

Report to the Cabinet

Report reference: C-013-2018/19
Date of meeting: 18 October 2018



Portfolio: Safer, Greener and Transport
Subject: Epping Forest Local Highways Panel
Responsible Officer: Qasim (Kim) Durrani (01992 564055).
Democratic Services: Adrian Hendry (01992 564246).

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

To agree to recommend to the Council a supplementary DDF estimate of £100,000 in 2018/19 to match fund the contribution from Essex County Council for the Epping Forest Local Highways Panel to implement highway improvement schemes within the District.

Executive Summary:

The Epping Forest Local Highways Panel (LHP) was formed in 2009. It consists of eight elected Councillors, four from County and four from District. The Panel is supported by Essex Highways and carries out highway improvement schemes within the District.

The County Council has offered to match fund £100,000 for the LHP to implement schemes within the District. If match funding is agreed by the Council then a number of highway schemes will be enabled in the District which would otherwise not get funding.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

To enable highway improvement schemes to be implemented over and above those for which funding is available.

Other Options for Action:

The Council can decline the offer of match funding.

Report:

1. The Epping Forest Local Highway Panel was formed in 2009 when Cabinet agreed the membership and constitutional arrangements proposed under Essex Localism Agenda. The scope and membership of the LHP has since changed however the focus remains delivery of highway improvement schemes within the District. The membership of the Panel consists of four county division members and an equal number of district members. The LHP is allocated budget by the Essex County Council (ECC), in 2018/19 it has a budget allocation of £349,775 for carrying out capital improvement, road safety, traffic management, passenger transport, cycling and public rights of way schemes. The entire available budget of £349,775 has been committed for schemes.

2. The LHP can only undertake capital improvement schemes, all revenue and maintenance schemes are delivered directly by Essex Highways, and the types of schemes that the LHP can undertake include: Passenger transport, public rights of way schemes, traffic management and walk way schemes. In addition the Panel keeps an oversight on any highway related Section 106 schemes as well as the work of the Highway Rangers.

3. Last year the Council match funded ECC's £50,000 for highway improvements. This funding enabled feasibility studies, detailed designs and the implementation of capital schemes. The schemes funded through the match funding budget are listed below:

1. B172 Abridge over River Roding, Abridge – Warning signs
2. Loughton Way j/w River Road, Buckhurst Hill, Epping - Dropped kerbs
3. Tidy's Lane, Epping - TMI
4. Hoe Lane, Nazeing - TMI
5. Willingale Road, Loughton - TMI
6. Public Footpath 109, Loughton
7. Lower Road, Loughton - Feasibility for one way road
8. HGV Routing for Lea Valley Glasshouses
9. Victoria Road, Buckhurst Hill
10. High Road j/w Bassett Gardens, North Weald Bassett
11. Motts Lane, Waltham Abbey
12. Brook Road, Epping
13. Staples Road / Shaftesbury, Loughton
14. B181/Upland Road, Epping Upland
15. Sedge Green j/w Dobbs Weir Road, Nazeing
16. A121 j/w Manor Road, Epping Forest
17. B172 Coppice Row j/w The Green, Theydon Bois
18. B181/Upland Road, Epping Upland

4. Although the LHP has significant budget allocation there is high demand for highway improvement and new road safety schemes. This forces scheme prioritisation and some schemes lose out. There are currently a total of 28 schemes on the Approved Works Programme of the Panel. The total cost of these schemes will be known once these go through the various stages of validation: feasibility, site investigation and cost estimation. It is understood that in the absence of match funding from the Council not all of these schemes, or any new ones, could be funded in 2018/19.

5. The ECC Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation Councillor Kevin Bentley wrote to the Leader of the Council on 24 May 2018, letter attached at appendix, offering to match fund up to £100,000 of District Council contribution to the Panel. Given that all the available budget for the LHP has been committed the additional funding, £200,000 in total, will enable the delivery of a number of priority schemes which would otherwise not be possible it is recommended that the Council accepts the offer of match funding by ECC.

Resource Implications:

A DDF allocation of £100,000 will be required to match fund the contribution made by Essex County Council. This is being requested as a supplementary estimate as the offer from the Essex County Council was made on 24 May, after this Council's budget for 2018/19 had been set for 2018/19.

The DDF does not currently have enough resources available to meet this expenditure. If Members are minded to agree the recommendations in this report DDF monies allocated to other projects may need to be reallocated to fund this expenditure.

The Epping Forest Local Highways Panel has currently allocated all existing budget for schemes for 2018/19. By agreeing the recommendations in this report a sum of £200,000 will be available to the Panel to approve additional schemes.

Legal and Governance Implications:

The responsibility for carrying out capital improvement schemes on the public highway is that of the Essex County Council. All schemes recommended by the LHP are considered for approval by the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport at Essex County Council and all schemes are in line with County Council policies, strategies and guidelines.

Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:

The nature of schemes implemented with the match funding will be for highway safety, casualty reduction and pedestrian walk way improvements. These will improve the road network in the District.

Consultation Undertaken:

Chairman of the Epping Forest Local Highways Panel and the lead officers of Essex County Council.

Background Papers:

Previous reports on the formation of the Epping Forest Local Highways Panel.

Risk Management:

If the recommendations in this report are not agreed then no more schemes can be considered within the current financial year and a significant opportunity for achieving improvement and enhancement of the highway network will be missed.