

Local Highway Panels

Following the establishment of the new Local Highway Panels (LHP's) across Essex, I would like to take the opportunity to explain how the new Panels work and, more importantly, how you, as a Parish or Town Council, can interact with them.

What are the new Local Highway Panels (LHP's)?

The new LHP's were formed in April this year. Membership consists of all County Councillors for each given area, together with an equal number of District/Borough/City Councillors. In some areas, the LHP has agreed to representation by Parish Councils. The LHP can be Chaired by a County Member or District/Borough/City Member, as agreed locally by the LHP Membership.

There is not a 'one size fits all' solution for every part of the highways service and this is reflected in the way that the LHP's have been set up and their membership.

What is the purpose of the new LHP's?

The LHP's are intended to be a forum for County and District/Borough/City members to come together and to jointly consider, and prioritise, elements of highways spend within their local district or borough boundaries. The LHP's have been formed in recognition of the local role and knowledge of elected members and to promote greater partnership working between County, District, Borough and City Councils. The LHP's are also an important mechanism for ensuring there is proper engagement with local bodies and representative groups, including Town and Parish Councils.

The scope of works that can be prioritised by the Panel is broad and will include the following service areas:-

- Traffic Management improvements
- Tackling congestion
- Safer Roads (including casualty reduction)
- Public Rights of Way improvements
- Cycling schemes
- Passenger Transport improvements
- Minor improvement schemes

What Budgets do the LHP's have?

The overall budget available to the LHP's is £8M. The budget allocations have been made on an equitable basis and therefore each District/Borough/City does not receive an equal amount. A formula has been used to divide the funding in such a way that it takes account of a number of influences, including road length, population and road type. The budget split across the County is shown on the attached sheet.

What is the role of Town and Parish Councils?

In terms of engaging with Town and Parish Councils, we are aware that these organisations are well placed to highlight local issues on the highway network. Decision making through the Panel will rest with Members who will be responsible for engaging with district/borough/city Members; including inviting them to join the Panel and to work in partnership on prioritisation.