



# **Local Highway Panels Task and Finish Group Review March 2022**



Essex County Council

**Place Services and Economic Growth  
Policy and Scrutiny Committee**

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## 1. Foreword from Task and Finish Group Chairman

As Chairman of the Local Highways Panel (LHP) Task and Finish Group, I am pleased to present this report and a series of recommendations.



Following a Place Services and Economic Growth Policy and Scrutiny Committee (PSEG) meeting in September 2021, at which the Cabinet Member for Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport, Councillor Lee Scott, presented, it was agreed to undertake a review of the way the LHPs operated.

LHPs, in their current form, were created over a decade ago with the scope as set out in their Terms of Reference:

- *The delivery of road safety casualty reduction schemes as identified through the collision analysis. This is a statutory duty for the County Council.*
- *The delivery of locally requested measures that are not able to be prioritised for funding through other dedicated highways budgets but meet the desires of the local community.*

In essence, the LHPs were set up to devolve decision making down to the 12 districts of Essex, with support from ECC (Essex County Council) Members. There is a wealth of support on the individual LHP websites, including Member Guides on all the different types of schemes, Terms of Reference for the LHPs, and information on costs and timescales.

The Task and Finish Group's work addressed the concerns that have been raised about various aspects of the LHPs, including the size and allocation of budget, scheme costs, delivery time, the range and size of schemes, membership, delivery mechanisms, decision making processes, the reporting of schemes and the tracking of progress.

In some areas, where there is a multitude of scheme requests, there is an increasing gap between the expectations of scheme requestors (elected members) and the speed and delivery of schemes – namely, expectations severely outstrip budgets and capacity. It may be the case that the LHPs are a victim of their own success. Our analysis showed that currently there are over a thousand schemes waiting to be addressed, which are costed (or partially costed) plus a further 369 uncosted schemes in the 'queue'. With just the (partially) costed schemes amounting to 3 years' worth of budget (and growing), it is somewhat inevitable that there is a perception of disappointment in the speed of delivery!

The Group undertook to investigate these aspects by data analysis of the current and past schemes as recorded by the 12 LHPs, and by gathering evidence from LHP

chairmen and members, ECC members including the Cabinet Member, and from council officers.

This report captures the work completed and presents conclusions and recommendations for consideration by the Portfolio Holder for Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport, and the members of the PSEG Committee.

I would like to thank the members of the Task and Finish Group for their time and effort in completing this work and to all those who gave evidence to the Group.

I am pleased to commend this report and its recommendations to the Committee.

**Councillor Mike Steel (Chairman of the LHP Task and Finish Group)**

## 2. Summary Findings

### 2.1. Executive Summary

The Task and Finish Group has investigated LHPs in detail and found that the main cause of frustration is the lack of sufficient funds to meet expectations and a perception that schemes take too long to deliver.

The recommendations aim to address these and other issues; they are focused on structure, training, budget and scope, membership, delivery and implementation, the overlap with highways maintenance, reporting, and the casualty reduction work.

In summary, the Group believe that the principle of LHPs is sound, and they work particularly well in terms of facilitating local decision making. However, in terms of scope and budget, LHPs should be refocused to deliver a greater number of local schemes with more expensive proposals considered by a new LHP 'Super Panel'.

This restructure along with additional training, clarification on membership, and a greater use of 'Direct Delivery Gangs' and external contractors to deliver schemes, will help to improve the effectiveness of the LHPs.

### 2.2. Summary Conclusions and Recommendations

#### Structure

Having analysed LHP decision-making, the Group **recommend** maintaining the current structure of 12 LHPs (one per district). Consideration was given to combining LHPs (e.g. into 4 panels covering the north, east, south and west of the county respectively) or devolving decision-making down (to a town/parish level), but it was concluded that the current structure represents a manageable division of the county and effectively supports local decision-making and delivery.

However, as part of a refocusing of LHPs, the Group **recommend** the creation of an LHP Super Panel that would operate in parallel with the existing LHPs. This panel would be made up of one representative from each of the 12 LHPs and would focus on the larger schemes that address both the 'Everyone's Essex' plan (including the 'Levelling Up' agenda) and the 'Safer, Greener, Healthier' ambitions, such as cycling and walking schemes. The creation of such a panel would require enhanced funding and it is recommended that given the cross-cutting nature of the schemes, funding should be found on a cross-portfolio basis.

The creation of a Super Panel would allow the 12 existing LHPs to deliver an increased number of smaller schemes and refocus their work on safety and locality-based decision making.

#### Training

The Group **recommend** that additional training and guidance is given to LHP members. The Group found that there is a lack of engagement (even a lack of

awareness) with the 15 LHP guides and other resources among some LHP members, and often a lack of understanding as to the cost and lifecycle of schemes. One way of increasing the awareness of the 15 LHP guides, would be a requirement that a request for a scheme include reference to the appropriate guide and justification against the relevant criteria.

There is a perception that LHP schemes take too long; however, the reality is that it is a complex process with many mandatory stages involving the scheduling of tasks to a limited design resource. Similarly, regarding cost, LHP members need to understand that a large proportion of a scheme's cost (especially smaller ones) are design costs (needing to address TROs, land ownership, utility location, public consultation, etc). Whilst effort should continue to be made to reduce costs and deliver schemes quicker, additional training will help to ensure requests for schemes are conscious of the current costs, timescales, and challenges.

Additional training and guidance (including the sharing of best practice) could also help to support the LHPs which are not currently spending their full budget allocation. This will help to address the inconsistency of activity across the county, whereby some districts are overwhelmed by schemes whilst some are not planning to spend their budget.

### Budgets and Scope

The Group explored the budgets given to LHPs and the allocation of the additional £200,000 funding to LHPs in-year during 2021/22. Overall, it is clear that given the expectations of councillors and the current structure of LHPs, the allocated budget is woefully short.

To resolve budget issues, the Group **recommend** that a £50,000 cap on individual schemes should be introduced. The current range of schemes is incompatible with the cost of higher end schemes which address elements of the Safer, Greener, Healthier ambitions. It is proposed that the 12 LHPs stick to the original mandate of safety and locality-based decision making and that more expensive schemes be removed from the individual LHPs' scheme range and instead referred to the new LHP Super Panel for consideration. The expectation is that the 12 LHPs would still have the same budget and that the LHP Super Panel is funded by budgets more appropriate to the strategic Greener/Healthier agenda.

On additional funding, the Group **recommend** that going forward any additional in-year budget allocation should follow the original allocation formula.

### Membership and Attendance

The Group **recommend** that decision making (voting) should be restricted to the ECC councillor membership and the attendance of district/borough/city councillors and parish/town council representatives should be maintained in an advisory capacity only and limited to 1 district/borough/city representative and 1 parish/town representative.

The Group found the attendance at the LHP meetings of non-ECC members can bring additional local knowledge; however, it is right that ECC members are responsible for scheme requests and accountable for determining which schemes go forward.

There is currently no explicit guidance on whether the public can attend LHP meetings, with the decision at the discretion of the respective LHP Chairman. The Group concluded that attendance by the public would not be productive and **recommend** that guidance is given that resident input is best channelled via ECC members (outside of meetings).

### Delivery and Implementation

The Group explored the delivery of schemes and the main delivery methods currently used: Direct Delivery Gangs and contracted-out Supply Chain (for more complex tasks). The Group found that savings had been achieved by the move towards Direct Delivery Gangs and the Group **recommend** that this use be expanded. The Group also **recommend** that the use and capability of Highway Rangers, which provide a valued services across the county, is expanded. Rangers could potentially go beyond their maintenance remit and could (as has happened in Epping Forest) be provided with more equipment and training with district, borough, and city councils also potentially supplementing ECC funding.

In addition, the Group **recommend** that to reduce delivery time and costs (particularly on larger schemes), LHPs or the Super LHP (under the proposed two-tier LHP structure) are given the option to contract out groups of schemes to external operators, and furthermore ECC should explore other opportunities for these organisations to support the work of LHPs.

Having considered the option of district, borough, city, town and parish councils being the delivery agents for higher-level LHP decision making, the Group concluded that these councils would not necessarily want to take this on, and changes would not necessarily achieve savings. Therefore, the Group **recommend** that implementation is currently set at the right level; however, there might be a case for further exploration of this area in the future.

The Group looked at the frequency of LHP meetings, and noted an inconsistency, with some LHPs meeting every quarter, and some less frequently. The Group **recommend** regular meetings (at least once a quarter, if not more frequently) to aid in the more rapid progress of schemes and enable members to regularly update their respective city/borough/district/town/parish councils.

### Overlap with Highways Maintenance

During the Group's work, it was recognised that whilst theoretically LHPs should not be addressing maintenance tasks, these maintenance issues put pressure on LHPs.

Whilst the Group **recommend** that the scope of LHPs should continue to exclude maintenance aspects, it is recognised that for this to happen highways maintenance

performance needs to be improved. To support this work, the Group **recommend** that the PSEG Committee review highway maintenance performance on a quarterly basis and make any necessary recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport.

#### LHP Reporting System

The Group considered the updates being made to the way that LHP requests are made and how they are reported. Under these updates, the ECC member submits a web form which is then tracked through to either completion or rejection (if it is not taken forward), with progress marked via a map-based reporting system with access to more detailed information for LHP members. The Task and Finish Group commend these improvements to the scheme request and data capture systems, and **recommend** the roll out of the improvements by mid-2022 with LHP members given full access to the whole contents of the database.

#### Casualty Reduction

The Group believe it is vital that the Casualty Reduction Team have the sanction to carry through their recommendations with LHPs agreeing to them. Therefore, the Group **recommend** no changes in this area.

### 3. Scope of the Task and Finish Group

A scoping document was agreed by the PSEG Committee in October 2021. This is included in the *Notes and Evidence* section at the end of this report. It stated that the Task and Finish Group would investigate the schemes, budgets, delivery times, panel membership and the overall effectiveness of the delivery of scheme requests and how they meet the expectation of the local communities that they serve.

The scoping document noted that an assessment will be made as to whether the objectives of the LHPs are still relevant and whether these objectives are being met. It also suggested lines of enquiry on whether LHPs are achieving value for money, demonstrating good practice on management and performance, and whether the expectations of the local community are being met.

#### 3.1 Membership of the Task and Finish Group

Councillor Mike Steel	Broomfield and Writtle
Councillor Lee Scordis	Abbey
Councillor Laureen Shaw	Rochford North
Councillor Mark Stephenson	Clacton East
Councillor Marshall Vance	Buckhurst & Loughton South
Councillor Alan Goggin* (*attending as Chairman of PSEG)	Brighlingsea

*Table 1 – Membership of Task and Finish Group*

#### 3.2 Summary of main meetings

30<sup>th</sup> November 2021 – included attendance by Councillor Lee Scott and the Head of Design Services, Essex Highways with presentations from both.

22<sup>nd</sup> December 2021 – included discussion on scheme costings and the Ringway Jacobs contract with officers.

18<sup>th</sup> January 2022 – included discussion on scheme timings and the proposed online mapping system with officers.

31<sup>st</sup> January 2022 – included discussion on the evidence considered so far and the emerging ideas, recommendations, and report structure.

28<sup>th</sup> February 2022 – included discussion on the results of the LHP Chairman’s survey.

2<sup>nd</sup> March 2022 – attended by Councillor Scott and the Director of Highways and Transportation and included discussion on the draft recommendations.

#### 3.3 Background to LHPs

LHPs, in their current form, originated in 2011 dividing the county into 12 regions. The objective was to put decision making on road safety schemes into the hands of the

local elected members. All ECC councillors are automatically members of their respective LHP. In addition, there are district, borough and city members and a parish council representative with the exact make-up varying from LHP to LHP (see Table 2).

A lead ECC/Essex Highways officer is assigned to each LHP along with other design and implementation support.

District	Total Panellists	County	Town/ Parish	District/ City	Borough	Officers
Basildon	14	9	1	0	0	2
Braintree	23	8	3	4	0	8
Brentwood	9	4	1	1	4	
Castle Point	10	5	1	0	4	3
Chelmsford	14	9	1	4	0	4
Colchester	12	8	1	0	3	3
Epping Forest	12	7	1	4	0	3
Harlow	8	4	0	4	0	2
Maldon	7	3	ELAC	3	0	2
Rochford	10	5	1	4	0	3
Tendering	13	8	TDALC	4	0	5
Uttlesford	9	4	1	4	0	2

*Table 2 – Makeup of LHPs*

The panels are responsible for making recommendations and setting priorities for highways schemes in their area. LHP members meet on an (approximately) quarterly basis to discuss and consider LHP schemes within district boundaries.

Each panel is allocated a budget to address highways issues brought to the attention of the panel via the public or by local parish/town councils. As outlined below, these budgets are allocated using a funding formula.

There are 15 ‘members guides’ that outline the work content to which Ringway Jacobs commit. Each guide outlines the varying issues it will address along with indicative timescales and objectives. The Task and Finish Group investigated the scope of these schemes and asked if they met the needs of local demands.

As companions to these guides, Essex Highways provide an index which outlines indicative costs relating to each scheme, this can be used as a guide to help each panel with budgeting their projects.

Schemes for consideration by the LHPs must come through one of the ECC members, following which they go through a validation process to check if they are relevant to the LHP process and if they are feasible. Such schemes are then considered by all members of the LHP for inclusion into a “funded” category. With competing priorities, one of the difficulties for LHPs is to collectively agree on which schemes should have precedence. Members must take into consideration a range of considerations and are of course (ultimately) answerable to their residents.

## 4. Approach of the Task and Finish Group

Following initial investigation and conversations with some members of LHPs, it became apparent that there was a common thread running through the LHPs of concern as to how they operate, and some shared difficulties identified.

The Task and Finish Group identified the main causes for concern were the lack of funding, the length of time to complete schemes, the makeup of panels, and a general despondency regarding the inability to deliver the best outcomes for the residents. However, the Group recognised that it needed to do more than just *identify* causes of concern and it was important to '*drill down*' to identify what could be done to help resolve some of these issues and then to make recommendations on the way forward.

Consequently, the following areas were investigated by the Task and Finish Group:

- An analysis of the 12 LHPs by budget, achievements, types of schemes chosen and length of queue
- Review of Budget Allocation – to investigate if the total budget allocated out to regions is done in a fair manner
- Cost of Individual Schemes – to investigate the perception that individual schemes are prohibitively expensive
- The time taken to deliver schemes– to investigate the perception that the time from scheme submission to implementation is far too long and can be several years
- The range of possible schemes – to investigate if the range is still appropriate as schemes range from simple signage (at £2,000) to complete cycle paths (£100,000s)
- Membership of the LHPs
- Overlap with maintenance – to investigate whether shortfalls in maintenance were causing LHPs to reassess their priorities
- Highway Rangers
- A survey of the 12 LHP Chairmen
- Centralisation vs Devolution of LHP (decision making and implementation) – to investigate whether the level of decision making, and implementation (two separate aspects) were at the right level and whether it should be devolved downwards or centralized upwards

- The LHP scheme reporting system – to investigate whether the current reporting system could be improved.

The following sections summarise the Group's investigations in each of these areas.

#### **4.1 Analysis by LHP Region**

A snapshot (from September 2021) of the 12 LHP regions is shown in Table 3 (page 13). As seen in the table, there are over 1098 requests made by all 12 regions ranging from 33 at the lower end to 177 at the top end.

In total, there are approximately 3 years' worth of schemes in the queue. This appears manageable; however, some individual LHPs have nearly 6 years' worth of requests in their queue (not so manageable), some less than 2 years. *(It should be noted that the costing on schemes in the queue do not represent total costs as some schemes are just costed for the design stage).*

It would appear that some LHPs feel overwhelmed by requests and struggle with priorities, whereas others can freely address the next scheme in their respective queue. It also seems that some LHPs were not ready for the extra distribution of budget (that occurred in 2021/22) and central resources were not sufficient to address the extra work. Consequently, there is an underspend of £350K in 2021/22, which the Group understand can be rolled into the following year (2022/23).

The Group heard evidence that one of the key challenges for officers is the inconsistency of activity across the county: some LHPs have too many schemes whilst some can not spend their allocated budget.

#### **Summary Findings - Regions**

In future, the distribution of the additional budget could take the inconsistency of activity into account and could be focused towards areas with a larger queue.

By definition, when LHPs were started 10 years ago, there would not have been a long queue of schemes awaiting funding. Therefore, those regions that were most 'successful' in bringing forward schemes, may now be suffering from that success and left with an inability to address them all.

To address the inconsistency across the county and the apparent lack of awareness of the LHP guides among councillors, additional training may therefore be needed including the sharing of best practice between LHPs. It is also proposed that scheme requests be accompanied by a justification which references the appropriate guide and criteria.

The schemes awaiting allocation stretch over several years and are unlikely to come to fruition, raising the question of how realistic it is to deliver the area's demands.

LHP Area	% Total Entries	Total Entries	Total Funded & Awaiting funds	Fully or partially costed Funded Schemes	Fully or partially costed Awaiting funds	Awaiting cost info and not included	% of Budget allocated	Budget allocation	Extra Allocation 21/22	Total budget 21/22	21/22 funded vs total budget	Awaiting funds vs annual budget	% awaiting funding versus budget
Basildon	6.74%	74	£1,198,500	£468,500	£730,000	26	12.50%	£500,000	£200,000	£700,000	£231,500	-£698,500	240%
Braintree	12.20%	134	£1,191,500	£445,000	£746,500	56	10.19%	£407,600	£200,000	£607,600	£162,600	-£783,900	292%
Brentwood	6.10%	67	£941,500	£552,000	£389,500	25	5.62%	£224,800	£200,000	£424,800	£127,200	-£716,700	419%
Castle Point	3.01%	33	£594,500	£369,000	£225,500	6	5.72%	£228,800	£200,000	£428,800	£59,800	-£365,700	260%
Chelmsford	13.48%	148	£2,881,160	£783,300	£2,097,860	40	12.50%	£500,000	£200,000	£700,000	-£83,300	£2,381,160	576%
Colchester	16.12%	177	£1,322,000	£667,500	£654,500	60	12.50%	£500,000	£200,000	£700,000	£32,500	-£822,000	264%
Epping Forest	10.29%	113	£986,750	£480,500	£506,250	59	8.74%	£349,600	£200,000	£549,600	£69,100	-£637,150	282%
Harlow	5.01%	55	£500,500	£358,500	£142,000	14	6.09%	£243,600	£200,000	£443,600	£85,100	-£256,900	205%
Maldon	4.55%	50	£284,135	£446,770	-£162,635	13	5.00%	£200,000	£200,000	£400,000	-£46,770	-£84,135	142%
Rochford	4.64%	51	£444,500	£213,000	£231,500	15	5.35%	£214,000	£200,000	£414,000	£201,000	-£230,500	208%
Tendring	11.48%	126	£1,554,800	£361,050	£1,193,750	21	9.88%	£395,200	£200,000	£595,200	£234,150	£1,159,600	393%
Uttlesford	6.38%	70	£361,950	£291,450	£70,500	34	5.90%	£236,000	£200,000	£436,000	£144,550	-£125,950	153%
Total 100%	100.00%	1098	12,261,795	5,436,570	£6,825,225	369		£3,999,600	£2,400,000	£6,399,600	£963,030	-8,262,195	307%

Table 3 - September 2021 Snapshot of LHPs

## 4.2 Review of Budget Allocation

The total LHP capital budget is approved annually by ECC and is allocated to individual LHPs in line with the ECC approved formula. This formula is based on the district's employment, population, and road length.

It is a complex formula and whilst the Group questioned aspects of it (e.g. a lack of emphasis on traffic volume and a failure to make a distinction between a largely rural district such as Epping Forest and a city such as Chelmsford), it was felt that overall the formula remains valid and a change is not necessary at the present time.

One aspect that concerned the Group however was how the additional budget was allocated in 2021/22 (noting that the allocation of additional budget was something unique to 2021/22). This was done not in line with the above formula, but as an equal £200,000 per region, without any regard as to how the regions were performing in terms of schemes vs budget. The Group believe that this was a mistake, and the additional allocation should have followed the basic formula or alternatively it could have considered the situation that some regions were clearly more proactive in their approach and had longer scheme queues, and so have been used to have a positive impact on these longer queues.

Going forward, it is expected that the total budget is allocated in line with the basic formula. It is recognised that this may result in apparent reductions or increases from 2021/22, for some districts. The Group also considered the “dampening” process whereby LHPs are capped at £500K maximum and £200K minimum. Not having access to the original calculation, the Group assume that the dampening was applied to remove very high or very low allocations. However, in so following the formula, it is logical that funds are steered towards the areas where the largest need exists. Should this result in a hugely disproportionate allocation, it is recognised that something similar to dampening may be needed going forward.

In terms of the overall budget, it is a sobering thought to divide the £6.4million “increased” LHP budget by the number of people in the ECC region and note that the LHP contribution per resident is just under £5. A typical parish council region of 3,000 people might therefore see a £12,000 LHP share – which is just about enough to deliver one scheme of a Village Gateway per year. On that basis, a fundamental issue is that there is a large gap between the expectations of the LHPs and the available funds. However, this is not the way the LHPs work and the ECC members covering each region are expected to pool funds, avoid a parochial view, and promote schemes across the district that maximizes benefits for most and consider safety aspects.

The Group note that there is an expectation that LHPs address a range of objectives, including the Safer, Greener, Healthier agenda. There is a concern that this is a loss of focus of the original intention of LHPs. If there is a broadening of the scope, then budget allocation should encompass other funding sources that address this agenda

and the structure of LHPs needs addressing.

### **Summary Findings Budget**

The Task and Finish Group has evaluated the schemes submitted by the 12 LHPs and have identified the following:

At the point of investigation there were a total of 1098 schemes listed, valued at over £12.2M, with £6.8M of those, still awaiting allocation of funding. In addition, there are a further 369 schemes identified as awaiting cost estimation. As such, the allocated budget is severely inadequate to address demand, and this partially explains why schemes take anything up to 5 years for full implementation.

The additional budget of £200,000 per local authority in 2021/22 should not have been distributed equally and was disproportionate to the original budget and has led to underspend. Going forward, the total budget should be distributed in line with the approved formula.

The schemes awaiting allocation stretch over several years and are unlikely to come to fruition raising the question of delivery to fulfill the area demands.

The Group conclude that the existing budget is far from adequate and in its current format will never meet the demand placed on the local LHP's and until either the budget is increased, the cost of schemes is radically overalled or a wider structural change takes place.

If the LHPs are contributing to the Safer, Greener, Healthier agenda, then such budgets need to be explicitly directed towards LHPs.

### 4.3 Cost of Individual Schemes

There is a perception that the one of the key problems with LHPs is that the implementation of the schemes cost too much, and that ECC is not getting Value for Money (VFM) from Ringway Jacobs.

The Group looked at some typical schemes and requested information on why they appeared so expensive. It is understandable that on first viewing, most councillors struggle with a gateway costing £17,500 or a new speed limit costing £15,000.

However, it seems that the guides tend to overestimate the cost, as the table below shows. The average cost is the average of several recent implementations versus estimated scheme cost.

Categories	Members Guide Budget	Average Cost	Comments
Speed Limit	£15,000	£5,889	
Gateway Treatment	£17,500	£10,283	
3-Arm Roundabout	£30,000		No consistent recent examples
Footway 200m	£90,000		Vary in length and scope - none 200m
Zebra Crossing	£35,000	£58,473	Small amounts of surfacing included in some schemes
Quiet Lane	£4,500	£3,138	

*Table 4 Guide Cost vs Actual Cost*

Meanwhile, it is too simplistic to claim that implementing a speed limit (for example) is just 'sticking a few signs up'. In reality, the main expense is the design cost (including utility searches land ownership searches, etc):

	Estimate	Comments
Feasibility Design cost	£0	Covered in the Validation process
Detailed Design cost	£3,162	Includes TRO and Design Time
Procurement cost	£0	Included in Works/Implementation
Mobilisation cost	£0	Included in Works/Implementation
Works/Implementation cost	£1,273	Materials, labour, supervision
Traffic Management	£0	Included in Works/Implementation

Supervision	£0	Included in Works/Implementation
Road Safety Audit	£26	Road Safety Audit/Assessment
<b>Sub-total cost</b>	<b>£4,461</b>	
LHP Overheads (15%)	£669	HLOs + management
Ringway Jacobs Pro-rata (9.1%)	£467	Essex support functions + office costs
Ringway Jacobs Overhead (2.7%)	£151	Corporate support functions
Ringway Jacobs Profit (2.5%)	£140	
<b>Sub-total overheads</b>	<b>£,1472</b>	
Total	£5,889	

*Table 5 – Breakdown of cost of a scheme*

This example demonstrates that the design cost accounts for 70% of the total cost, and overheads account for 25% of the total price.

The Group avoided the temptation to delve further into the profit/overheads of the Ringway Jacobs contract structure as this had been addressed previously by a PSEG Task and Finish Group – see final recommendations and responses [here](#), but in summary the Group broadly accept the cost structure of the Ringway Jacobs contract.

The Group investigated the possibility to reduce implementation costs. The Group analysed the work of Essex Highways in moving to a ‘Direct Delivery Gang’ approach (as opposed to supply chain delivery) where the reduced complexity allows, and the Group noted the resultant savings. Furthermore, the Group note the ambition to expand this approach so that more complex jobs can be addressed through the ‘direct gang’ contracting approach (see 4.8).

### **Summary Findings – Cost of Schemes**

The perception that schemes are too expensive needs to be addressed, perhaps with more training. Specifically, LHP members need to better understand the constituents of the whole delivery price with design costs being a major part of the total cost, and LHP management 15% and total overheads as 25% of the total price.

#### **4.4 Time taken to deliver schemes**

There is a perception that schemes take too long to deliver. To investigate this, the Group selected a number of recent schemes and asked for the duration from initial request to completion. The result was an average of 1.3 years. The Group further noted that some LHPs have schemes still in the system from more than 4 years ago. The Group felt it is likely that the decision-making process drives the perception of schemes taking too long.

The Group were keen to delve into the current database of information and also explore how task scheduling was managed. It reviewed the design resource scheduling tool that has the task of scheduling over 400 design tasks across 33 designers. It was noted that such resource is not dedicated to just the LHP tasks, but to all highway design jobs. It was discovered that there was a priority given to complete tasks (where design and implementation needs to occur during the same year) such that an LHP design only scheme would be scheduled for the back end of the year – although the Group noted that a request can be made to increase its priority.

There is no doubt that the design team have a difficult role to allocate all design tasks (LHP and other infrastructure designs) to meet an optimum outcome and that good use is being made of the state-of-the art scheduling software to maximise efficiency. It was further also noted that there are vacancies in the design team, which is obviously not helping the situation.

The LHP reports, which list all the current schemes, have little information on timescales, merely noting the ‘Quarter’ when the work will be done. With schemes that include several stages, it would be beneficial if a ‘gant’ type chart/listing was available so that the schemes can be better tracked. It seems that this may be available as the Group were shown it as part of the scheduling tool so it could potentially be made available to members of the LHPs.

There is a perception from the public and councillors that schemes are no more than the implementation time – a common refrain is “how difficult can it be to just put up some 30mph signs?” The reality is that much more is involved, and it would be useful if LHP members were more aware of the end-to-end process. In summary this is:

- 1. Site visits**
- 2. Traffic, pedestrian, speed surveys**
- 3. Searches from the utility companies**
- 4. Road Safety Audits**
- 5. Permit booking**
- 6. Organising consultations**
- 7. Cabinet Member Briefings**
- 8. Cabinet member Approvals for scheme progression**
- 9. Procurement process.**

It is clear that expectations need to be managed. The Group began its work with the view that schemes take too long, but with more understanding of what is involved, members became more conscious of the process. All members of the LHPs need to be taken on this same journey! A summary of scheme times is below:

Scheme	Delivery Time
20 MPH Zones	1 to 1.5
Roundabouts - Simple	1 year
Roundabouts Complex	2 years
VAS sign Simple	1 year
Pedestrian footways complex	2 years
Lining simple	1 year
Crossings	1 year
Traffic Signals Complex	2 years
Cycle Scheme existing footway	1 year
Cycle Scheme widened footway	2 years
Cycle Scheme existing highway	1 year
Cycle Scheme carriageway alignment	2 years
Cycle Parking	26 weeks
Passenger Transport	26 Weeks
PROW	unknown
Winter salt bins - must meet criteria	ordered
Quiet Lanes with agreement	1 year
Quiet Lanes requires agreement	2 years
Parking restrictions	1 year
Removal Highway Rights requires legal procedure	unknown

*Table 6 – Scheme Timings*

### **Summary Findings – Delivery Times**

The perception that LHP schemes take too long needs to be addressed by training LHP members on the lifecycle.

The timing of design task is a critical element in determining the timescale and has to be scheduled to a limited resource. Furthermore, shortage of design resource is causing some delays.

The implementation of the new scheduling and reporting database coupled with scheduling software should improve matters going forward.

There is a wealth of information on the LHP websites, but not all LHP members are aware of it. Furthermore, a deeper understanding of the scheme lifecycle would be beneficial.

#### **4.5 Is the range of schemes still appropriate?**

Presently, there are 15 member guides containing around 43 options under the direction of the local panels. The Group has scrutinised these schemes in depth and note that whilst most are cost justifiable budget wise and offer excellent opportunities to tackle issues at a local level, many on the face of it appear very expensive and would take a large chunk of an LHP's budget.

The principle of LHPs was to delegate decision making down to the 12 districts. As such, some regions may favour doing just a few large cost schemes. The Group also note that some LHPs consider undertaking maintenance tasks. LHPs were intended to provide new infrastructure, but the Group could see that it must be difficult for an LHP to add new infrastructure when the current infrastructure is not working. In the review, members came across an example where it would not make sense to commission a new VAS (Vehicle Activated Sign) when there were four already in place that were not working. This pressure is created by a failure to maintain the current infrastructure.

Some of the expensive schemes available to LHPs are listed below:

High-Cost Schemes	Cost of Scheme
20mph zone including 5 entry points and 20 speed cushions	£125,000
Traffic Signals at a junction, no additional changes to highway infrastructure.	£200,000
Stand-alone Pedestrian/Cycle Crossing – Single carriageway, no utility apparatus to be removed, no additional highway infrastructure or resurfacing required.	£140,000
Stand-alone Pedestrian/Cycle Crossing – Single carriageway, no utility apparatus to be removed. Additional lighting and road surfacing.	£180,000
Standalone Pedestrian/Cycle Crossing – Dual carriageway, no utility apparatus to be removed, no additional highway infrastructure or resurfacing required.	£160,000
Standalone Pedestrian/Cycle Crossing – Dual carriageway, no utility apparatus to be removed. Additional lighting and road surfacing.	£250,000
200m Shared, segregated or unsegregated footway/cycleway within existing footway, including drainage but not including lighting.	£225,000
200m Shared, segregated or unsegregated footway/cycleway within existing footway including design, new lighting and drainage.	£275,000
A structure with piled foundations spanning a large byway/bridleway.	£250,000
200m of footway width, 1.2m including kerbs, up to 10 vehicle crossovers within the existing highway land including alteration to drainage. Not including, lighting, diversion of utility apparatus etc.	£90,000

*Table 7 – High Cost LHP Schemes*

With an average budget of £333,000 per LHP (£533,000 enhanced), it is difficult to see how LHPs can entertain schemes of £100,000s. An LHP region may cover 10 parishes and allocating most of the budget to a single scheme would presumably not be met with enthusiasm.

The Task and Finish Group considered whether such large schemes should be removed from the LHP scope so that LHPs are able to deliver a larger quantity of lower cost schemes, driven by safety, and to maximise benefit to most residents.

One of the main aspects of LHPs is that the decision making is local, so having numerous schemes in scope allows the members to make these decisions. However, the Group thought it irreconcilable to have schemes that take such a large proportion

of the overall budget. Consequently, the Group is proposing that schemes over £50,000 be removed from the scope of individual LHPs.

However, rather than just remove these schemes all together, the Group's proposal is that the structure of LHPs is altered. High-cost schemes, which often must attract additional funding from other sources, could be recommended by an individual LHP for consideration by a new countywide Super LHP. This LHP Super Panel would operate in parallel with the existing LHPs and focus on the larger schemes that address both the 'Everyone's Essex' plan (including the 'Levelling Up' agenda) and the Safer, Greener, Healthier ambitions, such as cycling and walking schemes.

This would leave the 12-district based LHPs to (re)focus on the safety priority, which is often the main concern of parish/town councils and residents

### **Summary Findings – Appropriateness of Schemes**

With such large schemes in scope, there is a danger that LHPs will be dominated by delivery of a small number of schemes rather than many schemes across a whole region, benefitting more people.

The option to set a £50,000 cap and move consideration of larger schemes to a Super LHP should be explored on the basis that the Super LHP attracts alternative Greene/Healthier funding.

The concept that maintenance tasks are not in LHP scope should not be changed. However, this needs to be addressed by improving the maintenance performance.

## **4.6 Membership of LHPs**

The Task and Finish Group investigated the makeup of the membership of the 12 LHPs to ascertain effectiveness and to consider if current membership is still appropriate or if LHPs were top heavy, cumbersome, and if would be as (or more) effective with fewer members.

The composition of each of the 12 LHPs is different albeit with a common thread running through them (see table below). Some LHPs have district councillors, parish representatives, officers and allowance for members of the public.

District	Total Panellists	County	Town/ Parish	District/ City	Borough	Officers
Basildon	14	9	1	0	0	2
Braintree	23	8	3	4	0	8
Brentwood	9	4	1	1	4	
Castle Point	10	5	1	0	4	3
Chelmsford	14	9	1	4	0	4
Colchester	12	8	1	0	3	3
Epping Forest	12	7	1	4	0	3
Harlow	8	4	0	4	0	2
Maldon	7	3	ELAC*	3	0	2
Rochford	10	5	1	4	0	3
Tendering	13	8	TDALC*	4	0	5
Uttlesford	9	4	1	4	0	2

*Table 8 – Composition of LHPs*

The Group’s investigations have shown that on the one hand district, borough, city and parish/town councillors generally have good local knowledge of the needs; however, on the other hand county members are also aware of the local needs.

It is noted that most LHPs contain a large number of councillors from supporting local authorities. It is noticeable that each LHP has a differing number of representatives from each of these bodies and the Group explored if this makeup is representative of the district it serves.

Parish Councils exist for around 50% of the county. Usually, a panel has one parish council member whose role is to represent all the parish councils in that region. The Group asked a selection of members if they considered that parish councils play an important role at LHPs in supporting the reporting and implementation of schemes. The feedback the Group received showed that they are in most instances the front line for residents, who report issues requiring attention via them to the ECC member.

The current operation of LHPs allows ECC members to raise schemes as requested by individuals. The Group thought it would be better practice if, where a parish council exists, requests should be fed into the ECC member by the parish council.

In addition to the numbers shown above, each LHP has an assigned secretariat. One notable fact about the officers present is the range of job titles that attend (see below), the Group saw this as worth exploring further to understand their contribution to the decision-making process.

LHP Officer Support (range of officers attending LHP meetings):

Highway Liaison Office (HLO)  
Essex Highways and Operations Strategy and Policy Manager  
Governance and Members Officer  
Design Manager, Essex Highways  
Area Manager (North Essex Parking Partnership)  
Principal Planner  
Highway Liaison Manager

Design Engineer  
Head of Environment  
Transport & Sustainability Lead  
Design Services Manager  
Technical Officer  
Road Safety Engineering Team Leader

It appears that a standard expectation across LHPs is attendance by the HLO, Design representation and secretariat.

The Group also considered public attendance at LHP meetings and whether this should be standardised. The LHP Terms of Reference state “meetings are not open to attendance by the public or the press other than by specific invitation of the Chairman. Meetings are not broadcasted”. The Group are not aware of any LHPs which include the public as standard and could not perceive any benefit from their attendance but could see the danger of pressure being applied to approve certain schemes. The conclusion from the Group was that resident input is best channelled through the ECC members.

### **Summary Findings – LHP Membership**

LHP makeup ranges from 7 to 23 (Braintree) including officers and others; this can be considered top heavy.

The Group conclude that there is scope to reduce the number of members that make up these panels and suggest that they should consist of county councillors, 1 representative from district level, 1 parish representative.

The officer attendance could be reconsidered but should always include a member from the design team (to ensure there is sufficient consideration of this element).

The Group conclude that decision making (voting) should be restricted to the ECC councillor membership. Local parish councils should be part of the application process through the ECC member.

The Group believe that residents should input via their ECC member.

## 4.7 Overlap with Maintenance

The Group explored the relationship between LHPs and Highways Maintenance. Whilst noting that maintenance was excluded from the scope of LHPs, the Group nevertheless recognised that maintenance issues can impact upon the decisions taken by LHPs. This occurs in two main ways:

- LHPs are faced with the dilemma of choosing maintenance vs new schemes; and
- As more LHP schemes are added, more is added to the maintenance demand.

### Summary Findings – Overlap with Maintenance

LHP scope should continue to exclude maintenance aspects; however, for this to happen, the highways maintenance performance needs to be improved

PSEG should review Highway Maintenance performance on a quarterly basis.

## 4.8 Delivery and Implementation

The Group noted that there are two options for the delivery of LHPs schemes:

- Direct Delivery Gangs
- Contracted Out Supply Chain

The Direct Delivery Gang approach involves contracting the implementation resources on a bulk approach and then directing the teams to the specific task. More complex jobs use the contracted-out supply chain approach where an implementation task is individually quoted and contracted.

The Group has been presented with evidence that the Direct Gang approach results in significant savings for those tasks that can be done this way. The Group therefore agree with the expansion of the Direct Gang approach wherever possible.

A third approach has also been explored: Highway Rangers. Highway Rangers are a team (usually a couple of operators + a van) who are funded by ECC though the LHPs, but some district and borough level councils supplement their budget to expand them. Theoretically, they are restricted to maintenance tasks.

The Group has noted that the Highway Ranger service plays an important part when delivering services locally to residents. This service is commended for what it does. It is noted however that the use of this service is sporadic across the districts.

The Group note that most districts have decided to deliver this service via their respective district, city and borough councils. Doing this allows the individual local authority to set its own criteria for use of the Ranger service albeit with funding still provided by ECC Highways.

The Task and Finish Group recommend members take the opportunity to review this service with their respective local authority to develop the system in order to deliver an enhanced service.

The Group investigated one local authority (Epping Forest) and found that it has enhanced its use of the team; not only do they do the usual cleaning and small tasks, but they also have trained their team to use power tools safely, these include chain saws angle grinders as well as drills and small hand tools.

The Group found this team covers painting of bollards, root work to trees, small kerb repairs. They are also trained to perform street works in a risk safety environment which allows them to work on roads with speeds higher than 30mpn (i.e. laybys). A suggestion is the training and use of power tools (for example a multi-function tool that incorporates a strimmer, brush cutter, chain saw and hedge trimmer).

In addition, the Group recommend that to reduce delivery time and costs (particularly on larger schemes), LHPs or the Super LHP (under the proposed two-tier LHP structure) are given the option to contract out groups of schemes to external operators, and furthermore ECC should explore other opportunities for these organisations to support the work of LHPs.

The Group looked at the frequency of LHP meetings, and noted an inconsistency, with some LHPs meeting every quarter, and some less frequently. It was felt that regular meetings (at least once a quarter, if not more frequently), aid in the more rapid progress of schemes and enable members to regularly update their city/borough/district/town/parish council on delivery and implementation.

### **Summary Findings – Delivery and Implementation**

The expansion of the use of Direct Delivery Gangs is supported

More consideration should be given to the use of Highways Rangers including expanding their capabilities.

Options to contract out work should be explored.

LHP meetings should be at least every quarter and review progress of all the schemes.

## 4.9 Survey of LHP Chairmen

The Group were keen to understand the views of the LHPs and therefore created a questionnaire survey which was sent to the chairmen of the 12 LHPs and covered all the issues explored in this paper. The full results and commentary are attached in the *Notes and Evidence* section at the end of this report.

## 4.10 Centralisation vs Devolution

The Task and Finish Group explored whether the LHP process currently sat at the right level. The Group did this from 2 aspects:

- Decision Making; and
- Implementation

Currently, the county is divided into 12 LHPs therefore decision making is centred at a semi-local level, e.g., Chelmsford, Colchester, Epping Forest. This requires the members of these LHPs to take a non-parochial view as to which schemes should go forward for funding.

### **Devolvement:**

The Group considered whether such decision-making could be devolved to a lower level, but noted that such devolved budget (if apportioned by people numbers) would be unworkable with parishes able to spend just £3,000 to £7,000 each. The LHP process works on the basis that funds are summed together to enable the most deserving cases to be addressed. Further devolution would undermine this principle.

It should also be recognised that whilst it is not widely known, parish and district-level councils do have the ability to fund their proposed schemes. There is a third-party 'works construction team' at Essex Highways that manage all privately funded works on the highway. This mechanism allows councils to directly fund a scheme at their cost.

### **Centralisation:**

The Group considered whether decision making could be elevated to a higher level. For example, replacing the 12 LHPs with 4 (covering the north, south, east and west of the county) with consequently bigger budgets. The Group concluded that such an approach could lead to considerable in-fighting, a lack of local knowledge and dilution of the original goals of LHPs (e.g. local-decision making).

As an alternative, the Group has explored the idea of creating an LHP Super Panel that operates in parallel with the existing local LHPs. This panel would be made up of one representative from each of the twelve divisions. The aim of this panel would be to focus on the larger schemes that address both the 'Everyone's Essex' plan (including the 'Levelling Up' agenda) and the Safer, Greener, Healthier ambitions. An

example of this would be cycling schemes; these are often expensive to implement, take a long time to deliver and divert much need finances from the LHP budgets. It would also encompass walking, flooding, and sustainable transport, more generally. The creation of such a panel would require enhanced funding and it is recommended that other portfolio holders (beyond highways and sustainable transport) would contribute to this panel to ensure its success, and this mechanism would be a way for these schemes to access additional funding. It is proposed that a “cut off” be applied and the most straightforward one would be a value of £50,000 whereby schemes above this value (if solely to be funded by the ECC) are elevated to the Super Panel.

### **Summary Findings – Centralisation versus Devolution**

Decision Making for schemes of less that £50,000 should stay with existing LHPs with bigger schemes considered by a new LHP Super Panel.

## **4.11 LHP Reporting System**

Upgrades are being made to the way that LHP requests are made and how they are reported. Currently a request is made by the ECC member emailing a form to the LHP manager. Normally, such forms would be created in consultation with the division’s district, borough, city, town and parish councils. It is noted that in some cases parish councils directly submit such emails, but it is a requirement that the ECC member approve these submissions.

The Highways department are presently in the process of upgrading the reporting and management of scheme requests from an Excel spreadsheet system to a full database system, which will enhance the tracking, reporting and management of schemes. The Task and Finish Group considered this proposal.

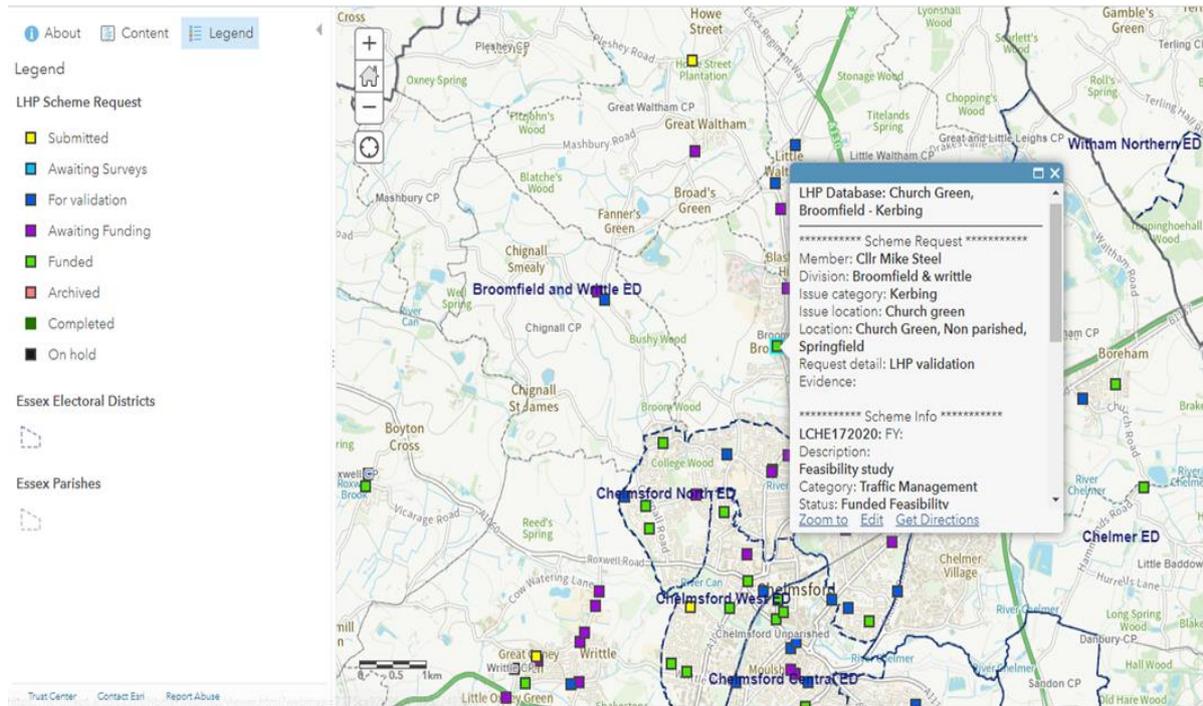
### **Scheme Requests:**

The proposal is that the ECC member submits a web-form which is then tracked through to either completion or rejection (if it is not taken forward). The web-form is similar to the current form that is emailed to the LHP manager. It does however have the advantage that it prepopulates relevant information and prompts for location details, details of the issue (rather than the solution), map location and allows uploading of files.

Currently, progress is reported via minutes from the LHP meetings and a spreadsheet (downloadable) on the LHP website. It is proposed that this is transformed into a map-based reporting system with access to more detailed information for LHP members.

## Reporting:

LHP members will be able to view a map-based report (see below) which shows all the schemes in their area with summary information. It may be feasible to make this available to the public/other local councils.



## More Detailed Reporting

Behind this, will be significantly more detail in a database format (below), which will be available to LHP members with clear details on stages, timescales and costs.

Essex Highways Local Highway Panel Dashboard							
Page 1 Page 2							
Basildon Braintree Brentwood Castle Point <u>Chelmsford</u> Colchester Epping Harlow Maldon Rochford Tending Littleford							
All Schemes Submitted In Progress Awaiting Funding <u>Funded</u> Completed Archived/On Hold							
Local Highway P...	LHP Code	Finance Code	Scheme Name	Scheme_category	Scheme Stage	External_bud...	Works_Descript...
Chelmsford	LCHE172031		O/s 19-33 Shelley Road, C...	Traffic Management	Design	5,000	Parking improvemen
Chelmsford	LCHE152105		The Tye - Dropped Crossing	Traffic Management	Total Scheme	8,000	Dropped kerbs
Chelmsford	LCHE152017		School Road, Good Easter...	Traffic Management	Feasibility	3,000	HGV survey
Chelmsford	LCHE163005		Penny Royal Rd to Woodhi...	Walking	Implementation	129,000	Footway to link to pa
Chelmsford	LCHE175014		Nr 35 Plantation Rd-Bus St...	Passenger Transport	Total Scheme	13,000	new bus stop
Chelmsford	LCHE154009		Princes Road - Cycling	Cycling	Implementation	131,500	Cycleway/footway
Chelmsford	LCHE172020		Church Green, Broomfield...	Traffic Management	Feasibility	4,000	Feasibility study
Chelmsford	LCHE192040		A414 Danbury - Route Bas...	Traffic Management	Feasibility	25,000	Route Based Study
Chelmsford	LCHE192012		Stonehill Road, Roxwell + P...	Traffic Management	Total Scheme	5,000	Pedestrian guard rail
Chelmsford	LCHE192019	16213101190500010	South Hanningfield Villag...	Traffic Management	Total Scheme	7,500	Bollards
Chelmsford	LCHE152113	16213101190500011	The Tye, East Hanningfield...	Walking	Implementation	41,500	Footway/kerbing
Chelmsford	LCHE152001	16213101190500012	Bridge over River Crouch ...	Traffic Management	Feasibility	5,000	Feasibility study
Chelmsford	LCHE192039	16213101190500019	White Elms Road, Bicknac...	Walking	Design	4,000	Design
Chelmsford	LCHE192039	16213101190500013	O/s Tyrrells School - 20mp...	Traffic Management	Total Scheme	8,500	20mph with wig-wag
Chelmsford	LCHE162143	16213101190500004	Copperfield Rd /w Dicken...	Traffic Management	Total Scheme	1,000	Arbs works
Chelmsford	LCHE182053	16213101190500020	Milburn Crescent Chelmsf...	Traffic Management	Design	2,500	Layby

The Task and Finish Group also looked at the work scheduling tools that address the complex assignment of design and implementation work, not just for LHP, but for all highways projects. This includes Gantt charts on the schemes, which would be useful to LHP members. It was also noted that this project aims to consolidate data, mapping and the capture of historical data so should lead to efficiencies.

### **Summary Findings – LHP reporting System**

The Task and Finish Group support the improvement to the scheme request and data capture system and promote its roll out by mid-2022

It is noted that the new database will be able to provide in depth data for members.

The Group recommend a two-tier reporting system, one for the public and a more in-depth one for members.

The Group support the new online reporting system but note that some minor changes could be made e.g. the inclusion of a “recommended solutions” category choice.

## **4.12 Casualty Reduction**

Casualty Reduction is a process whereby ECC Highways undertake reviews based on occurrence of incidents (serious and fatal) in a location and require the LHP to include any schemes that address these issues.

All local authorities have a statutory duty to analyse the collisions that occur resulting in road casualties and investigate whether engineering solutions are available to reduce the number of casualties.

The Task and Finish Group support this approach and see no reason to change it. Indeed, LHPs should take comfort from the fact that there is a process that investigates such casualty reduction schemes which are then prioritised annually by Essex Highways and presented to the relevant LHP. Collisions are analysed over the previous 3 years. Before analysis can commence, the most recent annual collision data must be signed off by the Department for Transport. The collision analysis is

undertaken across the County and sites are prioritised on the basis of those that can be effectively treated with engineering measures that would reduce the number of people killed or seriously injured in road traffic collisions. The Cabinet Member for Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport will receive recommendations for the Casualty Reduction programme before the end of the calendar year. Once approved, these will be included in the next annual LHP programme or funded from other funding allocations. It is vital that the Casualty Reduction team have the sanction to carry through their recommendations with LHPs agreeing to them and providing the necessary funding.

**Summary Findings – Casualty Reduction**

No change recommended

**Acknowledgements**

The Task and Finish Group wish to thank all those that provided oral and written evidence at meetings, as well as those who had expressed a willingness to attend sessions but were unable to do so due to other commitments.

**Notes and Evidence 1 (Scoping Document)**

**Essex County Council  
Place Services and Economic Growth (PSEG) Policy & Scrutiny Committee**

*This form is a tool that should be compiled at the start of each inquiry to set out clearly the aims and objectives of the committee’s involvement in a particular matter, and will be completed at the end of the inquiry to confirm what has been achieved. It is an iterative form; and also acts as an audit trail for a review.*

<b>WHAT ARE WE LOOKING AT?</b>	
<b>Review Topic</b>	Local Highway Panels (LHPs)
<b>Type of Review</b>	Task and Finish Group
<b>WHY ARE WE LOOKING AT THIS?</b>	
<b>Rationale for the Review</b>	<p>At its meeting of 23 September 2021, PSEG agreed that a Task &amp; Finish Group be set-up to consider the future direction of LHPs. This followed discussion with the Cabinet Member for Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport, Councillor Lee Scott.</p> <p>The review has been instigated to consider the future direction of LHPs and areas where they can be developed and enhanced. The work of LHPs potentially links to several elements of <i>Everyone’s Essex – Our Plan for Levelling Up the County: 2021-2025</i> including on delivering a High Quality Environment for residents.</p>
<b>WHAT DO WE HOPE TO ACHIEVE?</b>	
<b>Indicators of success</b>	<p>What would you wish to see happen as a result of the review?</p> <p><i>Scrutiny to make a series of realistic and evidence-based recommendations on LHPs to the Cabinet Member.</i></p> <p>What value can scrutiny bring to the review?</p> <p><i>Scrutiny can draw on the experience, knowledge, and insight of councillors as well as their links to LHPs (all are members) and Borough/City/District/Parish/Town Councils. Scrutiny can bring a fresh perspective to the issue and take time to consider the overall approach of LHPs.</i></p> <p>Why do you think the desired outcome is achievable?</p> <p><i>The review is being properly scoped and is supported by the Cabinet Member and key officers.</i></p>

<b>HOW LONG IS IT GOING TO TAKE?</b>	
<b>Timescales</b>	Three-month review with final report to PSEG Committee in January 2022
<b>Provisional Timetable</b>	28 October 2021 – 20 January 2022
<b>WHAT INFORMATION DO WE NEED?</b>	
<b>Terms of Reference</b>	To review:  The remit, effectiveness and future direction of LHPs.
<b>Key Lines of Enquiry</b>	<p><b>Remit and Objectives</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the current scope of LHPs appropriate i.e., is the scope too wide or too narrow?</li> <li>• Should additional budgets/responsibilities be devolved to or from LHPs? And if so, what can realistically be proposed, what is the appetite of the LHPs and (for example) parish councils, and what would the implications be?</li> <li>• How can LHPs most appropriately support the strategic objectives of ECC/Essex Highways?</li> </ul> <p><b>LHP Processes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can the current processes (i.e. how a scheme is selected, validated, designed, costed, delivered, etc) be improved?</li> <li>• What are the factors that determine the current costs and timeframes for schemes? Is there any additional work that can be done on these?</li> <li>• Are the current funding arrangements and funding formula fair and robust?</li> <li>• How can LHPs best link to other programmes, budgets, and areas of work?</li> </ul> <p><b>Guidance and Communications</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How can LHPs be better promoted to ensure improved community engagement whilst increasing understanding as well as managing expectations?</li> <li>• (Subject to the above) can the present Terms of Reference and guidance documents be improved?</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there any ideas about how to handle districts with not enough schemes?</li> <li>• Should the Panels be encouraged to spend more on aesthetic improvements? And if so, how could this be achieved?</li> </ul> <p><b>Issues</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How can LHPs best deal with recurring local issues such 'rat-running', HGV traffic, and speeding?</li> </ul>
<b>What primary/new evidence is needed?</b>	TBC
<b>What secondary/ existing information is needed?</b>	What have other councils done? Is there any good practice to draw on from elsewhere?
<b>What briefings and site visits might be relevant?</b>	TBC
<b>Other work being undertaken/Relevant Corporate Links</b>	TBC
<b>What is inside the scope of the review?</b>	Highways and Highways Rangers LHPs Climate Change considerations
<b>What is outside the scope of the review?</b>	Wider transport issues e.g., Home-to-School Transport policy, pothole repairs, and government-determined funding and policy.

**WHO DO WE NEED TO CONTRIBUTE/CONSULT? (INITIAL MEETING TO ESTABLISH THIS)**

<b>Relevant Portfolio Holder(s) and other Member involvement</b>	Councillor Lee Scott (Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport) and other members as appropriate
<b>Key Officers</b>	Vicky Presland, Head of Design Services, Essex Highways David Gollop, Design Manager, Essex Highways
<b>Partners and service users</b>	Borough/City/District/Parish/Town Councils (TBC) Other LHP members (TBC)

**WHAT RESOURCES DO WE NEED?**

<b>Lead Member and Membership</b>	Councillor Laureen Shaw (Chairman) Councillor Lee Scordis Councillor Mike Steel Councillor Marshall Vance
<b>Co-optees/Other Invites (if any)</b>	Councillor Lee Scott (to the first and last meeting as an observer)

<b>Lead Scrutiny Officer/Other</b>	Justin Long, Senior Democratic Services Officer
<b>Expected Member commitment</b>	Four meetings to be concluded by the end of December 2021
<b>WHAT ARE THE RISKS/CONSTRAINTS?</b>	
<b>Risk analysis</b> (site visits etc.)	Risk management form to be completed if any site visits are included as part of the review
<b>Possible constraints</b>	To be determined, if any
<b>WHAT WILL BE REQUIRED FROM STAKEHOLDERS?</b>	
<b>Internal stakeholders</b>	Their time to attend Task and Finish Group meetings Information and advice Communications for any potential press release following the review
<b>External stakeholders</b>	Potential time commitment of co-optee Their time to attend Task and Finish Group evidence sessions
<b>WHO ARE WE DIRECTING ANY RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS TO?</b>	
<b>Recommendations to</b> (key decision makers):	This to be compiled during, and following the review
<b>Reporting arrangements</b>	Task and Finish Group final report to be presented to the full PSEG Committee, for a response from the relevant Cabinet Member(s), on Thursday, 20 January 2022
<b>Follow-up arrangements</b>	Six-month implementation review to full PSEG Committee in July 2022.  Outcomes to also be monitored by the Scrutiny Board.
<b>ADDITIONAL INFORMATION/NOTES</b>	
<b>Meeting dates (provisional)</b>	TBC

## Notes and Evidence 2 (Results from LHP Chairmen Questionnaire)

### Overview:

The Group was keen to understand the views of the LHPs and therefore created a questionnaire survey which was sent to the chairmen of the 12 LHPs. The questions were crafted to cover all the areas covered in this paper.

11 of the 12 LHP Chairs responded to the survey.

In general, there was a correlation between the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group, with some variation on the following:

- Membership of the LHPs – respondents were generally content with the current membership
- Devolvement of delivery of schemes – respondents thought there could be advantages to devolving delivery of schemes
- Adequacy of budget – ½ the respondents thought it was adequate
- Range of schemes – respondents seemed to prefer the freedom of a wide range of schemes.

The final question was a general “do you think LHPs work well?” – with 6 respondents saying Yes, and 5 saying No – a fairly even split!

Aligning the questionnaire responses to the Task/Finish Group recommendations:

### Analysis by Regions:

Question 4 – it seems that the suspicion that LHPs are generally unaware or make use of the member guides, was borne out with 10 of the 11 respondents stating that they do not regularly make use of, or don't know about the Member Guides. Only 1 respondent said that they make use of the guides.

It is, therefore, not surprising that Question 5 revealed a consensus for more training.

The free text of Question 6 included suggestions for training on the LHP lifecycle, range of schemes, managing public expectations, as well as sharing experiences across LHPs

### Budget Allocations:

Question 14 revealed that 50% of respondents giving a view, thought that the budget they were given was adequate (so 50% thought it wasn't)

Of the 5 that thought the budget was adequate, 1 of these LHPs is forecasting to overspend, and 4 of these LHPs have unfunded queues at the shorter end of the range. One of these LHPs has 4 years' worth of unfunded schemes in the queue and yet is forecasting to only spend around half of its budget.

This aspect may benefit from further investigation, possibly with a conversation with the respective chairmen.

Unsurprisingly, the LHPs with the longer queues of unfunded schemes, thought the budget was inadequate.

#### Individual Scheme Costs:

Question 15 – 8 of 11 respondents agree with the perception that LHP schemes are too expensive.

#### Delivery Times:

Question 16 – 10 of 11 respondents agree with the perception that schemes take too long to deliver

#### Range of Schemes:

Question 18 – showed a preference for LHPs to have free choice in which schemes to address and not be restricted by narrower options. Only 3 of the respondents thought that the schemes range should be restricted.

Question 19 – Safety was the key priority for most. Beyond that, environmental considerations featured slightly higher than number of people benefitted.

#### Membership of LHPs:

Question 3 - 8 of the 11 LHPs enjoy full attendance most of the time

Question 9 – the majority of respondents (7 of 11) are content with the membership of the LHPs.

#### Delivery and Implementation:

Question 2 showed that LHPs met quarterly or less frequently, with only one meeting more frequently every 2 months

#### Centralisation versus devolution:

Question 7 – 7 of the 11 LHPs supported the current level of decision making. There was clearly not a desire to see either centralisation or devolution with 1 respondent also raising concerns about decision making becoming political.

Question 12 – 7 of the 11 respondents thought that delivery of schemes could be devolved to a lower level. However, whether such districts/boroughs/city/parish councils would want to accept the responsibility was not known (Question 12).

#### Reporting System:

Question 17 was included to discover where LHP members got their steer for submitted schemes. The result seemed to be a fairly even distribution between their own view, residents, and from their respective local authorities (e.g. parish council).

More than half of the respondents (Question 20) thought that the reporting was adequate, but 5 of 11 would like to see more, all of which wanted to see a map view of schemes in their area.

The full results are below:

## Local Highway Panels Survey

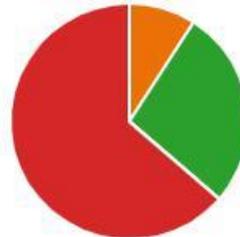
### 1. Please select your District

● Basildon	1
● Braintree	1
● Brentwood	1
● Castle Point	1
● Chelmsford	1
● Colchester	0
● Epping Forest	1
● Harlow	1
● Maldon	1
● Rochford	1
● Tendring	1
● Uttlesford	1



### 2. How often does your LHP meet?

● Monthly	0
● Every Two Months	1
● Less Frequently	3
● Other	7

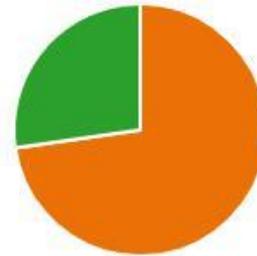


*Other:*

*Quarterly (x7)*

3. In general, do all nominated councillors attend?

●	All - Every Meeting	0
●	All - Most of the time	8
●	Some - Most of the Time	3
●	Attendance is Poor	0



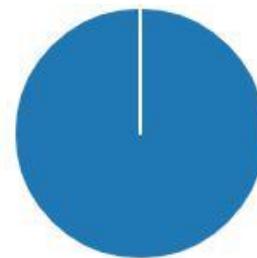
4. In general, does your LHP make regular use of the supporting material on your webpage i.e. the 15 part Members' Guide, and the Costs and Timescales Guide (Appendix 1)?

●	Yes	1
●	No	7
●	Don't Know	3



5. Do you think additional training and guidance should be offered to LHP members for example on the costs and timescale of schemes, how schemes are delivered, best practice examples from other LHPs?

●	Yes	11
●	No	0
●	Don't Know	0



6. Do you have any other ideas for additional training, guidance or support that you would like to see LHP members or chairmen offered?

**Responses**

Training on Design/Validation/Implementation from Essex Highways.

Visit to local highway offices to meet and understand better the operations and challenges.

Group meeting of all Chairmen and deputies to share experiences and develop future plans to shape the effectiveness of the LHPs attended by cabinet member for highways.

More info on the range of projects available

Training on a key aspect each meeting and then for every policy change

By ensuring that the terms of the LHP are understood and particularly in enhancing the understanding what is within the remit of the panel and what is not.

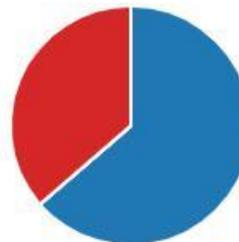
I think there should be training on how to deal with public expectation from the panel in relation to time taken and ability to fund. The public become disillusioned when they are referred to the LHP only to find that the process takes years.

We have had a number of good training sessions and my Vice-chairman (who also chairs SEPP) and I are very experienced and we have had some excellent LHP officers so a lot of information is provided more generally, but some members remain more interested in road repairs and maintenance or schemes that are well outside any LHP budget. The time taken to carry out the programme of works and the uncertainty of when they will start leads to some members being openly sceptical about the purpose of the process. scepticism about the process. I think more training on which matters really are "accidents waiting to happen" and on speed management/cameras/regulations would be useful (perhaps Safer Essex Roads Partnership might help on this).

More details of what is available

7. LHPs were created to place new scheme decision-making at a district level. Do you support the current structure of LHPs (i.e. 12 LHPs each representing one district)

<span style="color: blue;">●</span>	Yes, support the current structure	7
<span style="color: orange;">●</span>	No, LHPs should be merged to cover multiple districts	0
<span style="color: green;">●</span>	No, decision making should be devolved a parish level	0
<span style="color: red;">●</span>	Other	4



*Other*

*Yes, I support the existing structure, but more resources need to put in to the highways engineers side to deliver verification of schemes in a timely manner.*

*The intent of the LHP's was that they offered the opportunity to carry out local priorities with local decisions. However, in some instances that has become "political" and that deters from the requirements being achieved.*

*There should be more freedoms and flexibilities to LHP's in quadrants with a lead authority. Obviously with ECC controls.*

*I definitely wouldn't support the last two of these options which would, I think, make it even more difficult to get important larger schemes approved. I would prefer the current structure, but I would like some evidence as to whether LHPs represent value for money as a system.*

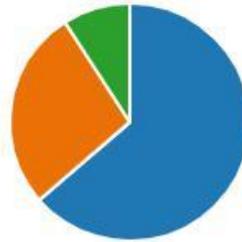
8. Member representation on LHPs covers several county council divisions. Does your LHP have any difficulties in agreeing which schemes to take forward?

- Yes, promotion of local interests can cause difficulties 2
- Sometimes 3
- No, the team works well together 6
- Don't Know 0



9. LHPs are made up of all the local county councillors and a nominated number of district, borough and city councillors and a parish council representative (with equal decision making powers). Do you support this current arrangement?

- Yes 7
- No 3
- Don't Know 1



10. If no, do you have any ideas for alternative arrangements?

**Responses**

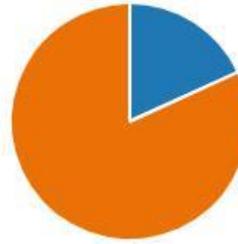
The contribution of the Parish Council member is negligible. We do not have nominated District representatives as 7 out of the 9 County members are double hatted.

ECC function, others may attend for info, but no voting rights.

By achieving a better balance between the respective delegates. It is important to ensure that the political differences are not unreasonably exerted.

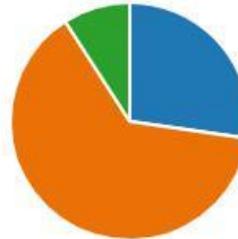
11. Do you think residents should be able to attend LHP meetings to contribute to the discussion?

●	Yes	2
●	No	9



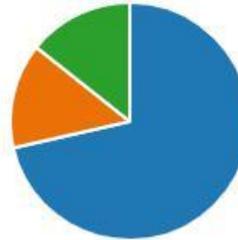
12. LHPs currently decide which schemes to deliver, but the delivery is done by a central Highways Department through the County Council. Do you think that delivery could be devolved?

●	No, a centralised delivery system works best	3
●	Yes, there would advantages to devolution	7
●	Don't Know	1



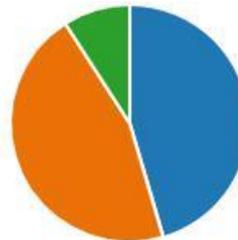
13. If you think delivery could be devolved to a lower level, do you know if your District/Borough/City or Parish Councils would be interested in taking on that responsibility?

●	Yes	5
●	No	1
●	Don't Know	1



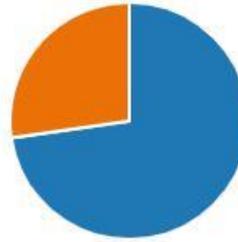
14. Do you believe the budget given to LHPs is adequate?

●	Yes	5
●	No	5
●	Don't Know	1



15. There may be a perception that LHP schemes are expensive. Do you share that view?

●	Yes	8
●	No	3
●	Don't Know	0



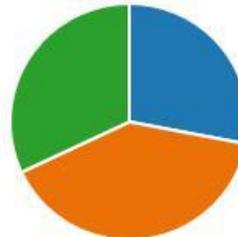
16. There may be a perception that LHP schemes take too long to implement. Do you share that view?

●	Yes	10
●	No	1
●	Don't Know	0



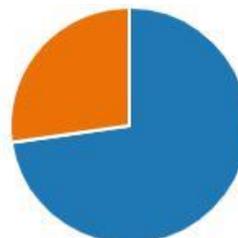
17. Submitted schemes have to come through the County Councillor. In general, where do they get their ideas and direction? (tick all that apply)

●	Their own view	7
●	Response to residents	10
●	District/Borough/City/Parish Council	8
●	Other	0



18. The scope of LHP schemes range from the cheapest ones at £2,000 up to £200,000 (on for instance cycle lanes and footpath schemes). The choice of which schemes to deliver is determined collectively by the LHP members and therefore the 15 part Members' Guide covers a wide range. Are you happy with this approach?

●	Yes, it's important that LHPs have free choice	8
●	No, I would prefer to see a narrower range	3
●	Don't Know	0



How does your LHP prioritise schemes? (tick all that apply)

19. How does your LHP prioritise schemes? (tick all that apply)

<span style="color: blue;">●</span>	Safety	9
<span style="color: orange;">●</span>	Number of people who benefit	3
<span style="color: green;">●</span>	Environmental considerations	4
<span style="color: red;">●</span>	Other	3



Other:

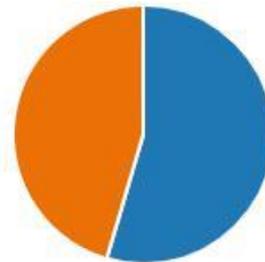
*"Dependent on the amount of money available"*

*"Cost - very large single schemes that would take up most of the budget have not proved successful save where match funding has been obtained"*

*"This is a good question and not clear to me!"*

20. LHP reporting is currently via a set of minutes from each meeting plus updating a spreadsheet which appears on the web page. Is this sufficient or would you rather see more?

<span style="color: blue;">●</span>	Yes, reporting is adequate	6
<span style="color: orange;">●</span>	No, I would like to see more	5
<span style="color: green;">●</span>	Don't Know	0



21. If no, what additional reporting would you like to see? (tick all that apply)

<span style="color: blue;">●</span>	A map view of schemes	4
<span style="color: orange;">●</span>	Further information on costs and timings	4
<span style="color: green;">●</span>	Other	4



Other

*"more succinct minutes - web spreadsheet more accurate"*

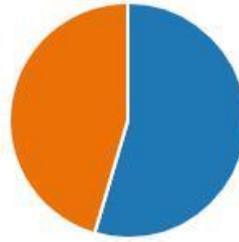
*"Back room planning schedules"*

*"Updates on completed schemes"*

*"Better information to parishes and residents so that the progress of schemes can be followed by them"*

22. Overall, do you think LHPs work well?

●	Yes	6
●	No	5



23. Are there any additional points you would like to make to inform the work of the Group?

**Responses**

Too many schemes requests not enough money/time taken for validation/design is too long/implementation timing too long

No mention here of any form of price cap for a scheme.

There needs to be more funding devolved down to the LHP but only if officers have the engineering design team in order to delivery scheme validation, Clearly to me many schemes have been loaded onto the LHP but with little regard to delivery in order to placate residents. A clearer steer on what should go on and what shouldn't would be useful, a danger also exists of an unfair number schemes taking priority by an imbalance of voting on panels,

The Castle Point partnership works incredibly well. It is not political and we are well supported by officers. If the committee wants to see an example of how one can work effectively, come to Castle Point's one.

I have my doubts that this survey will provide any substantial information that isn't already known. It would have been much more informative to interview LHP Chairmen as we have experience and our own views how things could improve. Some LHP's opened up membership and allow public participation, I strongly resisted this and believe that it was a retrograde step by others. The LHP should be able to discuss schemes in private to prevent undue influence from parochial members of the public or other councillors.

My reason for answering No to question 21 is that the LHP's raise the expectations of Parishes and Residents which, mostly because of the time taken to complete projects or the reality that they cannot always have what they want leads to unwarranted dissatisfaction.

To many highways issues are pointed to the LHP through member enquires swamping the system.

On Q21 above I would add that ours has worked much better since we managed to get a full programme and pipeline of approved works. Before that several schemes would fall by the wayside for different reasons at a late stage without any substitutes to fill the gaps and with no time for any to be evaluated from scratch. I think the present LHPs broadly do the best they can within the circumstances of the LHP system itself, but it is a lot of bureaucracy to bring forward some of the more important schemes of work that we should perhaps be doing anyway.