

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 29 July 2008

Subject: Civil Engineering and Maintenance Portfolio

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Richard Bassett

Item: 6 (c)

Recommending:

That the report of the Civil Engineering and Maintenance Portfolio Holder be noted.

As you can appreciate this month the biggest issues I have been working on have been on Highways and specifically parking and highways maintenance. To this end I have arranged for a note answering many questions about highways to be circulated via the Bulletin. For information I can report that Essex Highways financial allocation for the Epping Forest District in 2008/09 is £1,954,298 which includes £847,489 for patching, potholes and minor repairs.

I would also like to clarify some points about 'Localism' a new initiative which started on 1 April 2008. There are three pilot areas, Castle Point, Colchester and Brentwood. Highways West are responsible for the Brentwood pilot.

Localism is where the County works with, and through a district council to set up "Highways Panels". This allows us to have some influence over where some of the money in the Highways department allocated to the EFD is spent. This would not be new money but came from existing budgets within the control of Highways. District councils are able to make recommendations as to where Highways could spend certain sums of money. Pilot areas have already set up local Highway Panels which also involve parish and other local representation. Each pilot council has set up these Panels in a different way, e.g. Brentwood has taken an existing committee and added local representatives to consider schemes that could be implemented. These needed to conform to the County's overall policy. There will be 6 months of the pilots and if successful they will be rolled out across the County to all the districts. I have stated previously that I would wish for this Council to be involved in this scheme and as detail become available I will share them with the Council.

Following a meeting with Councillor Norman Hume, the Essex County Council Portfolio Holder for Highways, he stated that he would be agreeable for EFDC to get involved in this scheme but no timetable is set at this time. I also shall be attending the Area Strategic Highways Panel this week and will report on this at a later date.

I have agreed with Highways that I will share their capital works programme for the rest of the year as soon as it is confirmed and I will share this in the next few weeks. I also have been working with various members on their key issues in their area and again I am working with them and Highways to get status and to try to find local fixes. Again if you wish me to work with you on issues please contact me.

On the issue of Parking reviews I shall be issuing a statement on where we are and a provisional timetable shortly. As you can imagine there are many issues with many conflicts on parking between residents, business and commuters but we will work with Highways to find the best solution. Also following the current round of reviews we will pause and just look at small local issues to enable a settling down of the bigger reviews.