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## HIGHWAYS LOCALISM – ROLE OF THE AREA COMMITTEES

### 1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides details of the new role of the Area Committees for dealing with highway issues through 'Localism'.

### 2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 Essex County Council has concluded that the creation of a Local Highway Panel in each District under their 'Localism' agenda will enable priorities and funding programmes for highway works to be delivered in a way that best reflects local requirements.
- 2.2 The Executive, on 10 December 2008 (minute 356/08), concluded that the arrangements for delivering Localism within the Rochford District should be through the existing Area Committees.

### 3 ROLE OF THE AREA COMMITTEE

- 3.1 It is intended that each Area Committee will receive regular reports on highway issues from County Highway Officers and that, where recommendations are made for highway works, the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transportation will determine the priorities for delivery, taking into account the proposals from all three Area Committees.
- 3.2 The Highway Localism objectives for the Area Committees are as follows:-
- to consider proposals for funding (including any joint funding) submitted by constituted bodies, including the District Council, Parish and Town Councils, or other elected bodies that represent the local community. These proposals will be set out in a schedule prepared by the Area Highway Manager and reported to each Area Committee;
  - to consult the public on proposals and priorities through the Area Committee Forum and other networks as appropriate;
  - to propose priorities to the District Council Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transportation for Localism funded projects and the work of the Highway Rangers, who will assess the proposals and make recommendations for project approval to the Essex County Council Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation;
  - to consider and monitor progress on the processing and delivery of approved projects through reports received from the County Council's Area Highway Manager;

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transportation together with appropriate officers, will meet with the County Council's Area Highway Manager, to which meetings the Chairman of each Area Committee will also be invited to attend.

#### **4 DISCUSSION**

- 4.1 The new Highways Localism provides an opportunity for each Area Committee to play a more significant role in the delivery of highway schemes and projects considered to be important in each area.
- 4.2 Whilst the final decision about the priorities to be recommended to County Highways (The Highway Authority) will rest with the District Council's Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transportation, each Area Committee will be able to carefully consider its own priorities and make recommendations for implementation. Furthermore, it will be possible for the Area Committees to suggest works for the Highway Rangers.
- 4.3 The new Highway Ranger team comprising two persons in this District, will be responsible for:-
- minor bituminous repairs/potholes;
  - cleaning/minor repairs to non-electrical road signs and street furniture including reinstatement of posts/bollards where no excavation is required;
  - repairs to concrete products/surfaces;
  - trimming of vegetation;
  - adhoc grass cutting;
  - repairs to roadside verges;
  - cleaning and minor excavation of roadside grips;
  - adhoc cleaning/emptying of gullies and associated pipe work;
  - removal of graffiti;
  - painting of street furniture;
  - removal of weeds from pavements;
  - scavenging and removal of small fly tips from highway land;
  - minor repairs to existing white lining;
  - road studs;
  - removal of illegal signs/fly posting;
  - random inspection of street furniture.
- 4.4 It should be noted that all reports of highway defects, including in particular potholes, should be made immediately through the Highways Helpline rather than wait for an Area Committee meeting. If such items are not immediately reported, there can be an unnecessary delay before urgent repairs are carried out (Note: the Highway Helpline number is 0845 6037 623). Forms for the reporting of highways defects will be available for residents at the meeting.

**5 RISK IMPLICATONS**

- 5.1 Highways Localism provides an opportunity for much more local input to the schemes and projects that are considered to be important within Rochford District and for greater direction on the resolution of minor works.
- 5.2 It is thought important to recognise that Essex County Council remains the Highway Authority for the District and is ultimately accountable for all highway works.

**6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The County Council will agree annually a budget for highway works in Rochford District and it will then be the responsibility of the Area Committees to advise on their preferred schemes/works, with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transportation determining, where necessary, the overall priorities for the District and advising County Highways accordingly.

**7 RECOMMENDATION**

- 7.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES** to note the Localism objectives for the Area Committee as set out in the report.

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**Background Papers:-**

None

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