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## **Minutes of the meeting of the Place Services and Economic Growth Policy and Scrutiny Committee, that was held in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Chelmsford on Thursday, 23 September 2021**

[A YouTube recording of the meeting is to be found online.](#)

### **Present:**

#### **Members:**

Councillor A Goggin	Chairman
Councillor P Honeywood	
Councillor D Land	
Councillor R Moore	
Councillor L Scordis	
Councillor L Shaw	
Councillor M Skeels	
Councillor M Steel	
Councillor M Vance	
Councillor M Mackrory	Substitute

#### **ECC Officers:**

Justin Long	Senior Democratic Services Officer (clerk to the meeting)
Lisa Siggins	Democratic Services Officer
Michael Hayes	Democratic Services Assistant

#### **Also present were:**

Vicky Presland, Head of Design Services, Essex Highways  
David Gollop, Design Manager, Essex Highways  
Councillor L Scott, Cabinet Member for Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport.

### **1. Membership, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest**

The report on Membership, Apologies and Declarations was received, and it was noted that:

1. The membership of the Place Services and Economic Growth Policy and Scrutiny Committee was as shown in the report.
2. Apologies had been received from Councillors Cannell and Whitbread. Councillor Mackrory substituted for Councillor Cannell.
3. No Declarations of interests were made.

The Chairman, Councillor Goggin, reminded members that any interests must be declared during the meeting if the need to do so arose.

## **2. Minutes and Matters Arising**

The minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 22 July 2021 were approved as a correct record and would be signed by the Chairman.

It was agreed that the response to the question on drop-kerb policy would be re-circulated.

## **3. Appointment of Vice-Chairman**

It having been moved by Councillor Goggin and seconded by Councillor Shaw, and there being no other nominations it was

Resolved:

That Councillor Blackwell be appointed as the second Vice-Chairman of the Committee.

## **4. Questions from the Public**

It was noted that no questions had been received from the public.

## **5. Local Highway Panels**

Councillor Scott, the Cabinet Member for Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport, introduced the item, and the Committee then received a presentation from Vicky Presland, Head of Design Services, Essex Highways supported by David Gollop, Design Manager, Essex Highways. The presentation included an overview of the functions and budgets of Local Highway Panels (LHPs), the key challenges being faced, and plans for their future direction. The full presentation can be found [here](#).

Following the presentation, members were invited to ask questions and provide comment. Key points raised during this discussion included:

- Councillor Scott thanked the team for its outstanding work, and outlined the growing importance of flooding-related issues in the county;
- Members were generally supportive of the idea that LHP initiatives should link to the goals of the 'Safer, Greener, Healthier' agenda;
- The review of LHPs would consider the criteria for schemes and the importance of speed-reduction initiatives to local residents;
- There was a need (where appropriate) for greater promotion and public engagement in the work and goals of LHPs, but alongside this members had a responsibility to manage the expectation of residents;

- Further information would be provided to members on the £5million budget reduction (which it was noted would not directly affect LHPs' spending);
- The LHPs were generally focused on smaller low-cost cycling and walking schemes e.g., signage and drop-kerbs (larger schemes were being funded by the Active Travel Fund);
- Working with Parish Councils was crucial, and it was confirmed that Parish Councils were being given support and information following the devolution of the VAS (Vehicle Activated Signs) process. In relation to this, it was agreed that members would be provided with more information on the responsibility for utility searches;
- It was felt by some members that the additional £200,000 highlighted for 2021/22 should have been spent on a pro-rata basis;
- Councillor Scott was lobbying the Government on an ongoing basis on a range of highways-related issues;
- Enforcement of highways and flooding-related matters was crucial. Councillor Scott had requested the recruitment of additional officers and was liaising with the police on issues such as speeding;
- To address staffing issues, there was a focus on staff-retention and new apprentices had been taken on. Ringway Jacobs was a member of 'The 5% Club' (5% of its UK workforce made up of young people on structured training such as Apprenticeship and Graduate schemes);
- Officers would be updating the Terms of Reference for LHPs and would consider the balance between virtual and in-person meetings;
- Concerns were raised about the cost and timescale for schemes. It was reported that work had been done to drive-down costs, and further work was underway on timescales;
- An online mapping of LHP schemes would be launched shortly and officers would liaise with members on the detail.

Following the questions, it was agreed that subject to scoping document, a policy and scrutiny review should be carried out on the future direction of LHPs. Volunteers were sought for the proposed Task and Finish Group, which would be chaired by Councillor Shaw.

*Councillor Mackrory left the meeting at this point.*

## **6. Work Programme**

The report was noted, and members were encouraged to submit topic suggestions. It was confirmed that a further update would be presented to the Committee for consideration at its 28 October 2021 meeting.

**7. Date of Next Meeting**

The Committee noted that the next scheduled meeting would be held on Thursday 28 October 2021 at 10.30am at County Hall.

**8. Urgent Business**

No items were raised.

**Chairman**