blame others (the committee two years ago, the Scottish Government). We seek clarification on processes that may overturn or influence such decisions so that our concerns can be addressed in a more democratic manner.

We were led to believe from Councillor Purves' letter that a working group would be set up to look into the implementation of the cuts, your email states nothing about this. What is the point of parent council representatives (all volunteers) meeting with you if you have no intention of listening to our concerns?

There has been a huge community response against this decision. As previously stated, we are the largest primary school in Perth & Kinross. The two roads you plan to remove crossing patrols from are both very busy access roads to the M90. You have not considered local user opinions or, as requested by KPPC, a traffic matrix assessment - as is being conducted in Dundee & Angus. It is obvious to the parents that Station Road and Springfield Road are the most important locations for crossing patrollers to be maintained. It may be that certain times of the day are more of a priority and we are prepared to compromise on this.

The fact that these budget cuts were discussed in private also seems inappropriate. We suspect that this may have been discussed in private to prevent debate, entirely inappropriate in a democracy spending our public money.

We would all welcome improvements to road safety generally, but this is not an adequate substitute for School Crossing Patrols. Children are excitable and at times run out/don't wait even if they do know how to cross the road. It is indeed an important life skill to cross roads, one they as children are learning and should be supported to do so in a safe environment.

If the crossing patrols are removed then more people will drive to school as they will not feel it is safe for children to walk on their own. This stops children developing important life skills as they become more independent. It also increases congestion around school, exacerbating our safety concerns.

It reduces exercise, increases particulate pollution, and contributes to climate change, surely all things you are meant to be trying to reverse? We constantly hear about problems with childhood obesity, disincentivising walking to school won't help with this. The Scottish Government and PKC are supportive of the Active Travel Strategy, and your proposed actions to remove School Crossing Patrollers runs entirely counter to these schemes.

We therefore request a full assessment of the impact of the cuts on the Council's Active Travel Strategy, any environmental strategies and on the points made in the 2016 Local Outcomes

Improvement Plan which lists its priorities as health and wellbeing, safer communities and a sustainable environment for all.

It seems an incredibly short sighted decision made with no dialogue with stakeholders. We request a full options appraisal to help the parents understand where the cuts may alternatively be applied.

We expect your reply by return so that we may report back to our community in a timely fashion.

DR Sarah Hall

Chair , Kinross Primary Parent Council

Extra response from Aileen Eadie (Parent)

Most of the response from Counsellor Shiers shocked and disgusted me. As chair of the committee she is taking no responsibility for the decision made previously. However what angered me most was the paragraph below:

The review of school crossing patrollers was actually undertaken to achieve a saving of £463,000 on facilities management as a whole. This budget saving was agreed in February 2017, before I was Convener of Lifelong Learning. Following much discussion, it became clear that funding is unavailable to reverse that savings decision

As far as I am concerned nothing is irreversible except death. Is that what will happen before the council realise the consequences of their decision - the death of a child? Every day householders balance their budget and to make ends meet stop the spending on niceties and extras and to do that we move money around from one budget to another. Is the council seriously using the excuse that they have no money anywhere when they can spend hundreds of thousands of pounds on Christmas lights, personalities and the Norrie Millar light display for example? Get your priorities right, stop the frivolous spending and start listening to the people of Kinross and surrounding areas who pay your wages!

Sorry had a bit of a rant, I hope it goes well tomorrow night and I hope to get to the next kppc meeting later in the month.

Aileen Eadie