



Essex County Council

Place Services and Economic Growth Policy and Scrutiny Committee

10:30	Thursday, 24 March 2022	Council Chamber County Hall, Chelmsford, CM1 1QH
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For information about the meeting please ask for:

Justin Long, Senior Democratic Services Officer

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Email: democratic.services@essex.gov.uk

Essex County Council and Committees Information

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Pages

*	Members of the Corporate Policy and Scrutiny Committee have also been invited to attend and participate in the discussion on agenda item 5.	
1	Membership, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest	5 - 5
2	Minutes:20 January 2022 To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 20 January 2022.	6 - 10

- 3 Questions from the Public**
A period of up to 15 minutes will be allowed for members of the public to ask questions or make representations on any item on the agenda for this meeting. No statement or question shall be longer than three minutes and speakers will be timed.
- If you would like to ask a question at this meeting, please email [Democratic Services](#) by 12 noon the day before (Wednesday 23 March).
- 4 Work Programme** **11 - 16**
To receive an update (**PSEG/07/22**) on the current Committee Work Programme.
- 5 Economic Renewal Investment Fund (ERIF)** **17 - 32**
To receive a report (**PSEG/08/22**) and presentation from Councillor Whitbread, Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Corporate Affairs and Tina French, Head of Finance Commercial Insight.
- 6 Bus Service Improvement Plan** **33 - 36**
To receive a report (**PSEG/09/22**) from Councillor Scott, Cabinet Member for Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport and Helen Morris, Head of Integrated Public Transport Unit (IPTU).
- 7 Local Highways Panel Task and Finish Group** **37 - 82**
To consider a report (**PSEG/10/22**) and presentation from Councillor Steel, Chairman of the Task and Finish Group and Justin Long, Senior Democratic Services Officer.
- 8 Date of Next Meeting**
To note that the next meeting will be held on Thursday 21 April at County Hall.
- 9 Urgent Business**
To consider any matter which in the opinion of the Chairman should be considered in public by reason of special circumstances (to be specified) as a matter of urgency.

Exempt Items

(During consideration of these items the meeting is not likely to be open to the press and public)

The following items of business have not been published on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information falling within Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. Members are asked to consider whether or not the

press and public should be excluded during the consideration of these items. If so it will be necessary for the meeting to pass a formal resolution:

That the press and public are excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the remaining items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information falling within Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, the specific paragraph(s) of Schedule 12A engaged being set out in the report or appendix relating to that item of business.

10 Urgent Exempt Business

To consider in private any other matter which in the opinion of the Chairman should be considered by reason of special circumstances (to be specified) as a matter of urgency.

Agenda item 1

Committee: Place Services and Economic Growth Policy and Scrutiny Committee

Enquiries to: Justin Long, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Membership, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest

Recommendations:

To note

1. Membership as shown below
2. Apologies and substitutions
3. Declarations of interest to be made by Members in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct

Membership

(Quorum: 5)

Councillor A Goggin	Chairman
Councillor D Blackwell	Vice-Chairman
Councillor S Crow	
Councillor P Honeywood	
Councillor D Land	
Councillor R Moore	
Councillor L Scordis	
Councillor L Shaw	Vice-Chairman
Councillor M Skeels	
Councillor M Steel	
Councillor M Stephenson	
Councillor M Vance	
Councillor H Whitbread	
Liberal Democrat	Position to be filled

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, 20 January 2022

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

Present:

Members:

Councillor A Goggin	Chairman
Councillor D Blackwell	Vice-Chairman
Councillor P Honeywood	
Councillor D Land	
Councillor R Moore	
Councillor L Shaw	Vice-Chairman
Councillor M Skeels	
Councillor M Steel	
Councillor M Vance	
Councillor H Whitbread	
Councillor J Deakin	

Officers:

Clare Perkins	Business Intelligence Partner
Samantha Kennedy	Director, Environment and Climate Action
Justin Long	Senior Democratic Services Officer (clerk to the meeting)
Lisa Siggins	Democratic Services Officer
Jasmin-Harley Carswell	Democratic Services Officer

Also in attendance were:

Councillor L Scott, Cabinet Member for Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport
Councillor P Schwier, Climate Tsar

Welcome and Introduction

Councillor Goggin, the Chairman of the Place Services and Economic Growth Policy and Scrutiny Committee, welcomed those in attendance. He noted that the meeting was taking place under the rules of social distancing, and that if anyone moved from their seat, they should wear a facemask.

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 Councillor Stephenson. Councillor Deakin was filling the vacancy on the Committee.
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

Subject to a minor amendment, the Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 10 January 2022 were approved as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

3. Questions from the Public

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

4. Work Programme

The current Work Programme was noted.

It was reported that the item on 'Culture and the Arts' originally scheduled for 17 February would go to the 21 April meeting, and that a quarterly update on 'Highways Maintenance' had been added to the Work Programme.

Councillor Steel, the Chairman of the LHP Task and Finish Group, provided a short overview on the work of the Group.

A further update on the Work Programme would be presented to the Committee for consideration at its next meeting.

5. Cabinet Member Update – Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport Performance Measures

The Cabinet Member gave a verbal update to the Committee on the performance measures on coastal paths, flooding, EV take-up and charging points, and encouraging a modal shift from cars to bus/bike/foot.

It was reported that a summit with bus companies to discuss key issues had been arranged for 9 February 2022. The Cabinet Member also reported that commercial opportunities were being considered to deliver EV charging points including partnership work with car manufacturers.

Following the update, members were invited to ask questions and provide comment.

Key points raised during this discussion included:

- EV charging points should be installed at County Hall and EV options for the Council's own fleet were being considered;
- The Cabinet Member wanted 'as many charging points as possible' and anticipated they could be delivered through a combination of initiatives by local authorities, central government and car manufactures;
- Active Travel schemes (such as the 'Essex Pedal Power' initiative in Clacton and Jaywick Sands) were a way to deliver the 'Levelling-Up' agenda;
- In response to concerns over surface water flooding, the Cabinet Member reported that partnership work was ongoing with water companies, a jetting programme (to clear gullies and drains) was in place, and there were proposals to work with local planning authorities to ensure builders and developers take responsibility for any issues they may cause;
- The Cabinet Member would come back to the Committee to provide an update on surface water flooding and the partnership work with water companies on tackling unforeseen issues;
- The Business Intelligence Partner clarified that Everyone's Essex contained both contextual performance measures (high-level and cross-function/organisation) and strategic measures (linked to overarching measures, but more directly related to ECC activity);
- A written update would be provided on the LED streetlight rollout including the delivery time of the overall programme, a breakdown of work by division, costs, and estimated carbon savings;
- A written update would be provided on the partnership work with Greater Anglia in the light of recent timetable changes;
- Additional Enforcement Officers were being recruited to help with a range of matters;
- Reliability of buses was a key issue and it was hoped that this would improve as staff absence due to self-isolation reduced. The issue of faulty bus stop displays would be addressed at the aforementioned Bus Summit;
- The Cabinet Member reported on the recent procurement process for the Home to School Transport service. He confirmed that 75% of vehicles used already met the Euro 6 emission standard and he would consider how to mandate higher environment standards in future contracts.

6. Climate Change Update

The Climate Tsar and the Director, Environment and Climate Action gave a presentation on the Essex Climate Action Plan. The presentation can be found [here](#).

Following the presentation, members were invited to ask questions and provide comment.

Key points raised during this discussion included:

- A detailed property plan was being developed by officers in regard to the target to make the Council's own estate net-zero carbon by 2030;
- An online residents pack would be launched in the next few weeks giving practical advice and guidance on issues such as home insulation and PV panels. It was agreed that a copy of the pack would be shared with the Committee;
- A written answer would be provided on the indicative costs of delivering a net-zero carbon building, such as the Swayne Park School in Rayleigh;
- Further information would be provided on the carbon reduction plans of other county councils and how they compare to Essex;
- Transport was the biggest contributor to emissions in Essex (and across the UK), and it was noted that initial evidence suggested that the increase in home-working had resulted in a net fall in emissions;
- Further information would be provided on the extent to which the Essex Pension Fund had disinvested its holdings in 'fossil fuel' companies;
- Further information would also be provided on the measures bus companies were taking to contribute to net-zero targets as well as on the bus companies' ability to cancel routes without public consultation;
- The Warm Homes Fund was available to help support lower-income homeowners and landlords (with tenants on lower-incomes) to insulate homes;
- It was agreed that the Climate Tsar and officers would put in writing their 3 to 5 priorities for the next six months, and would come back to the Committee in the summer to provide an update on these.

7. Date of Next Meeting

The committee noted that the next meeting of the Committee would take place on Thursday 17 February at County Hall.

8. Urgent Business

No items were raised.

Chairman

Work Programme

Agenda Item 4

Reference Number: PSEG/07/22

Report title: Work Programme	
Report to: Place Services and Economic Growth Policy and Scrutiny Committee	
Report author: Justin Long, Senior Democratic Services Officer	
Date: 24 March 2022	For: Discussion
Enquiries to: Justin Long, Senior Democratic Services Officer at justin.long@essex.gov.uk.	
County Divisions affected: Not applicable	

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The work programme is a standard agenda item.

2. Action required

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to consider the work programme in the Appendix and suggest any additional items.

3. Background

3.1 Developing a work programme

Work has continued on identifying priorities and future agenda items. This has included discussions with Committee Members, Cabinet Members and Officers as well as the other Policy and Scrutiny Committees.

This work has reflected the adoption of the *Everyone's Essex – Our Plan for Levelling Up the County: 2021-2025* organisation strategy at Council on 12 October 2021.

The current work programme is attached in the **Appendix**.

4. Everyone's Essex

The Committee should take account of the *Everyone's Essex – Our Plan for Levelling Up the County: 2021-2025* strategy when considering the work programme and future items.

Particular attention should be paid to the strategic ambitions (and associated commitments and performance measures) most relevant to the work of the Committee: 'Strong, Inclusive and Sustainable Economy', and 'High Quality Environment'.

Work Programme

5. Update and Next Steps

See Appendix.

6. Appendix – Current work programme

PSEG Work Programme (March 2022)

Provisional Dates (2022)	Topic Title	Lead Contact / Cabinet Member	Purpose and Target Outcomes	Relevance to Scrutiny Theme (where applicable)	Cross-Committee Work Identified (where applicable)
24 March	Bus Service Improvement Plan	Councillor Scott, Cabinet Member for Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport, Helen Morris, Head of ITPU	Six-month update on the implementation of the Bus Service Improvement Plan	Scrutiny of the Corporate Strategy (modal shift from cars to bus/bike/foot) and Climate Change	Link to the performance monitoring work of the Corporate Policy and Scrutiny Committee (CPSC)
24 March	Local Highway Panels – Task and Finish Group	Councillor Steel, Chairman of the Task and Finish Group / Justin Long Senior Democratic Services Officer	To consider the final report and recommendations from the Task and Finish Group		
24 March	Economic Renewal Investment Fund	Councillor Whitbread, Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Corporate Affairs	To consider the draft proposals and make any recommendations to The Cabinet	Scrutiny of the Corporate Strategy	<i>Joint session held by PSEG with CPSC attendance</i>
21 April	Culture and the Arts	Councillor Butland, Cabinet Member for Devolution, the Arts, Heritage and Culture	To consider plans to support the arts and culture in Essex		

PSEG Work Programme (March 2022)

21 April	Country Parks	Councillor Butland, Cabinet Member for Devolution, the Arts, Heritage and Culture, Samantha Kennedy, Director Environment and Climate Action	To consider the activity, performance, and strategic direction of the Country Parks service	Scrutiny of the Corporate Strategy (High Quality Environment)	Consider any links to Active Essex/People and Families (PAF) Policy and Scrutiny Committee/Health
TBC	Highways Maintenance Update	Councillor Scott, Cabinet Member for Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport	To receive a quarterly performance report on Highways Maintenance including the latest budget situation		Link to the performance/budget monitoring work of the CPSC
TBC	Climate Change Update	Sam Kennedy, Director, Environment and Climate Action / Councillor Peter Schwier, Climate Tsar	To receive an update on Climate Change work across ECC and response to Essex Climate Action Commission	Climate Change	Link to the performance monitoring work of the CPSC
TBC	Minerals Local Plan Update	Richard Greaves, Chief Planning Officer/ Cllr Wagland, Cabinet Member for Economic Renewal, Infrastructure and Planning	To consider the latest developments with the Minerals Local Plan including feedback on the public consultation and 'call for sites' engagement		

PSEG Work Programme (March 2022)

TBC	Essex Enhanced Partnership	Councillor Scott, Cabinet Member for Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport, Helen Morris, Head of ITPU	To consider the Essex Enhanced Bus Partnership	Scrutiny of the Corporate Strategy (modal shift from cars into bus/bike/foot) and Climate Change	Link to the performance monitoring work of the CPSC
TBC	Surface Water Flooding / Partnership work with Water Companies	Councillor Scott, Cabinet Member for Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport	To provide an update following a request at the meeting on 20 January 2022		
TBC	Freeport East	Councillor Wagland, Cabinet Member for Economic Renewal, Infrastructure and Planning	To consider the proposals and specifically the governance arrangements		Possible joint session with CPSC
TBC	Local Highway Panels – Task and Finish Group	Councillor Steel, Chairman of the Task and Finish Group / Justin Long Senior Democratic Services Officer	To receive a response to the recommendations from the Cabinet Member for Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport		

PSEG Work Programme (March 2022)

Task and Finish Groups

Local Highway Panels – meetings in November 2021 to February 2022 with final report and recommendations to be considered at 24 March meeting.

Report title: Economic Renewal Investment Fund (ERIF)	
Report to: Place Services and Economic Growth Policy and Scrutiny Committee	
Report author: Tina French, Head of Finance Commercial Insight	
Date: 24 March 2022	For: Discussion
Enquiries to: Tina French, Head of Finance Commercial Insight tina.french@essex.gov.uk	
County Divisions affected: All Essex	

1. Introduction

Attached as an Appendix is a presentation on the proposal for an Economic Renewal Investment Fund (ERIF).

2. Action Required

The Committee is asked to consider the proposals and provide feedback as necessary.

3. List of Appendices

Presentation: Economic Renewal Investment Fund (ERIF)

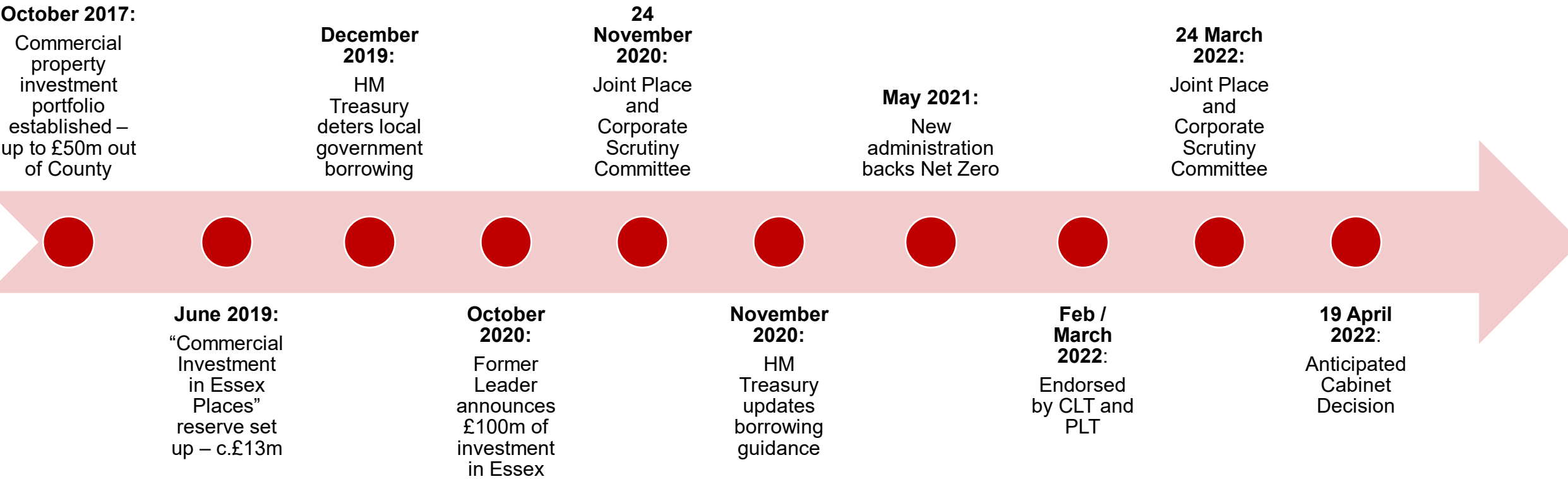
Please note: the item is being considered by both members of the Place Services and Economic Growth Policy and Scrutiny Committee and the Corporate Policy and Scrutiny Committee as the topic crosses the remit of the two committees.



ECC Economic Renewal Investment Fund (ERIF)

Joint Place and Corporate Scrutiny – 24 March 2022

The story so far...



When we last met...

Joint Place and Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 24 November 2020

- Welcomed the shift to investment **within the County**
- Supported a focus on economic, social and environmental **benefits for residents and businesses** – and communication of these
- Requested a good balance between **internal capacity and capability / independent specialist expertise**
- Urged **openness and transparency** of decisions and performance (incl. revaluations)
- Requested more information on balance of **risk and reward** relative to private sector
- Raised concerns around application of **PWLB borrowing guidance**

What is the Economic Renewal Investment Fund (ERIF)?

*Essex County Council's **Economic Renewal Investment Fund (ERIF)** will support its commitment to good jobs, future growth and investment, green growth and levelling up the economy.*

*Over the next 20 years, the Fund aims to **invest over £100m**, support **1,000 jobs**, and add **£200m** to the Essex economy.*

*It will do this through **land and property projects** that the market wouldn't deliver – or, may not deliver to such **high standards**.*









*All new build projects will be expected to deliver **net zero carbon in operation**.*

*The Fund will access the Council's 'Commercial Investment in Essex Places' reserve, as well as securing **central government grant funding**, attracting **private sector funding** and revolving **its own rental income and capital receipts**.*

*It will have a **catalytic impact beyond the projects** that it supports directly, by building **confidence in Essex places and markets**.*

Delivering Everyone's Essex

Strategic Fit assessed using eight Economic Renewal priorities...

Strong Inclusive & Sustainable ECONOMY		Good jobs	Job creation and safeguarding
		Levelling up the economy	Attract and retain investment and talent in strategic locations / least resilient areas
		Future growth and investment	Supporting start-ups and high-potential firms
		Green growth	Contribute to green growth and climate resilience
High Quality ENVIRONMENT		Transport and built environment	Keep momentum with / accelerate major housing and economic growth projects
HEALTH, wellbeing & Independence for All Ages		Healthy lifestyles	Encourage shift to sustainable modes of transport
A Great PLACE for Children & Families to Grow		Education outcomes	Provide opportunities for re-skilling / up-skilling
		Levelling up outcomes for families	Facilitate higher productivity economic activity

Delivering Everyone's Essex

...plus a Net Zero policy

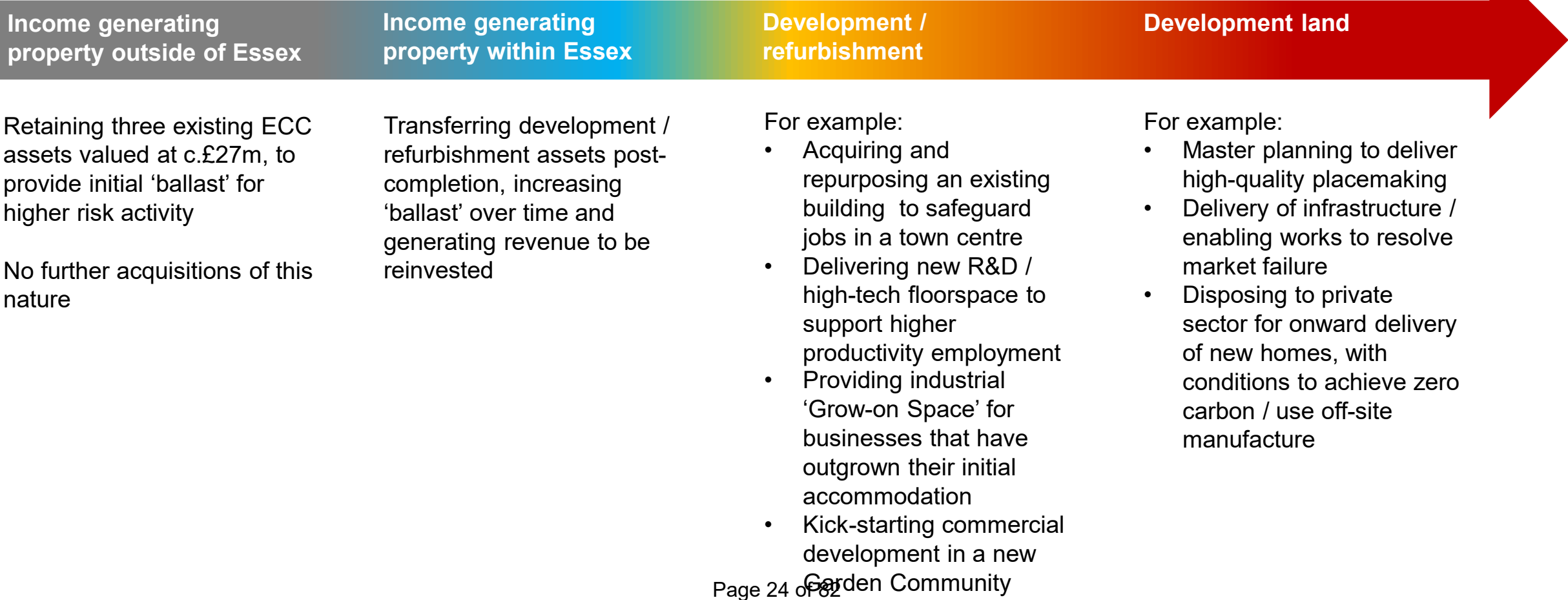


ERIF Net Zero policy

1. All new build projects will be expected to deliver **net zero carbon in operation**.
2. Where possible, **external grant funding** will be used to enhance environmental performance.
3. Exceptions to the Net Zero expectation will be considered only where there is a clear opportunity to deliver on the Council's commitment to **Level Up Essex**. Decisions on exceptions at a project level must take account of the Fund's overall contribution to Net Zero.
4. Where a project is delivered at lower environmental credentials, it will target a higher financial return. This will allow for **cross-subsidy** into higher environmental credentials elsewhere.
5. Resources will be directed towards finding projects **on brownfield sites / refurbishment activity**.
6. Resources will be directed towards finding projects that support **green economic activity**, and development in **sustainable locations**.
7. **Waste minimisation** will be considered in procurement decisions.
8. **Lettings policies** will be designed to support growth and innovation in key sectors, including the green economy.
9. Divestment decisions will consider **long term stewardship** arrangements.

What kinds of projects will ERIF deliver?

A balanced portfolio of land and property strands and projects across the risk spectrum



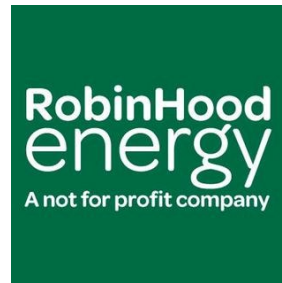
What will ERIF do – and not do?

The Fund provides a 'new string to the bow' of the ECC Capital Programme

Socioeconomic	Financial	Development activity	ECC Estate	Environmental
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Resolving evidenced market failures ✓ Investment beyond initial purchase price 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Projects under £12.5m (incl. grant funding) ✓ External funding beyond £12.5m 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Infrastructure and enabling works ✓ Non-residential property (housing only where ancillary) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Development Land ✓ Land and property assets within County 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Land and property ✓ Expectation of Net Zero carbon in operation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Competing with the private sector ✗ Indefinite holding of assets ✗ Development finance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Investment primarily for yield ✗ No return on investment ✗ 100% grant funded 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Social infrastructure (e.g. schools, libraries) ✗ Direct delivery of housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Land and property assets outside County ✗ ECC service operational assets ✗ Residential lettings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Renewable energy generation ✗ Charging / energy storage

Nb – **Bold type** indicates a requirement of PWLB borrowing guidance

Concerns from elsewhere...



How will ERIF reduce risks?

- **Scale of fund** modest relative to size of organisational revenue budget / capital programme
- **No reliance on investments** to fund day-to-day service delivery
- Each investment decision subject to **individual business case**, maximum £12.5m per project
- **Higher-risk activity balanced with lower-risk** (existing commercial property portfolio, new income generating assets and cash reserve)
- Prudent approach to **Minimum Revenue Provision** (MRP)

Summary of key principles

Portfolio- and project-level controls span the Five Cases recommended by HM Treasury

Strategic and economic arrangements

- Projects to be appraised for **strategic fit, financial return, social value and environmental benefits** – mixture of hurdles, targets and prioritisation criteria

Financial arrangements

- Controls reflect different risks associated with **different strands of activity**
- Value of higher-risk activity shall remain below 1.4x that of the **‘ballast’ of lower-risk cash and prime assets**
- **Maximum lot size** £12.5m, to ensure diversification of risk
- **Maximum grant funding requirement** prior to start on site shall not exceed £10m across the portfolio at any one time
- Revenue reserve shall not be allowed to fall below £0.5m, to provide a **contingency for unexpected revenue costs**
- Confirmation of **compliance with CIPFA guidance and Prudential Code** formally sought from ECC Section 151 Officer prior to any capital investment decisions

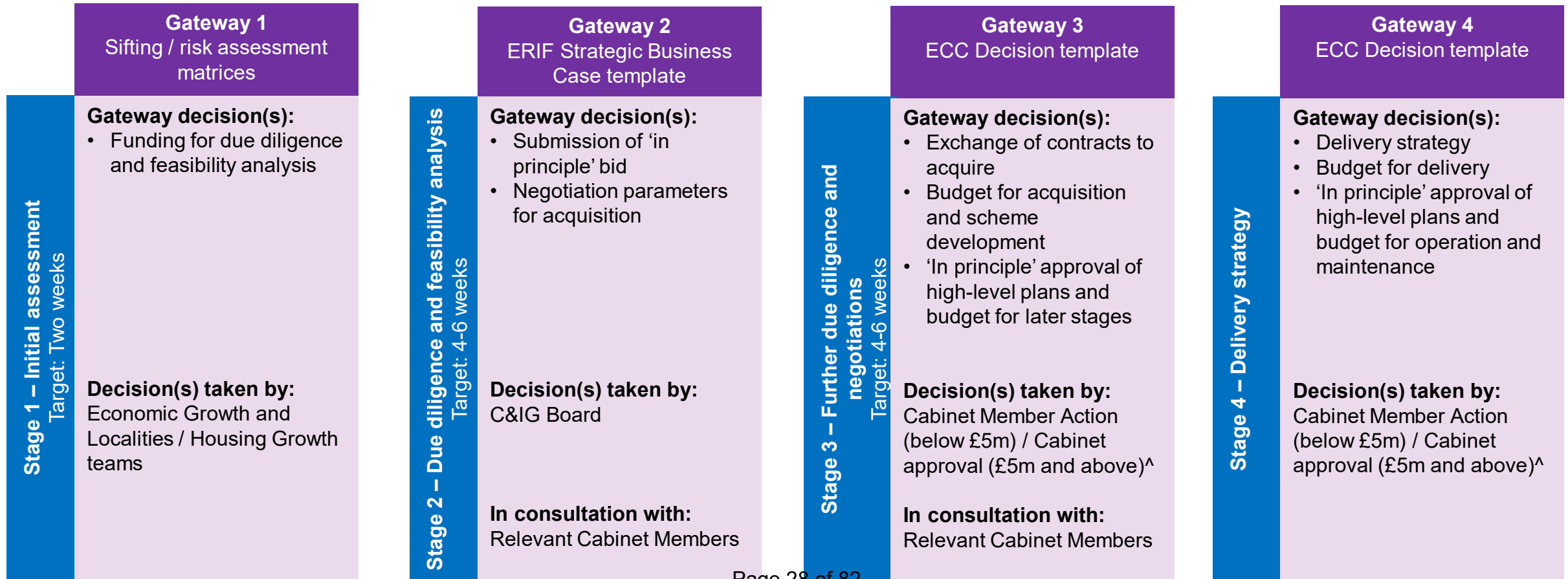
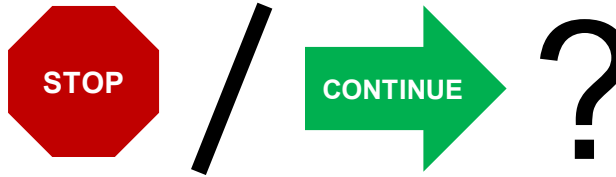
Commercial arrangements

- Use of external advisers alongside internal capacity building to provide **independence, market intelligence and specialist support**
- **Facilities management** through existing arrangements, unless specific reasons to deviate

Management arrangements

- Scrutiny of investment / divestment proposals by **ECC Corporate Landlord**
- Investment / delivery / divestment decisions would follow **formal ECC governance routes** - Finance Cabinet Member or Cabinet, depending on delegation thresholds
- Economic Renewal Cabinet Member as formal consultee, to ensure **rounded decision-making**
- Financial, economic and environmental performance will be **regularly reported on and reviewed**

How will projects be selected / critical decisions taken?



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* Commercial & Income Generation Board decision could be taken through written deliberation, without meeting (i.e. 'virtual')

^ Urgent decision procedure can be used, where appropriate

Project-level controls in place across the Five Cases

To be examined at each gateway

	Strategic Case	Economic Case	Financial Case			Commercial Case	Management Case
Control	Strategic fit	Cost Benefit Analysis	Maximum lot size	Cashflow modelling	Debt Management Office tests for PWLB borrowing	Investment readiness	Risk assessment
Metric	Scoring matrix across nine criteria, aligned to Everyone's Essex	Exchequer Benefit Cost Ratio (x.x : 1.0)	Total capital expenditure (£, acquisition and delivery, including that repaid by grant funding)	Post-financing IRR (% , assuming 100% debt)	Pass / fail for each of five tests	Scoring matrix	Scoring matrix
Criteria	To aid prioritisation by decision-makers	Pass / fail based on minimum hurdle (2.0 : 1.0)	Maximum of £12.5m	Pass / reliant on growth / fail (3.75% to 5.00% for EPC Rating A+; 4.25% to 7.00% for EPC Rating B)	Pass / fail overall	No criteria, to avoid only progressing easy / more developed projects, but visibility provided to decision-makers at each gateway	Minimum score of 2 out of 4 across all gateway criteria, and visibility provided to decision-makers at each gateway

Risk management

The mitigations proposed reduce risks associated with the Fund

Top 15 risks and issues (out of the 40 identified)

Organisational

1. Reputational impacts arising through controversial projects / schemes / issues

Service delivery

2. Delays / abortive costs due to consents process
3. Insufficient officer capacity and capability
4. Capital values lower than anticipated (other than related to economic and property cycle)
5. Bias in project selection / business case development
6. Failure to secure non-recoverable grant funding
7. Aborted negotiations to acquire land and property

8. Disputes with neighbours
9. Unable to meet requirements within approved financial parameters
10. Design liability / construction disputes
11. Site capacity reduced through consents process / environmental constraints
12. Reduced demand due to behavioural changes post-pandemic
13. Lettings policy impacts occupancy levels

External

14. Economic and property market cycle / competition impacts capital receipts
15. Change to central government policy reduces access to capital funding

Key mitigations

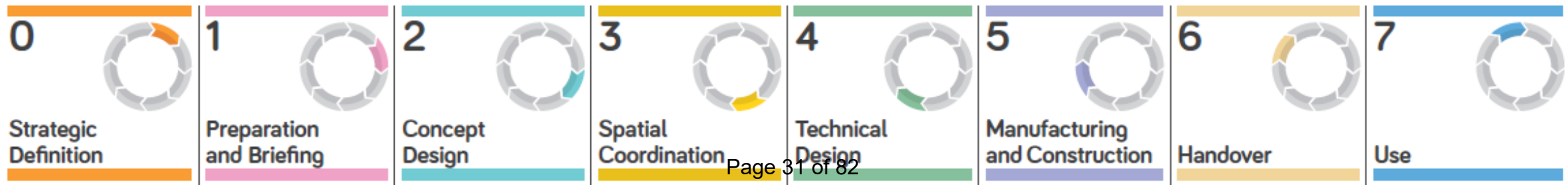
- Assessment matrices used to provide consistency of decision making

- Decision making in line with ECC Constitution, including arrangements for declarations of interest
- Sufficient budget to allow proper resourcing, including recruitment / procurement of specialist expertise
- Independent advice and market intelligence from external specialists
- Desktop engineering studies to be commissioned early on, supplemented by site inspections as appropriate
- Appropriate contingencies and conservative assumptions. Conditional agreements for acquiring land, where possible
- Stakeholder engagement strategy for each project, involving ECC Communications team where appropriate
- Phased approaches to project development and delivery

Delivery and disposal

- Typically, **trade-offs** between:
 - Lower capital receipts and risk for ECC, greater uncertainty for private sector
 - Greater income and greater control of benefits realisation for ECC, less uncertainty for private sector
- **Potential delivery routes** include:
 - **Master Developer** - Procure multi-disciplinary team, promote through planning system, deliver enabling works / infrastructure, restricted disposal to private sector (may include transfer to Essex Housing Development LLP)
 - **Developer** – Establish Employer's Requirements and procure Design and Build team OR traditional two-stage procurement (procure design team followed by Main Contractor, who would novate design team and subcontract as required thereon)
 - **Delivery partnership** – Procure delivery partner, contract management of Development Agreement thereon
- **Natural jump-off points** after RIBA Plan of Work Stages 2 and Stage 3 – more complicated if we wish to deliver enabling works / infrastructure

Natural 'jump-off points' across RIBA Plan of Work stages





Questions/Feedback?

Report title: Bus Service Improvement Plan: sixth month update	
Report to: Place Services and Economic Growth Policy and Scrutiny Committee	
Report author: Helen Morris, Head of Integrated Public Transport Unit (IPTU)	
Date: 24 March 2022	For: Discussion
Enquiries to: Helen Morris at helen.morris@essex.gov.uk	
County Divisions affected: All	

Introduction

1. [Bus Back Better](#), the Government's new national bus strategy was published in March 2021. It required local transport authorities to meet three commitments:
 - To make a statement of intent on either franchising or Enhanced Partnerships by June 2021
 - To publish a Bus Service Improvement Plan by the end of October 2021
 - To put an Enhanced Partnership in place (if that is the chosen route) by the end of March 2022.
2. ECC has met the first two requirements. The third is due to be discussed at Cabinet on 15 March. The paper is [here](#).
3. ECC is also required to publish a six-month update on the BSIP targets by the end of April 2022.

Action required

4. The Committee is asked to consider the contents of the paper.

Everyone's Essex

5. Buses contribute to all four priorities in Everyone's Essex:
 - **the economy:** buses get people to work and training; to the shops and leisure facilities; and support local jobs – all without contributing to the growth limiting impacts of congestion;
 - **the environment:** buses help improve air quality by reducing emissions from traffic. Poor air quality is linked to a significant number of adverse health impacts.
 - **children and families:** buses get children to nursery, school and college; they get parents to work; support family days out; and link generations together.
 - **promoting health, care and wellbeing for all ages:** buses support younger and older people particularly to get out and about; to meet friends; have company and care; access health appointments; and be independent.

Background

6. Pre-Covid there were over 40 million journeys on the bus network in Essex every year. At its lowest that dropped to 12 million during the first lockdown. Buses bring a huge range of benefits to individuals and communities. They also have a key immediate role in mitigating air quality and climate change emissions.
7. Measures to return the bus network to previous levels of patronage and then grow it will benefit everyone. Essex County Council published their [Bus Service Improvement Plan](#) in October. Enhanced Partnerships (background [here](#)) are a way for local authorities to work with operators and wider partners to improve bus services. They are expected to be the main mechanism to enable the delivery of Bus Service Improvement Plans.
8. ECC set three targets as part of its BSIP and committed to the development of two more. This is attached at annex A.

Consideration

9. The six-monthly report on the BSIP will give an update on the numbers for passengers and reliability. The passenger satisfaction measure will not have been updated for this report because of Covid.
10. The six-monthly report will also give an update on the development of measures to test accessibility and modal shift.
11. ECC will also be giving an update on the overall context of the bus network and progress against some of the workstreams identified in section 8 of the BSIP. A full update is due by the end of October 2022 as part of the annual refresh of the BSIP itself.

Next Steps

12. Publication of the sixth monthly report due by the end of April 2022.

List of Appendices

Appendix A – targets section from the BSIP.

Targets section from BSIP:

Target One:

- For reliability to meet the target of 95% of services operating within the statutory window.
- Our assessment is that our current performance is at 94% (2020-21) but this was during the significantly lower traffic levels of COVID-19. Pre-COVID-19 the baseline level was 92% (2018-20) and 88% (2016-17). This is the range we would expect it to return to initially without intervention.

242. Post lockdown car traffic levels have increased significantly in proportion to the overall number of journeys being made. We expect congestion levels to initially be higher, as increasing numbers of people return to work. Reaching the statutory target would mean a 3% increase on pre-COVID-19 levels of performance. This will need to be achieved in advance of major opportunities to improve things like bus priority. There will be a lag in delivering improvements as we identify pinch points through our twelve District level network reviews and understand how congestion can be addressed.
243. People's perception of reliability is influenced by issues such as roadworks and accidents or breakdowns on the network, that cause significant and frequent delays.
244. We will measure progress towards this reliability target every six months.
We do not currently have reliability data measures for each of our large urban areas. We are working with BODS to develop these measures, which will be included in future BSIPs.

Target Two:

- For passenger numbers to see a return to pre-COVID-19 levels of patronage of 40.7 million journeys.
245. Our assessment is that we are currently at 12.6 million journeys for 2020-21. On some services, particularly in rural areas, patronage is as low as 80% less than pre-COVID-19 levels.
246. Patronage in rural areas has been hit significantly harder by the pandemic than urban services; concessionary travel more than fare paying; and travel in office-based economies harder than for factory or manufacturing based economies. For many, concerns about the risk of shared travel will persist and influence their travel choices. We are expecting the return to pre-COVID-19 patronage levels to be challenging, particularly as working patterns change. The revolution in homeworking will also have a profound impact on the frequency with which journeys to work are made.

Target Three:

- For customer satisfaction to maintain an 86% (2019) overall journey satisfaction rating over what we expect to be a volatile time for the network.
- Our current satisfaction rating should be re-assessed in November 2021 following the cancellation of surveys last year due to COVID-19.

247. We use the annual Transport Focus survey to assess customer satisfaction levels, and how we benchmark against our peers. We expect there to be significant network volatility in the coming years, particularly as post-COVID-19 travel patterns bed down. We expect rural routes, which in many cases were already commercially marginal, to struggle. Holding a customer satisfaction level at pre-COVID-19 rates is therefore ambitious. We would rather set a realistic challenge than a superficially impressive target that is never achieved.

Future targets

248. As we undertake our network reviews, we will establish the current baseline for the following, within a District, to develop future targets:

- Accessibility figure based on % of population with access to bus services/times of day/days of week.

249. For many of our residents, the issue is that they do not have access to any bus service. Simply improving existing provision won't address this. We need to understand how our areas score in terms of accessibility and therefore understand where we can focus support. We can then assess how the measures we put in will change accessibility.

- Modal shift % (switch from car to bus)

250. As post-COVID-19 travel patterns bed down we want to understand how people's journey choices are changing and how we support more sustainable travel. For many longer journeys in Essex bus is the only real alternative to car. Understanding the new base position for our urban centres, and the drivers for those choices, will be key to understanding how we shape services to offer an alternative to car.

Report title: LHP Task and Finish Group – Report and Recommendations	
Report to: Place Services and Economic Growth Policy and Scrutiny Committee	
Report author: Justin Long, Senior Democratic Services Officer	
Date: 24 March 2022	For: Decision
Enquiries to: Justin Long, Senior Democratic Services Officer at justin.long@essex.gov.uk	
County Divisions affected: All Essex	

1. Introduction

Attached as an Appendix is the final report and recommendations from the Local Highway Panels (LHP) Task and Finish Group.

2. Action Required

The Committee is asked to endorse the report and recommendations from the Task and Finish Group.

3. Everyone's Essex

The report and recommendations support the ambitions outlined in *Everyone's Essex* Including on delivering a High Quality Environment for residents.

4. Next Steps

Subject to the Committee endorsing the proposals, the Cabinet Member for Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport will be asked to consider the report and recommendations and provide an initial response back to the Committee in April 2022.

5. List of Appendices

Final report and recommendations from the LHP Task and Finish Group.



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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Acknowledgments

Notes and Evidence

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

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

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

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

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

28th February 2022 – included discussion on the results of the LHP Chairman's survey.

2nd 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
Sub-total cost	£4,461	
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	
Sub-total overheads	£,1472	
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.

Devolvment:

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 than £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.

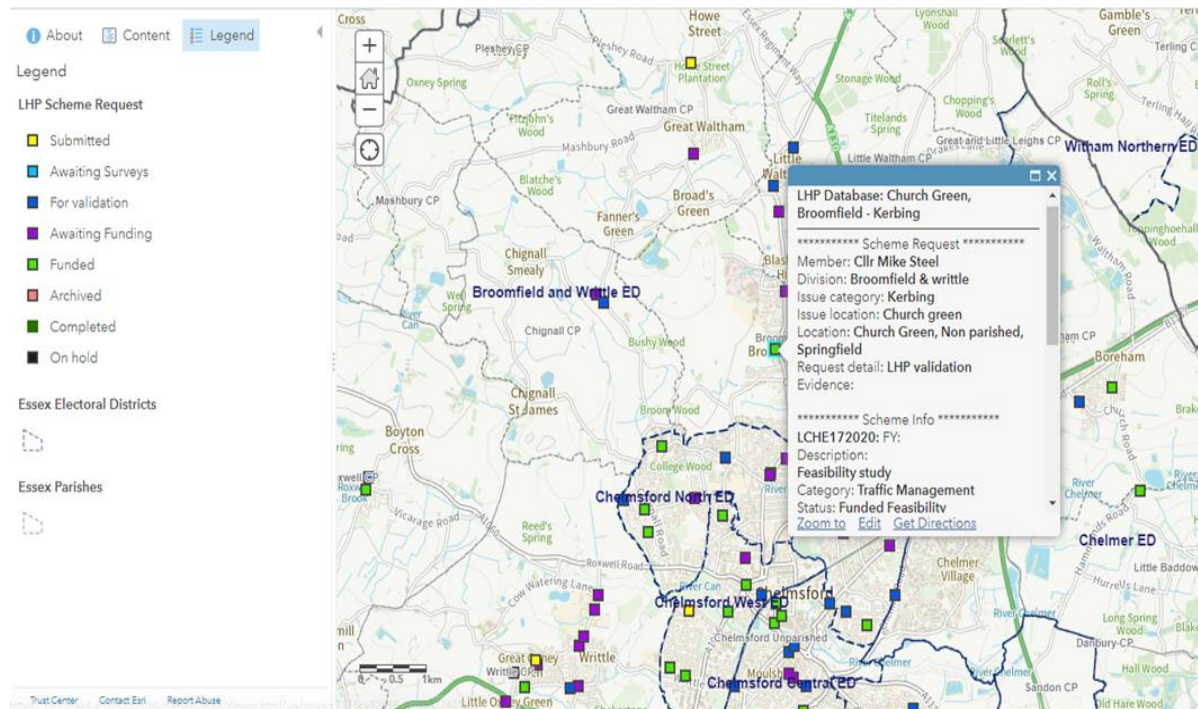
Scheme Requests:

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							
<div> Basildon Braintree Brentwood Castle Point Chelmsford Colchester Epping Harlow Maldon Rochford Tendring Uttlesford </div>							
<div> All Schemes Submitted In Progress Awaiting Funding Funded Completed Archived/On Hold </div>							
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 j/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.

WHAT ARE WE LOOKING AT?

Review Topic	Local Highway Panels (LHPs)
Type of Review	Task and Finish Group

WHY ARE WE LOOKING AT THIS?

Rationale for the Review	<p>At its meeting of 23 September 2021, PSEG agreed that a Task & 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>
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WHAT DO WE HOPE TO ACHIEVE?

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

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are there any ideas about how to handle districts with not enough schemes? Should the Panels be encouraged to spend more on aesthetic improvements? And if so, how could this be achieved? <p>Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How can LHPs best deal with recurring local issues such 'rat-running', HGV traffic, and speeding?
What primary/new evidence is needed?	TBC
What secondary/ existing information is needed?	What have other councils done? Is there any good practice to draw on from elsewhere?
What briefings and site visits might be relevant?	TBC
Other work being undertaken/Relevant Corporate Links	TBC
What is inside the scope of the review?	Highways and Highways Rangers LHPs Climate Change considerations
What is outside the scope of the review?	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)	
Relevant Portfolio Holder(s) and other Member involvement	Councillor Lee Scott (Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport) and other members as appropriate
Key Officers	Vicky Presland, Head of Design Services, Essex Highways David Gollop, Design Manager, Essex Highways
Partners and service users	Borough/City/District/Parish/Town Councils (TBC) Other LHP members (TBC)
WHAT RESOURCES DO WE NEED?	
Lead Member and Membership	Councillor Laureen Shaw (Chairman) Councillor Lee Scordis Councillor Mike Steel Councillor Marshall Vance
Co-optees/Other Invites (if any)	Councillor Lee Scott (to the first and last meeting as an observer)

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

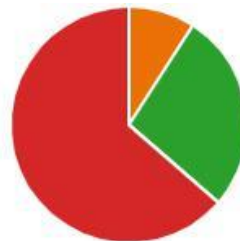
1. Please select your District

●	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?

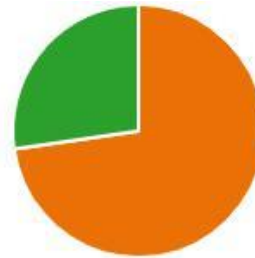
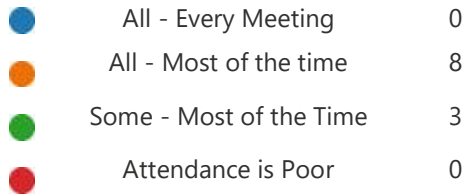
●	Monthly	0
●	Every Two Months	1
●	Less Frequently	3
●	Other	7



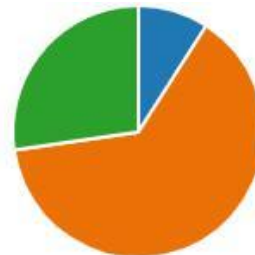
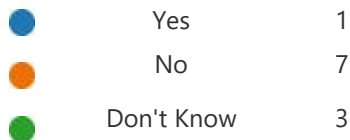
Other:

Quarterly (x7)

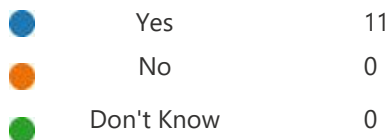
3. In general, do all nominated councillors attend?



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)?



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?



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.

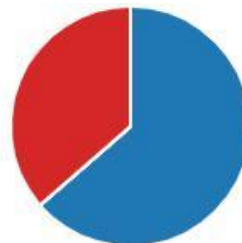
I think there should be training on how to deal with public expectation from the panel in relation to time taken and ability to fund. The public become disillusioned when they are referred to the LHP only to find that the process takes years.

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)

●	Yes, support the current structure	7
●	No, LHPs should be merged to cover multiple districts	0
●	No, decision making should be devolved a parish level	0
●	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.

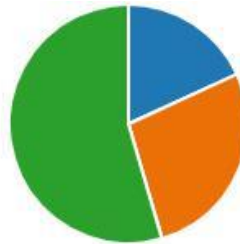
The intent of the LHP's was that they offered the opportunity to carry out local priorities with local decisions. However, in some instances that has become "political" and that deters from the requirements being achieved.

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.

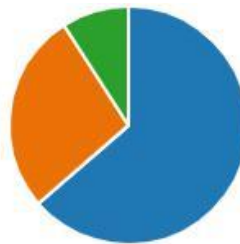
8. Member representation on LHPs covers several county council divisions. Does your LHP have any difficulties in agreeing which schemes to take forward?

● 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

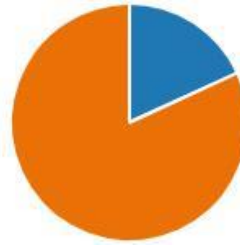
The contribution of the Parish Council member is negligible. We do not have nominated District representatives as 7 out of the 9 County members are double hatted.

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.

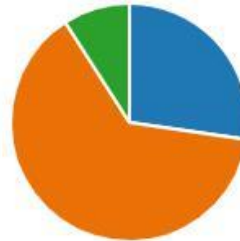
11. Do you think residents should be able to attend LHP meetings to contribute to the discussion?

●	Yes	2
●	No	9



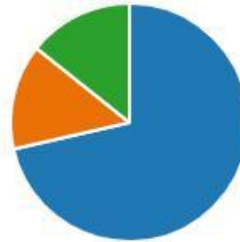
12. LHPs currently decide which schemes to deliver, but the delivery is done by a central Highways Department through the County Council. Do you think that delivery could be devolved?

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



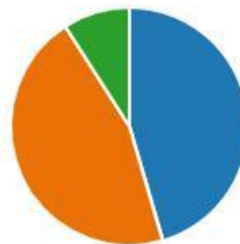
13. If you think delivery could be devolved to a lower level, do you know if your District/Borough/City or Parish Councils would be interested in taking on that responsibility?

●	Yes	5
●	No	1
●	Don't Know	1



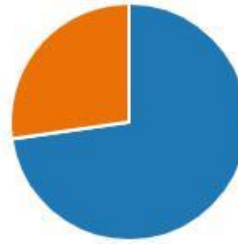
14. Do you believe the budget given to LHPs is adequate?

●	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



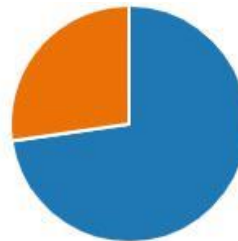
17. Submitted schemes have to come through the County Councillor. In general, where do they get their ideas and direction? (tick all that apply)

●	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?

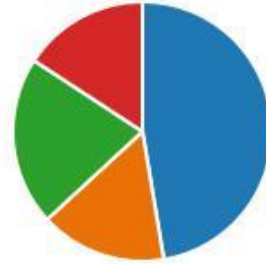
●	Yes, it's important that LHPs have free choice	8
●	No, I would prefer to see a narrower range	3
●	Don't Know	0



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

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

<input checked="" type="radio"/>	Safety	9
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	Number of people who benefit	3
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	Environmental considerations	4
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	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?

<input checked="" type="radio"/>	Yes, reporting is adequate	6
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	No, I would like to see more	5
<input type="radio"/>	Don't Know	0



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

<input checked="" type="radio"/>	A map view of schemes	4
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	Further information on costs and timings	4
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	Other	4



Other

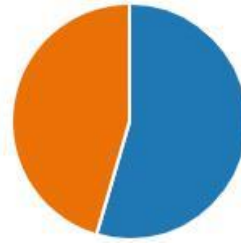
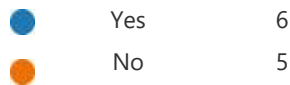
"more succinct minutes - web spreadsheet more accurate"

"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?



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.