

Local Highway Panels

Place Services and Economic Growth
Policy and Scrutiny Committee
23 September 2021

Overview of today's presentation

- **Reminder of main functions of LHP and budgetary position**
- **Improvements to the LHP in recent years**
- **Strategic external factors influencing LHP**
- **Initiatives already underway**
- **Considerations for future direction**

Main functions of Local Highway Panels

- **Raising highway improvement concerns and ideas on behalf of the community**
- **Consider recommendations for proposed solutions from Highway Liaison officers and specialist technical officers**
- **Implementation of the Casualty Reduction Programme**
- **Recommending the Annual Programme to the Cabinet Member for approval**

LHP Capital Budget

The total LHP capital budget is approved annually by Essex County Council and is allocated to individual LHPs in line with the ECC approved formula.

LHP Formula = % of total sum of Employment, Population and Road Length (from 2010) in district from total sum of Employment, Population and Road Length in county (subject to dampening rational).

Dampening = No individual district to receive more than £X or less than £Y

(2018/19 X = £500k and Y = £200k).

Remaining money is then distributed as per original percentage between the remaining districts that have not had a dampening effect applied

Employment and Population Source:

East of England Forecasting Model (autumn 2010 forecasts) & the Office of National Statistics Mid 2010 population estimates

Road Length Source: Hi Net (official record of Highways, used by ECC to report road lengths to DfT) in 2010

Local Highway Panel Percentage Split

LHP	Percentage (%)
Basildon	12.50%
Braintree	10.19%
Brentwood	5.62%
Castle Point	5.72%
Chelmsford	12.50%
Colchester	12.50%
Epping Forest	8.74%
Harlow	6.09%
Maldon	5.00%
Rochford	5.35%
Tendring	9.88%
Uttlesford	5.90%
Total	100%



LHP £4m

District	Total Budget
Basildon	£500,000
Braintree	£407,789
Brentwood	£224,938
Castle Point	£228,675
Chelmsford	£500,000
Colchester	£500,000
Epping Forest	£349,775
Harlow	£243,658
Maldon	£200,000
Rochford	£213,904
Tendring	£395,240
Uttlesford	£236,021
Total	£4,000,000



Budget 21/22

District	Total Budget for 2021/22	Additional	SEPP Funding	Overall Total Budget
Basildon	£500,000	£200,000		£700,000
Braintree	£407,789	£200,000		£607,789
Brentwood	£259,938	£200,000	£67,500	£527,438
Castle Point	£228,675	£200,000		£428,675
Chelmsford	£500,000	£200,000	£19,000	£719,000
Colchester	£500,000	£200,000		£700,000
Epping Forest	£349,775	£200,000		£549,775
Harlow	£243,658	£200,000		£443,658
Maldon	£200,000	£200,000		£400,000
Rochford	£213,904	£200,000	£100,000	£513,904
Tendring	£395,240	£200,000		£595,240
Uttlesford	£236,021	£200,000		£436,021
Total	£4,035,000	£2,400,000		£6,621,500



How Local Highway Panels have changed over the years?

- Widened the scope of works – ‘Improvement’ includes aesthetic improvements
- Members Guide provide up to date information on Professional advice on topical matters
- Website provides transparent information on LHP operations
- Introduction of Direct Delivery Gang(s)
- Terms of Reference and full participation of all County Councillors in Panels
- Establishing formal link between EALC and Local Highway Panels
- Flexibility to manage budgets i.e. not all budget has to be allocated at start of year
- Option to include other budget streams in LHP funding
- Closer links between LHP teams and planning teams

Overview of Local Highway Panels

Highways Liaison Officers

- 7 members of staff
- Responsibilities:
Supporting the Highway Panels
Commissioning design teams

Design Teams

- 30 Members of staff
- Dedicated resource for TROs
- Additional specialist staff
- Responsibilities: All civil engineering design within the county
- LHP: validation and design of schemes

Construction Team

- 2 Direct gangs
- Supply chain partners
- Responsibilities: Safe construction and delivery of schemes to our network

External factors influencing Local Highway Panels

- Safer, Greener, Healthier
- Road Safety Casualty Reduction Programme
- Reducing revenue budgets
- Staffing shortages
- Lack of scheme requests in certain areas

Safer, Greener, Healthier

Vision of Essex Highways – Delivering and enabling Safer, Greener and Healthier travel for current and future users of the transport network in Essex.

Should the LHPs contribute towards these objectives?

Four Cycling schemes (1% of total schemes in 2020/21 programme)

Five PROW schemes delivered



Road Safety – Casualty Reduction

- **Statutory duty – should these form part of the LHP programme of works as unpredictable events? Poses issues to forward planning**

Paper prepared for Cabinet Member to propose removing budget from LHP annual programme

An additional 44 schemes citing road safety reduction reasons (16% of total budget are implemented)



Reducing budgets

- There is a five million reduction in revenue funding from 1 April 2022
- Inability to fund low risk maintenance defects
- Launch of Local Streets Improvements has not seen the expected take up



Should the Panels be encouraged to spend more on aesthetic improvements?
How could this be achieved?

No Public Realm improvement schemes delivered last year

Staff shortages

- Increase in LHP Budget was unexpected and trying to increase resource is extremely difficult
- LHP schemes are staff hungry as they often involve local consultation. The larger schemes take a lesser proportion of staff time
- Those involving Traffic Regulation Orders take up a significantly higher proportion of staff time
- Processing schemes which are outside of policy is staff resource hungry and costly

UK employers struggle with worst labour shortage since 1997

Rush to reopen and departure of overseas workers have caused problems in areas including transport, hospitality and construction

Engineers remain on UK skills shortage list

May 30, 2019

A large majority of construction and engineering firms have reported serious concerns about a lack of skilled workers.

A survey by recruitment specialist Search Consultancy found that 85% of engineering and manufacturing firms were being hit by skills shortages, with 83% of construction firms also reporting that they were struggling to find enough skilled workers.

Not enough schemes.....

- Some districts have few schemes on their forward programme
- Other districts have few new schemes which leads to historical schemes being funded. These historical schemes in some cases have not been previously funded as the benefits of the scheme are questionable



What is already planned?

- **Roll out of new VAS process underway to give more autonomy to Parish Councils**
- **Cabinet Member Report to be submitted to propose to remove average spend from last three years from LHP to create a dedicated casualty reduction budget as this area is a statutory spend**
- **Continue to encourage the increase in asset enhancement projects to support other budget pressures within the authority**
- **Encouraging third party spend – new members guide to be launched**

What is already planned?

- **New proposal for 10% of budget for low cost schemes so they can be delivered in year**
- **New Finger Post process (similar to VAS initiative) to allow these to be delivered locally**
- **Guidance issued on the introduction of speed cameras**
- **Review of Speed Management Strategy underway**
- **Terms of Reference to be updated to reflect new ways of working developed through pandemic**
- **LHP mapping of schemes will be launched – nearing completion**

Consideration for future direction

- Should the Local Highway Panels spend be outcome driven to align with Essex Highways vision?
- Do the objectives need updating to align with new emerging pressures and challenges? Links to the Sustainability agenda
- Are there any ideas about how to handle districts with not enough schemes?
- Should the Panels have an overview of other programmes of work to increase the visibility of our work to local communities?



SAFER / GREENER / HEALTHIER

