

Report title: Withdrawn Call-in: FP/175/06/23 Changes to the composition of the Local Highway Panels (LHPs)	
Report to: Place Services and Economic Growth Policy and Scrutiny Committee	
Report author: Justin Long, Senior Democratic Services Officer	
Date: 21 September 2023	For: Noting and to consider any follow-up scrutiny activity
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County Divisions affected: Not applicable	

1. Introduction

This report advises the Committee of the withdrawn call-in of FP/175/06/23 (Changes to the composition of the Local Highway Panels) as is required under the Council's call-in procedures.

2. Action Required

The Committee is asked to note this report and the action taken.

3. Background

- 3.1 On 5 July 2023 a proposed Cabinet Member Decision - Changes to the composition of the Local Highway Panels (FP/175/06/23) - was called-in by Councillor Barry Aspinell with the support of Councillors Mike Mackrory, James Newport and Mark Cory.

- 3.2 A copy of the decision can be found on the Council website and can be accessed using the following links:

[Decision Details - Changes to the composition of the Local Highway Panels](#)

[Report - Changes to the composition of the Local Highway Panels](#)

- 3.3 The reasons given for the call-in were:

"The decision asks the Cabinet Member to agree more 'local flexibility' as to how Local Highway Panels can best work and who can sit on them. However, this leaves the Chair to decide, without input of the panel, who they wish to sit on it. In the case of most LHP's meetings would always take place within the local council offices and voting members would be the County Council members, local district members and a representative from the Parish Councils, plus officers. Meetings would often be clerked by the district Council staff and administrative work carried out by that same office. If this decision is implemented the Chair will have the power to cut membership to only the

county members, with no input from district or parish members. This will disenfranchise local members and we will lose valuable local knowledge of areas.

“District Councils may, quite rightly, decide to withdraw their support of the LHP, meaning an alternative venue and secretariat may need to be sought. This would mean that the LHP may not necessarily be in the area in which the Councillors are from, meaning unnecessary travel which also impacts on the climate. The issue of Quorum for meetings is an important one if only the County Members are on the LHP meetings, if one of the County members, for whatever reason cannot attend the meeting will Panels always be cancelled? This has already proved inefficient in the example of the recent Brentwood LHP when one member had to give apologies, the meeting was cancelled as there are now only 4 county members on the panel (although the formal decision has yet to be implemented).

“Would it not be more beneficial to have one unified system for these Panels applied throughout Essex so they can all operate as efficiently and effectively as possible, rather than leaving the format to be decided on the seemingly whim of individual Chair persons? ”

- 3.4 Following informal discussions between call-in members, the Cabinet Member for Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport and the Chairman of the Committee, the call-in was withdrawn with the agreement that the Committee considers the matter as part of its regular work programme.
- 3.5 The item has subsequently been added to the Committee’s Work Programme.

4. Next Steps

The item will be considered at the 19 October 2023 meeting of the Committee as a part of a more general update on LHPs.