

# Scrutiny

Improving public services

## Ringway Jacobs

A Joint Task and Finish Review

April 2019

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

**Corporate Policy and Scrutiny  
Committee**

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## **1. Foreword from the Chairman of the Task and Finish Group, including the summary of recommendations**

As Chairman of the Ringway Jacobs Task and Finish Group, I am pleased to submit the following report and recommendations to the Cabinet Member. This paper is the end result of a really ambitious piece of work, with officers and members acting collaboratively to conduct a comprehensive and wide-ranging scrutiny exercise. Given the sensitivity of the subject matter, I think we can all be proud of the manner in which this investigation was conducted.



Being a 'critical friend' within a political environment is not always easy. I am really pleased with how members came together, leaving rosettes at the door to provide positive and constructive insight. As local representatives we are always uniquely placed to offer genuine challenge, but this particular exercise required us to draw beyond local experience, looking strategically at the system as a whole. I'd like to thank members for their knowledge and insight, but particularly for their positive engagement with this process. I think that it is clear from the recommendations that our determination has been rewarded with some really insightful and ambitious outcomes.

I am sure that members of the Task and Finish Group will join me in thanking officers for their time and commitment to this project. Collectively, we have learnt a great deal from this exercise. We are incredibly grateful for the hard work that Essex Highways and Essex County Council (ECC) staff have devoted to this project to ensure its success. We have benefitted from a great deal of expertise, knowledge and candour throughout this process and the report is stronger for it. We look forward to building on this open and ongoing dialogue as we move forward.

As local members we have a responsibility to ensure that the services offered by ECC are robust and ensure value for money. Providing an effective and efficient highways system will always be an unenviable task. Alongside task and finish colleagues, I feel strongly that by continuing to strengthen the relationship between members and highways and by building on the recommendations within this report, there is a great potential for scrutiny to truly add value.

I hope that the recommendations set out in this piece of work go some way to building on the good work already taking place and I look forward to working more closely in the future.

Thank you for your consideration. I commend this report to the Committees.

**Cllr Tony Ball**  
**Chair, Task and Finish Group**

## **Summary of recommendations**

### **Contract Re-procurement**

1. Members of the Task and Finish Group recommend to ECC Cabinet Member that the most sensible option is to renew the contract with Ringway Jacobs for five years, with the caveat that a number of changes are made to current arrangements. These are set out in the recommendations below in the following categories: ongoing scrutiny, maintenance, reporting of defects, customer services and communications and supply chain works.
2. Members still have serious concerns regarding the readiness of ECC to re-procure. Within three years, both Place Services and Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee and Corporate Policy and Scrutiny Committee need to be satisfied that ECC is in a secure position to re-procure, with a clear place for scrutiny factored into the timeline.

### **Ongoing Scrutiny**

3. A working group (hereafter referred to as the Ringway Jacobs and Essex Highways Working Group) should be established to facilitate an ongoing engagement with Ringway Jacobs and ECC Highways officers. This will continue the work of the Task and Finish Group, encouraging member-driven scrutiny looking at procurement, highways policy and overall contract performance. The Ringway Jacobs and Essex Highways Working Group should meet quarterly. A six-monthly update, presented by the Chairman of this Working Group, will be delivered to both scrutiny committees. The Group will be comprised equally of members from both the Place Services and Economic Growth and Corporate Policy and Scrutiny Committees and operated through current task and finish arrangements.
4. The annual review of Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) that are presented to the Cabinet Member should also be presented to the Place Services and Economic Growth Policy and Scrutiny Committee and the Corporate Policy and Scrutiny Committee for further review, with time to offer recommendations.
5. The Ringway Jacobs and Essex Highways Working Group will continue the benchmarking work of this committee, exploring the work of other highways authorities.
6. The Cabinet Member is to be commended for improvements in the quality of relationships between members and Ringway Jacobs officers. This is due, in large, to the success of the 'buddy system'. Member relationships with regards to local pieces of work however, could be improved. There should be a mechanism put in place for direct scrutiny of specific contract elements or pieces of work, even if this simply involves the local member being consulted upon request. This could be through an enhanced version of the 'buddy system' already in operation.

### **Maintenance**

7. The Cabinet Member should consider asking officers to review the risk matrix. As it stands, serious defects that might register significantly on the 'risk impact' scale, but only slightly on the 'risk probability' scale could potentially receive a less urgent timescale for repair than their impact would necessitate. This should be addressed. Members should be engaged through the Ringway Jacobs and Essex Highways Working Group to aid in the review and update of the risk register.
8. The Cabinet Member and officers should explore reviewing the current Maintenance Strategy (last updated in 2008) with a view to determining suitability of ECC's current policy priorities and is encouraged to make use of the Working Group. This should include a conversation around road classifications and priorities as well as the current criteria for defects to warrant repair.
9. Members noted with concern that particular KPI's outlining timescale requirements for street light repairs had been removed from the contract. Members ask that KPI A14 (average number of days taken to repair lighting faults within control of the Local Authority is reinstated.
10. Members should receive a more accurate indicative timetable for remedial works and larger schemes, with estimates on timescales provided for communication with local residents.
11. A specific KPI should be included within the contract for all work carried out by utility companies to be inspected before the two-year maintenance repair ends. This inspection should determine whether the work has been completed properly and to an agreeable standard.

### **Reporting of defects**

12. Officers and Members raised a number of concerns regarding the interaction between Ringway Jacobs and Essex Highways systems (Confirm/online reporting tool). This should be seen as a priority moving forward, to ensure a more effective, joined up service is offered in future.
13. The ease with which faults can be reported has a huge amount of impact on overall public perception of the highways service offered by ECC. Ringway Jacobs and ECC should learn from best practice in terms of fault reporting with a view to designing a more effective system. This should provide members of the public with more detailed information regarding the defect including an estimated timescale for repair. We are aware that work is already being undertaken to improve the online tools and the Working Group would welcome being involved in this moving forward.
14. All Members should receive quarterly drop-in and training opportunities on issues around reporting of defects, changes to the online tool, and follow up enquiries.

### **Customer Services and Communications**

15. It was noted by members that, while ECC and Ringway Jacobs are both excellent with regards to reactive communications, both need to work together to produce a more proactive communications agenda. Members of the Working Group gave considerable time investigating this area and would like to undertake further analysis as part of its future programme. Members understand that expectations need to be managed, but feel strongly that Ringway Jacobs should be measured on overall public perception through an additional KPI – the manner of which to be determined by the Cabinet and officers, with input from the Essex Highways Ringway Jacobs Working Group.
16. Members question the value of the National Highways Tracker (NHT) as an effective method of measuring satisfaction. Officers and Members should explore whether the NHT is fit for ECC, and whether an in-house alternative could potentially lead to greater ownership of results, more validity of feedback, and more control over the questions asked.
17. A single, clearer set of lines of responsibility for informing members of changes to roadworks and reported repairs be implemented which could be written into the Ringway Jacobs contract.

### **Supply Chain**

18. The Cabinet Member should consider the potential for ECC to employ or contract its own independent inspectors to assess the quality of works carried out by Ringway Jacobs parent companies, as well as the wider supply chain. This could be conducted as a sampling exercise, with a KPI associated to ensure that the quality of works remains consistent.
19. ECC needs to more closely oversee larger pieces of supply chain work. The Working Group should be more engaged moving forward and provided assurances as to the value for money and quality of work provided by third parties.
20. All third parties carrying out work on ECC's behalf should be branded accordingly, explicitly stating that the organisation is representing ECC. The quality and consistency of signage on Essex Highways works also needs to be greatly improved in terms of the information provided and the expected timescales outlined for completion.
21. The Cabinet Member should explore encouraging Ringway Jacobs to adopt an incentive-based scheme when procuring further works beyond those originally contracted. This could take the form of a ranked preference system as already in operation in authorities such as Hampshire County Council.
22. ECC should draw more on expertise from within the Supply Chain Forum, collectively determining solutions to local government pressures around efficiency and reputational damage. There needs to be a mechanism in place to ensure that these efficiencies are monitored and fed back into the supply chain. The Ringway Jacobs and Essex Highways Working Group should engage with these and the Chairman of the Ringway Jacobs and Essex

Highways Working Group should be invited to attend Supply Chain Forum meetings.

23. Ringway Jacobs is to be commended for its social value work and commitment to activities beyond those required through the contract, especially with regards to work carried out with the armed forces. ECC should be better at publicising this work. The Cabinet Member should encourage Ringway Jacobs to adopt more internal social value measures, and the working group are to be engaged to monitor the ongoing number of apprentices within Ringway Jacobs.

## **2. Background**

The aim of the group was to provide recommendations and feedback to be taken into account when ECC makes its decision as to whether or not the option of renewing the contract for a further five years is implemented.

### Membership

At the November 2018 meetings of the Corporate Policy and Scrutiny Committee and the Place Services and Economic Growth Committee, it was agreed that this item would be included in both work programmes moving forward and commence with immediate effect, a review of the current Ringway Jacobs highway maintenance contract and established a Task and Finish Group.

The full membership of the Task and Finish Group was as follows:

- Councillor Tony Ball, Wickford Crouch
- Councillor Jo Beavis, Halstead
- Councillor Michael Hardware, Harlow West
- Councillor Stephen Hillier, Pitsea
- Councillor David Kendall, Brentwood South
- Councillor Valerie Metcalfe, Buckhurst Hill and Loughton South
- Councillor John Moran, Saffron Walden
- Councillor Ron Pratt, Southminster
- Councillor Anne Turrell, Mile End and Highwoods
- Councillor Carole Weston, Rochford West.

At the initial scoping meeting on 17 December 2018, the group agreed Councillor Tony Ball would be the Chairman of the Task and Finish Group.

During this scoping meeting, the group identified four key areas they wished to explore further:

- KPI's
- Perception
- Quality of repairs
- Other authorities.

### Evidence base of the scrutiny review

A scoping document (Appendix 1) was agreed during a meeting of the Task and Finish Group on 17 December 2018. Evidence was sought from those identified in the scoping document and those listed below attended as witnesses:

Councillor Kevin Bentley	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Infrastructure
Councillor Lesley Wagland	Deputy Cabinet Member for Infrastructure
Andrew Cook	Director for Highways and Transportation
Peter Massie	Head of Essex Highways Commissioning
Laura Lee	Head of Procurement – Corporate and Place
David Forkin	Head of Maintenance and Operations
Diane Crix	Category and Supplier Relationship Specialist
Mark Godson	Head of Communications, Essex Highways

The Task and Finish Group are content that it has received views and contributions from relevant individuals to undertake this review. The contributions received are highlighted in the section below, which is presented together with recommendations for the Cabinet Member, Councillor Kevin Bentley, from whom the Task and Finish Group invites for a response.

### **3. Evidence and recommendations**

#### Key evidence

The Task and Finish Group held four formal meetings, during which officers presented and provided information based on the key lines of enquiry identified during the scoping meeting.

#### **Contract Re-procurement/extension**

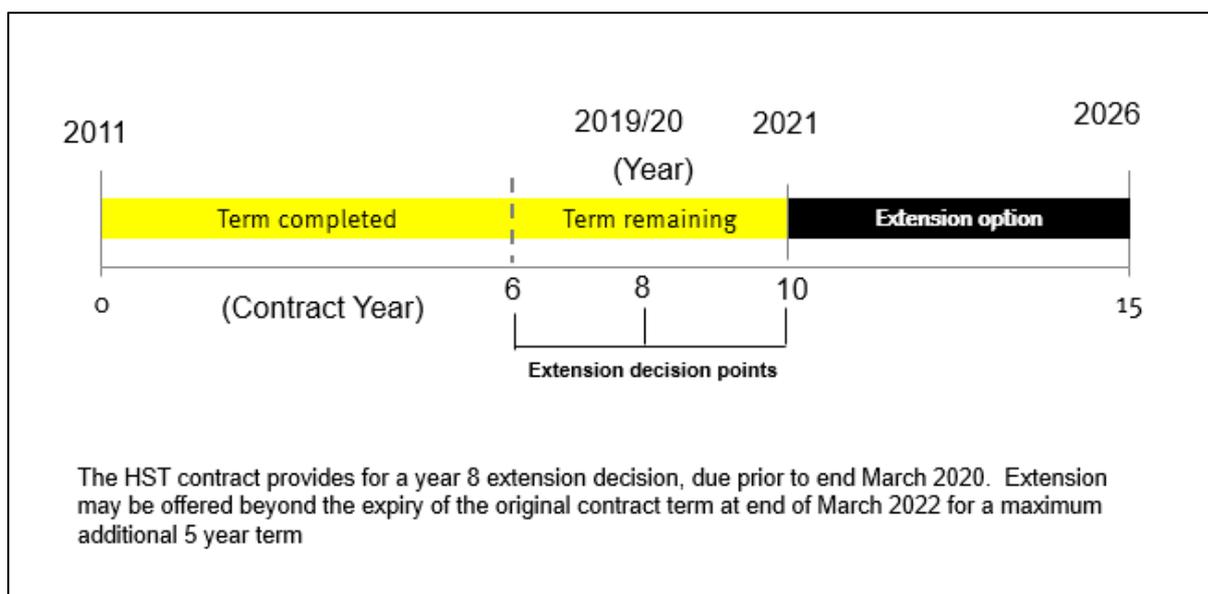
From the offset, Task and Finish Group members looked for clarity around the intentions of the Cabinet Member to re-procure, and the readiness for ECC to explore an alternative procurement strategy should the Task and Finish Group recommend it.

Officers provided guidance around how a re-procurement exercise might work, the potential options available to ECC moving forward and some background information to inform recommendations.

The current contract was procured in 2011 with ECC accumulating 13 previous contracts and awarding one overarching highways service contract to a wholly joint venture between Eurovia Ltd and Jacobs (Ringway Jacobs). This represents 50% of Ringway Jacobs's business. Annual spend on this service has varied between £78.7m and £154.7m (dependant on the priorities of ECC leadership at the time), split between capital and revenue. The contract is based on actual cost plus arrangements with a fixed percentage, and corporate overhead, also a fixed percentage, applied to transactions. When completing work through the supply chain as a provider, Ringway Jacobs and its parent companies will apply a joint profit value to ensure that profits are not duplicated and ECC is assured of value for money.

Activities covered by the contract include reactive repairs (footway and carriageway repairs), winter services, white lining, gulley maintenance, capital structure maintenance. Contract mechanisms incentivise performance with deductions for missed KPI's overspends and lost productivity. KPI performance for the last 3 years has been between 94-99%. Over £20m of efficiencies have been delivered since the start of the contract.

The contract timeline is set out in the chart below:



In terms of high level options moving forward, officers outlined five potential avenues for exploration. ECC could either:

- a. Extend the contract for five years with some changes to existing arrangements
- b. Extend the contract possibly not for the full five years with some changes to existing arrangements
- c. Re-procure with a different model
- d. Re-procure with the same model
- e. Extend for one year to allow more time to gather evidence, review options and make time for potential service transformation

Members formed a view that officers and the Cabinet Member displayed a preference for option A.

When explored further, Members were made aware of potential procurement timelines and the amount of work required for ECC to be in a secure position to undergo a complete re-procurement exercise or to explore alternative methods of managing the highways service (i.e. dynamic purchasing/procurement model, multiple contracts/providers or a new provider with a new contractual arrangement).

Members came to a view that it was clear through the activity already undertaken in preparation that extension was a foregone conclusion, rather than one of multiple options for potential exploration - some of which might offer a more dynamic and effective highways service. With this in mind, the Task and Finish

Group felt that there was little option other than to move forward with option A. There are, however, a number of areas with which members can envisage significant improvement if the steps outlined throughout this report are taken on board. This begins with a greater involvement of Scrutiny moving forward.

#### **Associated recommendations:**

1. Members of the Task and Finish Group recommend to Essex County Council's (ECC) Cabinet Member that the most sensible option is to renew the contract with Ringway Jacobs for five years, with the caveat that a number of changes are made to current arrangements. These are set out in the recommendations below in the following categories: ongoing scrutiny, maintenance, reporting of defects, customer services and communications and supply chain works.
2. Members still have serious concerns regarding the readiness of ECC to re-procure. Within three years, both Place Services and Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee and Corporate Policy and Scrutiny Committee need to be satisfied that ECC is in a secure position to re-procure, with a clear place for scrutiny factored into the timeline.

#### **Ongoing Scrutiny**

- Members agreed that, moving forward, a greater role for scrutiny should be factored into re-procurement conversations. It was noted that the work of the Task and Finish group had yielded a great amount of information, and opened avenues of inquiry far beyond what was possible with the timeframes allowed for this initial piece of work. It was agreed that continuing member input should take the form of a working group (hereafter referred to as the Ringway Jacobs/Essex Highways Working Group). This should be used as a means by which to facilitate an ongoing engagement with Ringway Jacobs and ECC Highways officers. This will continue the work of the task and finish group, encouraging member-driven scrutiny looking at procurement, highways policy and overall contract performance. The Task and Finish Group agreed that the Working Group should meet quarterly in order to properly cultivate a regular and meaningful dialogue with key stakeholders
- Members discussed the KPI process with officers and the method with which KPI's are reviewed annually, with some removed and some introduced. Officers advised that, prior to the start of each contract/financial year, a review exercise of performance against contract measures is undertaken by officers and the Cabinet Member where potential changes to measures and targets are explored. This is influenced by previous performance, changes in policy/procedures/legislation, new ways of working and value for money. Officers asserted that the collaborative contract allows for a more dynamic approach to KPI's, with both parties working constructively to ensure that expectations are both ambitious and fair

- Officers used the example of the KPI SC5/CP07. This relates to the percentage of public rights of way that are easy to use. In year one of the contract this was set at 75%. Due to re-evaluated funding for this particular area of focus, the KPI was reduced to reflect reductions in investment
- As can be seen below, in years two and three of the life of the contract the target dropped to 57% and in year 4 dropped further to 54%. In response to this, Ringway Jacobs proposed an updated methodology which would make the results of the survey against which the KPI was measured fairer – for example, if a fingerpost was missing from a route, only that section of the route ‘failed’ rather than the whole route, so 250m might fail, rather than the whole route of 1200m

### **SC5/CP07**

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7
75%	57%	57%	54%	56%	65%	65%

- Members agreed that it would be useful to involve scrutiny members more closely in the annual review process to ensure that KPI’s more accurately reflect local need
- Officers did note the cost implications of introducing new KPI’s. Any new contract expectations would have to be properly benchmarked and incentivised through new KPI arrangements. KPI’s that are not met at the end of the year result in a profit reduction for Ringway Jacobs
- KPI’s are set on annual basis and any changes are agreed and signed off by the relevant Cabinet Member. Those KPI’s that are not met are subject to an improvement plan. Some KPI’s are measured annually, with progress unknown until the new financial year begins
- After year three, the total number of KPI’s were streamlined as they were judged by ECC to overlap each other and/or were no longer relevant with regards to ECC’s strategic goals
- If any KPI’s remain red for two consecutive months, Ringway Jacobs must present an improvement plan to ECC showing how this will be rectified. This is reported to the Essex Highways board. The Cabinet Member is informed of such occurrences on a quarterly basis
- Members were quick to commend the Cabinet Member on the success of the ‘buddy system’ and the positive impact of this upon member relationships with Essex Highways. Similarly, members were impressed with the work currently taking place to open up the Local Highways Panels (LHPs) to greater public involvement. It was agreed that this represented a significant step in the right direction, albeit with considerable room for improvement in future. It was noted, however, that greater work could be

done to ensure that members are more directly informed of work in their local area, with access to new forms of scrutiny beyond formal committee work

- The Task and Finish Group were impressed with the extent of benchmarking work that has already taken place with regards to preparing ECC for future conversations around procurement and market alternatives. Members were left with the impression that they had only touched the surface of this particular strand of work and agreed that this could be an area for the working group to take forward
- Members noted that due to timescale associated with this piece of scrutiny work, they have not yet had the opportunity to engage in site visits to other local authorities, something which was identified as part of the scoping exercise undertaken at the beginning of this process. This is something the Ringway Jacobs and Essex Highways Working Group would consider as part of its work programme.

### **Associated Recommendations**

3. A working group (hereafter referred to as the Ringway Jacobs and Essex Highways Working Group) should be established to facilitate an ongoing engagement with Ringway Jacobs and ECC Highways officers. This will continue the work of the Task and Finish Group, encouraging member-driven scrutiny looking at procurement, highways policy and overall contract performance. The Ringway Jacobs and Essex Highways Working Group should meet quarterly. A six-monthly update, presented by the Chairman of this Working Group, will be delivered to both scrutiny committees. The Group will be comprised equally of members from both the Place Services and Economic Growth and Corporate Policy and Scrutiny Committees and operated through current task and finish arrangements.
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6. The Cabinet Member is to be commended for improvements in the quality of relationships between members and Ringway Jacobs officers. This is due, in large, to the success of the 'buddy system'. Member relationships with regards to local pieces of work however, could be improved. There should be a mechanism put in place for direct scrutiny of specific contract elements or pieces of work, even if this simply involves the local member being consulted upon request. This could be through an enhanced version of the 'buddy system' already in operation.

## Maintenance

- Officers noted that ECC employs a fairly expansive team of Highways Inspectors who monitor and inspect according to set patterns. They record and raise defects as and when they occur
- When carrying out an inspection officers record the defect, check the severity of impact and nature of the damage, the rate of interaction and then apply a risk assessment and timeline for completion of works
- The impact of the defect outlines the imminent threat of damage and the size/shape/depth of the defect and position in the road. Following questions, members were assured that this would take into account the size/width of the road – narrow roads would incur a higher impact score. Members were further assured as to the consistency of approach, allowing for a fair triaging of potentially hazardous defects across the county
- Members noted that it would be useful if the above table and allocated score were made available to the public at the time of triage, with updates available online upon enquiry. This would provide greater assurance as to the timescale of works involved. It was also noted that it would be useful if greater education around this were made available to members, allowing for more effective communication between local representatives and residents
- Members discussed the effectiveness of the ranking system altogether. It was noted that this was potentially outdated. Officers acknowledged that a pipeline of work could be developed to explore the feasibility of reviewing this system
- Officers noted emerging technologies to aid in effective early intervention strategies to improve the quality and expediency of repair work. This was described very much as a future prospect however. Officers were keen to assert that work with Ringway Jacobs allowed for greater opportunities for innovation and development due to the size of the organisation and the scope of Ringway Jacob's 'reach' and resources. This would reportedly not be an option if ECC explored multiple smaller contracts or chose to innovate using in-house resources
- Members also noted previous Task and Finish conversations around 'criteria' for repairs and discussed the potential for this also to be reviewed as part of ongoing conversations
- Officers reported that, if members were to see highways maintenance as a spectrum from asset based focus (ABF) to customer responsiveness we have tended to be more ABF. We are moving more to a compromise now under current leadership.

## Inspection regime

- The inspection regime is not set out in the contract, but KPI's around maintenance are. The criteria for intervention are owned by ECC as part of the maintenance strategy and ECC sets out the resource for repairs. If ECC sets out a more austere or strict funding model, then the contract KPI's will adjust to meet this. Greater integration of ECC and Ringway Jacobs staff has led to a more effective inspection/follow through process
- Essex Highways operates its own inspectors who will quality assure and inspect a random sampling of repairs per year. Last year, 213 spots were inspected with only 2 failures. On top of this, routine audits were carried out periodically as part of a desktop exercise to ensure quality
- Members discussed the importance of hiring internal ECC inspectors and the impact of this in relation to the nature of a 'collaborative' contract.

#### Maintenance of road signage and street furniture

- This rests in the same area of the KPI's as the rest of maintenance. However, the budget for signage maintenance is so strict that only 'safety critical' signage is replaced (i.e. a 'bend warning' sign would receive greater priority than basic direction signage)
- Members expressed frustration at the speed and quality of streetlight repairs. Officers discussed the grouping prioritisation formula Ringway Jacobs adopted to determine the timing of repairs.

#### 'Make safes'

- Members discussed the make safe process and temporary repairs. Officers outlined the timelines expected to ensure a permanent repair and outlined variances in relation to overall probability/impact score.

#### Relationships with local businesses

- The committee commended ECC on the quantity of work provided through the supply chain to local Essex small maintenance and engineering businesses. Quality of utilities works is price driven. When large companies carry out work they do so according to a budget and this often drives down the quality of final works. Smaller companies often carry out work to a superior quality at a more affordable price.

#### Utilities repairs

- Members discussed warranty arrangements when utilities organisations carry out work on Essex Highways. Members agreed that this was an area for further conversation.

#### Materials used in repair work

- Members discussed the potential for innovation in relation to repairs work carried out by Ringway Jacobs. This was discussed specifically in relation to innovations such as recycled plastic road patching

- Officers were keen to assert the importance of remaining cynical until breakthroughs are tested effectively and are assured as safe. That being said, a great amount of work is done to ensure that materials used are not outdated.

### Cyclists and walkers

- Members expressed frustration at the sole focus on carriageways. It was noted that greater esteem be given to footways and cycle paths:
  - Inspectors are trained to pick up on whether or not cyclists will be affected by defects. Greater innovation could include getting more immersed in swerve data (how often cars have to swerve to avoid cyclists). This is a work in progress
  - Overgrowth and vegetation on footpaths are not considered a 'priority' in the same way as other defects (potholes etc.) are under the current Maintenance Strategy
  - Officers were also asked about whether investing in data from Apps such as 'STRAVA' would help in data gathering. Officers were sceptical as to the worth of this.

### **Associated Recommendations**

7. The Cabinet Member should consider asking officers to review the risk matrix. As it stands, serious defects that might register significantly on the 'risk impact' scale, but only slightly on the 'risk probability' scale could potentially receive a less urgent timescale for repair than their impact would necessitate. This should be addressed. Members should be engaged through the Ringway Jacobs and Essex Highways Working Group to aid in the review and update of the risk register.
8. The Cabinet Member and officers should explore reviewing the current Maintenance Strategy (last updated in 2008) with a view to determining suitability of ECC's current policy priorities and is encouraged to make use of the Working Group. This should include a conversation around road classifications and priorities as well as the current criteria for defects to warrant repair.
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10. Members should receive a more accurate indicative timetable for remedial works and larger schemes, with estimates on timescales provided for communication with local residents.
11. A specific KPI should be included within the contract for all work carried out by utility companies to be inspected before the two-year maintenance repair ends. This inspection should determine whether the work has been completed properly and to an agreeable standard.

## Reporting of defects

- It was further noted that greater information was required as to the ratio of defects recording by the public and those recorded by Inspectors. This would allow for a greater understanding of resource allocation and sustainability of service, alongside investment in new detection technology solutions
- Members discussed with officers the efficiency of standard inspection techniques, led by Inspectors. Members asked whether it would be more effective to simply allow for a wholly customer led reporting system with all resources driven into maintenance. This was noted by officers, but it was agreed that to do so would not provide a wholly representative, impartial representation of defects and would not allow for effective triaging of repairs
- Members noted the discussion around reporting tools and agreed that this should be explored further at a later meeting.

## Associated Recommendations

12. Officers and Members raised a number of concerns regarding the interaction between Ringway Jacobs and Essex Highways systems (Confirm/online reporting tool). This should be seen as a priority moving forward, to ensure a more effective, joined up service is offered in future.
13. The ease with which faults can be reported has a huge amount of impact on overall public perception of the highways service offered by ECC. Ringway Jacobs and ECC should learn from best practice in terms of fault reporting with a view to designing a more effective system. This should provide members of the public with more detailed information regarding the defect including an estimated timescale for repair. We are aware that work is already being undertaken to improve the online tools and the Working Group would welcome being involved in this moving forward.
14. All Members should receive quarterly drop-in and training opportunities on issues around reporting of defects, changes to the online tool, and follow up enquiries.

## Customer Services and communication

- It was agreed that originally there was a real push and genuine logic behind prioritising major roads to improve quality. Now that these are in a good state of repair there was an acknowledgement from the Cabinet Member that a reprioritisation was necessary to focus on urban and rural roads. It was noted that this would go a long way to redressing perception imbalances within remote communities. The 2019/20 contract period would focus largely on local roads and footways

- When the contract was drawn up it was noted that an active decision was made to maintain control of communications. While no processes are currently in place it was claimed that the contract would allow for responsibility for communications to formally pass to Ringway Jacobs. Cllr Wagland asserted that this could go a long way to reducing current disconnects between Ringway Jacobs, ECC and members. Potentially a more joined up approach was necessary in the long term, with a joint responsibility for public facing communications would be more prolific
- Members were largely positive regarding the ‘buddy system’ – building on the good work of the previous local area offices approach and providing dedicated support. Largely however, members noted a distinct communications void between Ringway Jacobs, Essex Highways and members. It was noted that this would need to be addressed in order to cultivate a more effective partnership moving forward
- Members were largely positive about changes to local highways panels, making them more open and transparent. It was agreed that further work should be undertaken to open these to the public more effectively to reduce disconnect between Essex highways and the public. It was also noted that often the output from these in terms of reports were often not particularly accessible with regards to costings, staffing costs etc
- Members engaged in discussion around what processes were in place to inform them as local members, as well as members of the public regarding planned work and timescales. It was acknowledged that the ‘roadworks’ system is not particularly accessible/user friendly and is rarely up to date. Many members also raised concerns regarding the quality and depth of communications. There is rarely clarity around the scope of the repair (temporary/permanent), timings of work and potential delays
- Members noted the reputational damage to ECC when repairs go wrong. Members of the public do not distinguish between Ringway Jacobs and ECC. It was further noted that when distinctions are made, the conclusion drawn was almost always negative with members of the public assuming that all poor highways work was completed by Ringway Jacobs. This is simply not the case, witnesses claimed, with the vast majority of non ‘big-ticket’ works completed by subcontractors on behalf of, and managed by Ringway Jacobs. Members noted that Ringway Jacobs was ultimately responsible for poor works due to their project management and quality assurance role
- It was noted by witnesses that ECC systems are inadequate in accepting reports of issues and articulating the timing of work being carried out when notifying local residents
- Witnesses acknowledged that ECC had little control over external organisations and work being carried out on their behalf. It was agreed that more work could be done to liaise effectively with utility companies to

ensure that repairs were not delayed and problems were resolved effectively and expediently

- Witnesses noted that ECC had an excellent record disputing insurance claims. This was largely due to the holistic approach employed by the courts. So long as ECC can display that a reasonable level of routine maintenance is in place then it cannot be held liable for individual accidents related to highways disrepair
- Members noted that, while the buddy system works well, the frustration is with partners and external organisations. The site [www.roadworks.org](http://www.roadworks.org) is great but oftentimes is not effective or up to date. It is difficult to get the good news out there amongst the poor perception
- Members discussed the worth of investing large amounts of money in a communications campaign to improve the quality and quantity of material released to the public. It was noted that this would be a balancing act. To make any notable difference this would require a significant amount of money – which could arguably be better spent reinvesting into the system. It was agreed that this would be the subject of further investigation.

### **Associated Recommendations**

15. It was noted by members that, while ECC and Ringway Jacobs are both excellent with regards to reactive communications, both need to work together to produce a more proactive communications agenda. Members of the Working Group gave considerable time investigating this area and would like to undertake further analysis as part of its future programme. Members understand that expectations need to be managed, but feel strongly that Ringway Jacobs should be measured on overall public perception through an additional KPI – the manner of which to be determined by the Cabinet and officers, with input from the Essex Highways Ringway Jacobs Working Group.
16. Members question the value of the National Highways Tracker (NHT) as an effective method of measuring satisfaction. Officers and Members should explore whether the NHT is fit for ECC, and whether an in-house alternative could potentially lead to greater ownership of results, more validity of feedback, and more control over the questions asked.
17. A single, clearer set of lines of responsibility for informing members of changes to roadworks and reported repairs be implemented which could be written into the Ringway Jacobs contract.

### **Supply Chain**

- Not all highways work is undertaken by Ringway Jacobs. The majority of it is completed by supply chain partners. These pieces of work are awarded according to usual ECC tendering processes

- Essex Highways monitor the quality of works carried out by the supply chain. If a defect is identified within the first year, Essex Highways would repair it
- Some contractors offer financial compensation instead of repairing the defect(s). If they do repair it, no cost is born by ECC or Essex Highways
- Independent inspectors - The inspection regime is not set out in the contract but KPI's around maintenance are. The criteria for intervention is owned by ECC as part of the Maintenance Strategy and ECC sets out the resource for repairs. If ECC sets out a more austere or strict funding model, then the contract KPI's will adjust to meet this. Greater integration of ECC and Ringway Jacobs staff has led to a more effective inspection/follow through process
- Members discussed the importance of hiring internal ECC inspectors and the impact of this in a 'collaborative' contractual environment
- Members of the task and finish group discussed the potential for the working group to be more involved when it comes to larger pieces of work. It was agreed that greater scrutiny and oversight could help to ensure value for money and quality of works completed
- The Task and Finish Group received evidence around the quarterly Ringway Jacobs Supply Chain Forum. Members were interested to hear of the outcomes of meetings that had taken place throughout 2018/19. Around 70 delegates from the national Ringway Jacobs supply chain attend, representing hundreds of millions of pounds of annual work. Here, they receive corporate training and receive presentations on issues such as H&S, Social Value, Work Programmes, Supply Portal; Processes e.g. finance Road Safety, Technology, and Environment. ECC currently attends and presents where it is seen as appropriate. Delegates also take part in 'efficiency workshops' to help determine more effective and joined up ways of working. Suggestions have previously included:
  - Longer contracts – at least four years, continuity of work.
  - Better scheduling – by areas, even level of work
  - Utilise local resource
  - Better communication and early engagement at all stages including upfront on task, design, pre site investigation, specification review
  - Sponsorship (road names, roundabouts)
  - 1% of turnover into a community fund for a local community project throughout the year
  - Micro-LED in depots. Possible for works too
  - Different contract option, i.e. SOR based rather than Target Cost or Fixed Cost
  - Greater collaborative work: - Learning lessons, closer working with supply specialism, and better use of surplus material.

- Members agreed that it would be beneficial for ECC to draw more on the expertise within through the Supply Chain Forum, collectively determining solutions to local government pressures around efficiency and reputational damage.

### **Associated recommendations**

18. The Cabinet Member should consider the potential for ECC to employ or contract its own independent inspectors to assess the quality of works carried out by Ringway Jacobs parent companies, as well as the wider supply chain. This could be conducted as a sampling exercise, with a KPI associated to ensure that the quality of works remains consistent.
19. ECC needs to more closely oversee larger pieces of supply chain work. The Working Group should be more engaged moving forward and provided assurances as to the value for money and quality of work provided by third parties.
20. All third parties carrying out work on ECC's behalf should be branded accordingly, explicitly stating that the organisation is representing ECC. The quality and consistency of signage on Essex Highways works also needs to be greatly improved in terms of the information provided and the expected timescales outlined for completion.
21. The Cabinet Member should explore encouraging Ringway Jacobs to adopt an incentive-based scheme when procuring further works beyond those originally contracted. This could take the form of a ranked preference system as already in operation in authorities such as Hampshire County Council.
22. ECC should draw more on expertise from within the Supply Chain Forum, collectively determining solutions to local government pressures around efficiency and reputational damage. There needs to be a mechanism in place to ensure that these efficiencies are monitored and fed back into the supply chain. The Ringway Jacobs and Essex Highways Working Group should engage with these and the Chairman of the Ringway Jacobs and Essex Highways Working Group should be invited to attend Supply Chain Forum meetings.
23. Ringway Jacobs is to be commended for its social value work and commitment to activities beyond those required through the contract, especially with regards to work carried out with the armed forces. ECC should be better at publicising this work. The Cabinet Member should encourage Ringway Jacobs to adopt more internal social value measures, and the working group are to be engaged to monitor the ongoing number of apprentices within Ringway Jacobs.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1

<b>Essex County Council Place Services and Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee and the Corporate Policy and Scrutiny Committee</b>
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<b>WHAT ARE WE LOOKING AT?</b>
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<b>Review Topic</b>	Ringway Jacobs contract renewal
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<b>Type of Review</b>	Joint Task and Finish Group
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<b>WHY ARE WE LOOKING AT THIS?</b>
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<b>Rationale for the Review</b>	Following agreement from the Chairman of the Place Services and Economic Growth Policy and Scrutiny Committee and Corporate Policy and Scrutiny Committee, a joint Task and Finish group has been established to investigate renewal of the Ringway Jacobs highways maintenance contract.
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<b>HOW LONG IS IT GOING TO TAKE?</b>
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<b>Timescales</b>	Four month review with final report submitted to a joint committee (with members from both Place Services and Economic Growth Policy and Scrutiny Committee and Corporate Policy and Scrutiny Committee) for approval on the 18 April 2019.
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<b>Provisional Timetable</b>	17 December 2018 – 18 April 2019
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<b>WHAT INFORMATION DO WE NEED?</b>
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<b>Aim</b>	The aim of this piece of work is to review current highways contractual performance and to make recommendations to the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Infrastructure ahead of renewal with Ringway Jacobs in November 2019.
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**Key Lines of Enquiry**

KPI's

- The reason for the reduction in the amount of KPI's set (115 down to 56)
- An explanation of what the percentages mean and how they relate to performance (Appendix A)
- KPI's (Appendix A) changed to a RAG grading so it shows which targets are/are not currently being met
- An explanation around KPI's MI1 – MI3
- Investigate whether extreme weather has affected performance
- Understand the mechanisms in place to ensure that KPI's are adaptive to changing needs and circumstances
- Explore whether any further KPI's are required

Other Authorities

- Explore how similar sized local authorities manage their highway maintenance contract – Kent County Council
- Explore whether other authorities who use Ringway Jacobs are satisfied with the service they are receiving – Central Bedfordshire, Cheshire East, London Highways Alliance
- Identify the changes that Cheshire East made to their contract Ringway Jacobs

Quality of repairs

- Explore the detail behind the repairing defects at the first attempt
- An explanation on the definition of a temporary repair
- Explore the new/different ways of repairing highway defects
- Explore the focus of repairs i.e. local roads, footpaths etc
- Impact extreme hot and cold weather has on operations
- Explanation of the fault repair process from reporting/identification through to inspection and rectification, including timescales and risk assessment process

Perception

- Explore the differences between public perception of how the contract is performing against ECC's/Ringway Jacobs perception

General

- The Essex contract makes up 50% of Ringway Jacobs business. What does the other 50% include?
- Is there a communications strategy included in the contract?
- An explanation from the Cabinet Member on the current highway maintenance focus (local roads, footpaths)
- An explanation on the current inspection regime
- Explore whether the current partnership driven contractual arrangements preferable to a more traditional, adversarial contract
- Explore whether there is anything specific the Cabinet Member wishes the Task and Finish Group to explore

<b>What primary/new evidence is needed?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The current Ringway Jacobs contract</li> <li>- The current KPI's within this contract</li> <li>- ECC press releases</li> </ul>
<b>What secondary/ existing information is needed?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Information on the types of enquiries received from Members, MP's and members of the public relating to highways (Member Enquiries, Customer Enquiries)</li> <li>- The types of queries reported via the online Tell Us About Something tool</li> </ul>
<b>What briefings and site visits might be relevant?</b>	Members were interested to see how highway maintenance repairs were carried out
<b>Other work being undertaken/Relevant Corporate Links</b>	None.
<b>What is inside the scope of the review?</b>	All aspects relating to highway maintenance in line with the current Ringway Jacobs contract.
<b>What is outside the scope of the review?</b>	Passenger Transport – unless it pertains specifically to interactions with wider highways planning.

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

<b>Relevant Portfolio Holder(s) and other Member involvement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Councillor Kevin Bentley, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Infrastructure</li> <li>- Councillor Lesley Wagland, Deputy to the Cabinet Member for Kevin Bentley</li> </ul>
<b>Key ECC Officers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Andrew Cook, Director Highways and Transportation</li> <li>- Peter Massie, Head of Commissioning Essex Highways</li> <li>- Laura Lee, Category and Supplier Lead</li> </ul>
<b>Partners and service users</b>	County Authorities who also use Ringway Jacobs (Buckinghamshire, Central Bedfordshire, Cheshire East and London Highways Alliance.)

**WHAT RESOURCES DO WE NEED?**

<b>Lead Member and Membership</b>	<p>Councillor Stephen Hillier  Councillor David Kendall  Councillor Jo Beavis  Councillor Valerie Metcalfe  Councillor Michael Hardware  Councillor John Moran  Councillor Ron Pratt  Councillor Anne Turrell  Councillor Carole Weston  Councillor Tony Ball (Lead Member)</p>
<b>Co-optees (if any)</b>	None.

<b>Lead Scrutiny Officer/Other</b>	Richard Buttress, Democratic Services Manager Peter Randall, Senior Democratic Services Officer
<b>Expected Member commitment</b>	A maximum of 7 meetings to be held between December 2018 and April 2019, as set out below.
<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>	
<b>WHAT WILL BE REQUIRED FROM STAKEHOLDERS?</b>	
<b>Internal stakeholders</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time to attend Task and Finish Group evidence sessions</li> <li>• Information and advice</li> <li>• Communications for any potential press release following the review</li> <li>• Legal/contractual advice</li> </ul>
<b>External stakeholders</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time to attend Task and Finish Group evidence sessions</li> <li>• Written evidence</li> </ul>
<b>WHO ARE WE DIRECTING ANY RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS TO?</b>	
<b>Recommendations to</b> (key decision makers):	Councillor Kevin Bentley, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Infrastructure
<b>Reporting arrangements</b>	Task and Finish Group final report to be presented to the full joint Committee for a response from the relevant Cabinet Member on Thursday 18 April 2019.
<b>Follow-up arrangements</b>	<p>The final report should be responded to by the cabinet member in the usual way, as set out in the 'Protocol for Working Arrangements Between the Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committees' as agreed at Full Council in October 2013.</p> <p>A follow up item will be scheduled for each committee separately in October 2019 to review uptake of, and progress against agreed recommendations.</p>
<b>ADDITIONAL INFORMATION/NOTES</b>	

<b>Meeting dates</b>	<p><u>January 2019</u> Monday 14 January 2019 Monday 21 January 2019</p> <p><u>February 2019</u> Monday 11 February 2019 Monday 18 February 2019</p> <p><u>March 2019</u> Monday 11 March 2019 Monday 18 March 2019</p> <p><u>April 2019</u> Monday 1 April 2019 Monday 8 April 2019</p>
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