

48. Terms of Reference

The terms of reference were noted.

Members were advised that nominations for Parish representatives would be required before the next Local Councils Liaison Committee on 28 July 2010 and for that reason it had been suggested that the Epping Forest Branch, Essex Association of Local Councils decide and that decision would be ratified at the Local Councils Liaison Committee. The Parish representatives would then be present at the Local Highways Panel meeting on 22 June 2010.

RESOLVED:

That the Epping Forest Branch of the Essex Association of Local Councils nominate Parish representatives for the five Parish members and for the decision to be ratified at the Local Councils Liaison Committee on 28 July 2010.

49. Local Highways Panel Report

The Highways Liaison officer advised the panel of the completed schemes within the programme of works for 2009/10.

The end of the financial year had seen the majority of the capital highways maintenance schemes completed with progress being made on traffic management improvement schemes.

The schemes to Earls Path, Loughton and Hastingwood Road, North Weald had been postponed in order that minor overspends on higher priority schemes could be supported and these would now need to be considered for inclusion on the 2010/11 programme of works.

The Highways Liaison officer advised that item 9, the Transport Freight Strategy for Nazeing would be dealt with under the officer's report and would be entitled to a Positive Signage Review. An audit of all HGV signing in Harlow, Nazeing, Roydon and Hoddesdon including existing routes had been completed and the preferred HGV routes had been agreed. In addition the traffic management improvements for Roydon and Nazeing included new speed limit orders that had been sealed, whilst the weight restrictions received some objections, which officers would continue to progress.

Members enquired about the placement of signage further out on the surrounding roads of Nazeing to prevent HGV having to turn around on unsuitable roads.

Members commented on the traffic improvements around Dobbs Weir and the traffic problems caused by large HGV's.

The Senior Traffic Engineer, Andrew Ruffell advised that officers had observed the larger HGV's and many of the problems seemed to be related to the driver's behaviour, but they were aware and would monitor the situation.

Members raised concerns about the suitability of the junction of Middle Street, Nazeing with St Leonards Road and problems that may be caused at Bumbles Green, Nazeing, if the HGV signage were not distributed far enough.

The Senior Traffic Engineer advised that off the roundabout at the A121 leading onto the Crooked Mile, advisory signage would be placed and further signage would be considered at Bumbles Green.

It had been noted that the removal of weight limits in Nazeing referred to the permit schemes only.

The Safer Roads Programmes had been completed at Pudding Lane, Chigwell, although the entire budget had been used. The identified scheme at B175 Stapleford Abbots would now be considered for inclusion in the 2010/11 financial year's programme of works.

All the Community Initiative Funding (CIF) projects approved in 2008/09 were delivered through the 2009/10 programme of works. A total of 21 CIF applications had been received in 2009/10 although 4 did not meet the criteria stated. The CIF Co-ordinator had advised the Highways Liaison officer that she would be intending to approach those applicants who had submitted more than one application to prioritise their applications to enable the acceleration of the judging process.

Members expressed concern about the request to prioritise applications, when detailed applications could have been grouped together into one, if they had known previously. Members agreed that applications should be judged on merit and the process should remain the same, when judging all the applications.

Members requested that a letter should be written to the CIF Co-ordinator to express the Panel's comments that all of the 17 applications should be judged on merit and dealt with as advised when the applications were submitted.

Officers advised the panel about the progress for the Area Parking Reviews in Buckhurst Hill, Epping and Loughton Broadway. Currently the draft traffic regulation orders for Epping were being passed to Essex County Council Legal and Administration department to formally advertise. The draft traffic regulation orders were being finalised by officers for Buckhurst Hill. The Loughton Broadway Parking Review required further investigation after meetings between officers, Members of Essex County Council and Epping Forest District Council, following draft proposals recently circulated by the Department for Transport pertaining to the authorisation of parking permit zones and signage.

Members expressed concern about the delays of all of the Area Parking Reviews and requested an assured timetable for completion dates.

The Senior Traffic Engineer advised that delays in the Epping Parking Review had impacted on the Buckhurst Hill and Loughton, Broadway Parking Reviews. Problems had been encountered when checks were made and information from survey maps and measurements from the highways did not correspond. The traffic regulation orders would be processed within 3/4 weeks by the Legal and Administration Section and advertised, with a 21 day statutory period for objections with a further delay if objections were received.

Members asked for a briefing to be placed within the EFDC Members Bulletin explaining the phases of the review, the delays and a timescales for the Parking Review completion.

Enquiries had been received from residents in Theydon Bois that would like to consider parking permits or suggested schemes for resident parking.

The Senior Traffic Engineer advised that that any schemes or suggestions from Members could be considered at a future meeting; however officers were concentrating their efforts on the completion of the current reviews.

The Panel had been advised that Epping Forest County Council Members had recently met to discuss parking problems around the District and would be speaking with the ECC Cabinet for Highways and Transportation.

Members enquired about a petition from residents of Meadow Road, Loughton for the implementation of a residents parking permit scheme.

EFDC Officers had received the petition and would be acknowledging, promptly. The District Manager, Trevor Baker advised that officers would review and report to this Panel at a future meeting within the upcoming financial year.

RESOLVED:

1. That the report of the Highways Liaison officer be noted;
2. That a letter to the CIF Co-ordinator be written expressing the concerns of the panel and that all applications should be judged on merit as individual applications.
3. That the Senior Traffic Engineer produce a briefing for EFDC Members about the delays in the Parking Reviews; and
4. A report be presented at a future meeting of the Panel on Meadow Road, Loughton parking permit scheme proposal.

50. Programme of Works 2010/11

The Highways Liaison officer informed the panel that the budget allocations for Maintenance and Traffic Improvement schemes for 2010/11 had not yet been disclosed. The recent weather conditions had impacted greatly, creating additional sites for maintenance to be considered along the schemes already identified.

Councillor R Bassett advised that the Chairman and he would be meeting with County Councillor N Hume and he would be attending a future Local Highways Panel meeting at Epping Forest.

The Panel commented on the work of the Highway Rangers and when they were likely to return and although the Highway Rangers undertook minor works, they provided a service which visually benefited the whole District.

The District Manager advised that the Highways Rangers service and timescale available in the District would depend on the budget allocations.

Members expressed concerns over a recent accident at B173 Manor Road, West of Tomswood Road, Chigwell and that priority would need to be considered to the pedestrian crossing proposal.

The Acting Area Highways Manager, West Essex advised that the allocated budget would most probably not cover the cost of the 14 schemes prioritised as high. He asked the Panel to consider prioritising the schemes already approved; so that once the budget had been allocated schemes could be progressed at the start of the new financial year. The officer advised that consideration could be given to prioritising one large scheme or a number of smaller schemes, dependent on the Panel's wishes.

After discussions Members felt that without a confirmed budget none of the schemes could be prioritised because the budget would reveal how schemes may could be progressed.

RESOLVED:

That the panel awaits the confirmation of the budget before prioritising the 14 schemes.

51. Damage to highway surfaces through consented development and utilities.

The District Manager advised the Panel that larger site developments were inclined to be more co-operative and invite officers to the site to agree responsibilities before the development has begun attend to damage or faults as they are reported and generally kept the highway around their sites in good order.

Members expressed concerns from residents noticing that small residential extensions caused broken kerbs and damage to highways. He wanted to know whether, if reported could an officer visit the site and deal with the problem through the normal planning protocol or could a process be developed through the Planning Scrutiny Committee to include damages to highways becoming responsibility of the applicant.

Members were informed that Utilities working in the public highway can only do so, if they hold a Section 50 Street Works License or if they were Statutory Undertakers, both of which require notifications to the Highway Authority, which allows for combined works if required. The District Manager advised that the responsibilities for the highway repairs and any costs incurred by the utilities were covered by legislation. Any unauthorised extension in the duration of works could incur charges and works were guaranteed for a minimum of two years.

Members commented on the occurrence of potholes around utility repairs.

The District Manager advised that the potholes were mainly caused by the weak point created when the works had been repaired, although all repairs were guaranteed for two years and if a repair were required within that time, the guarantee would begin again.

Members also queried what the total of fines were levied in Essex. Officers advised that they would be reported at a future meeting of the Panel.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Local Highways Panel's comments were passed onto the Planning Scrutiny Committee to consider the protocol for residential developments and damaged caused to the highway ;
2. That the reports on consented development and utilities be note; and
3. That the total of fines levied in Essex due to works carried out by Utilities companies be reported at a future meeting of the Panel.

52. Transport freight strategy for Nazeing Area

This item had been dealt with under minute 49, the Highways Liaison officer's report.

53. Any Other Business

Members asked whether District Councillors were able to contact a highways officer directly, to obtain information for residents.

The District Manager, Trevor Baker advised that any District Councillors could contact him by email for any highways queries.

The Panel raised concerns about a temporary traffic light system in Theydon Bois, associated with structural repairs to the viaduct, creating problems for traffic flow, owing to the sequence length and whether the company responsible could be environmental effects of traffic building up around temporary traffic lights and the economic viability of the repairs. Officers advised that they would speak with the colleagues at County Hall to get an analysis of the timing sequences of the lights and requested that the Member email the questions he had so that a comprehensive response could be given.

Comments were received about protecting grass verges from vehicles damage and who and how to enforce the restrictions.

The Assistant District Manager advised that the County Council would not be able to fund the grass protection schemes however if the Parish's were able to provide funding, ECC would work with the resources to help.

54. Date of Next Meeting

Noted that the next meeting would be held on Tuesday 22 June 2010 in the Council Chamber, Civic Offices, Epping.

CHAIRMAN