

Local Highway Improvement (LHI) Member Working Group

To: Highways & Transport Committee

Meeting Date: 9th March 2021

From: Steve Cox – Executive Director for Place and Economy

Electoral division(s): All

Key decision: No

Forward Plan ref: N/A

Outcome: For Committee to note and approve the outcome of the LHI Working group’s discussions and suggested amendments to the LHI initiative.

Recommendation: To note the discussion of the Member working group and the proposed amendments to the LHI process described in section 2 of the report.

To approve

1. Appendix A – revised application criteria
2. A maximum of 2 people to present per application at the LHI panel meetings
3. Future LHI panels to comprise a minimum of 6 and a maximum of 8 County Councillors from divisions within the relevant district areas.
4. That the chair of the LHI panels is to be chosen from the LHI Members sitting on the elected LHI panel and that the chair is to be agreed prior to the start of the panel meeting.
5. The review of the online LHI panel meetings to determine whether panels should be held online going forward

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1. Background

- 1.1 The Local Highway Improvement (LHI) scheme is a popular initiative that allows local communities the opportunity to bid for Council funding towards local highway improvement projects. Schemes are delivered by the County Council on a jointly funded basis and applicants can apply for funding of up to £15,000 as a contribution to their scheme. The applicant is expected to provide a minimum contribution of 10% of the total scheme cost.
- 1.2 The LHI process includes five stages, as follows:
- a) Application - community groups identify issues needing to be addressed and their available budget. Outside Cambridge City, one application is permitted per Parish Council, and for Town Councils the number of bids is increased to one per County Council Member. For Cambridge City, a maximum of five applications per County Councillor ward area can be submitted.
 - b) Feasibility - County Council Officers work on and suggest an appropriate solution to address highlighted issues, and/or assess solution/s proposed by an Applicant, including provision of estimated costs. Also, as part of the feasibility study, key areas such as road safety, risks to delivery, effectiveness and maintenance considerations are RAG (Red, Amber, Green) rated.
 - c) Assessment - Panel members, comprising of locally elected county councillors, for each district area review and score all bids against the following four criteria: persistent problem, road safety, community impact and added value. At panel meetings each applicant is offered an opportunity to present their bid to the panel.
 - d) Approval - all bids are ranked, and the funding allocated in order of overall ranking for each district area. The list is then put before the Highways & Transport committee for approval.
 - e) Implementation - approved schemes are then programmed into the Annual Plan for delivery in the following financial year.
- 1.3 At the December 2020 Highways and Transport committee, a cross-party Member Working Group (comprising 6 members) was established and terms of reference agreed, to review the current LHI process, with any approved changes to be implemented for schemes to be delivered from 2022/23 onwards.

2. Main Issues

- 2.1 At the first meeting, the LHI Working Group reviewed the terms of reference and agreed to discuss five areas. These were as follows:
- a) The number of applications per area
 - b) Financial contributions
 - c) Member panels, including their composition, operation and scoring criteria
 - d) Resourcing
 - e) Applications for Mobile Vehicle Activated Signs/Speed Indicating Devices

2.2 In order to thoroughly discuss each area, Members met remotely five times. Collated feedback from Councillors and officers, along with suggested amendments is included below, under each discussion area:

2.3 Applications:

- a) The working group explicitly agreed that the focus of the LHI schemes, in enabling residents' groups and organisations to put forward ideas for improvement, should remain a key objective of the initiative.
- b) Members asked officers to ensure that applications which are deemed unfeasible should never reach panel stage. Officers clarified that all received applications are technically appraised at feasibility stage and only those that are requested to be withdrawn would not be looked at by panel members. Feasibility reports are produced by officers, outlining recommendations that are deemed viable. Occasionally, an applicant may disagree with officer's recommendation and their proposal is still presented to the panel.
- c) LHI applications which concern maintenance related issues were also discussed. It was noted that problems needing urgent intervention, would not be suitable for an LHI proposal as the process is deemed too lengthy. Members agreed that all applications should be appraised by officers and scored by panel members on their own merits.
- d) Some members raised concerns over not being able to engage with officers regarding their future applications. Officers clarified, that any pre-engagement needs to be happening throughout the year and not within the last couple of weeks before the application window closes as it is impossible for officers to respond to all requests in a timely manner in these circumstances. Also, officers emphasised that their resources are limited, and this should be taken into consideration. Officers have been asked to make clear to applicants the timescales for pre-application engagement to seek their advice.
- e) Members thoroughly reviewed both the LHI application itself as well as the application criteria. It was suggested that criterion 4 should be removed as most of its aspects have already been included in the three previous criteria and some were deemed no longer relevant or invalid. The application criteria has been amended (appendix A) to reflect the views of the working group. For reference purposes the current criteria are included with this report (appendix B).

2.4 Funding:

- a) Members discussed the influence that may be exerted on a bid's success by the level of funding contribution that is offered by the applicant. This can be affected by the level of Parish precept levied and whether or not the applicant is a beneficiary of CIL payments.
- b) Experience has shown that wealthier/larger parishes can often afford to make very sizeable contributions which may have been seen as adding value to the application, thus giving an advantage over smaller parishes with smaller precepts.
- c) It was discussed whether or not the contribution should be capped or, where such levels of funding are available to an applicant, the privately funded option might be suggested. However, this too might be viewed as being inequitable and the working group recommended

that the contribution percentage should remain as a minimum of 10% and have no bearing on the score.

2.5 Member panels:

- a) There was a consensus that the scoring process should be clear and thus support consistency. It was suggested that there would be half an hour allocated at the start of each panel meeting to ensure that all members are clear on the scoring process. This led to the suggestion that an FAQ should be developed so that, particularly those to whom the process is new, have a clear understanding of the basic principles. For the complete list of FAQs, please refer to Appendix C.
- b) Request was made that one or the same Officer should attend all panel meetings to ensure consistency across all of them.
- c) Members agreed that a maximum of 2 people, for example one Councillor and one other representative, are to present their application at a panel meeting. It was noted that in previous years, on a few occasions' numbers have proved difficult to manage.
- d) Members also asked to allow City Councillors to be present on the Cambridge City panel. Members were concerned that since Cambridge City Joint Area Committee (CJAC) has been abolished, Cambridge City's representation in the process has been diminished.
- e) The number of Members at the panels was also discussed and a decision was made that between 6 and 8 Members should be on the panel meeting for each respective area. It was also agreed that one Member is to be elected to chair the meeting on the day.

2.6 Resourcing:

- a) Resourcing issues were not considered in detail. It was acknowledged that the Highway Projects & Road Safety Team have been working under considerable pressure during the covid crisis and many resources were redeployed. Looking forward, Members noted the importance of ensuring there are adequate resources to deliver the programme and officers will continue to review this to identify the necessary resources to ensure the LHI schemes are delivered effectively.

2.7 Mobile Vehicular Activated Signs (MVAS):

- a) Members discussed the current flow of MVAS applications and debated whether or not a separate pot of money should be allocated to remove these from the LHI programme, thus creating a separate process. However, as it would be difficult to predict future interest regarding MVAS bids, Members decided that no changes to the current process should be made at this time.

2.8 Other:

- a) The working group suggested that once the online panel meetings take place this year (due to current circumstances) a review should be undertaken to understand the merit with continuing with online panels in the future. The review should clearly identify advantages as well as disadvantages and also involve applicants in order to seek their views on the "new"

online process.

3. Alignment with corporate priorities

3.1 A good quality of life for everyone

The Local Highway Improvement initiative provides local community groups with an opportunity to address issues and so to improve safety. Section 2 of the report, in particular paragraph 2.3e, defines suggested amendments to the process, which in turn should have positive impact on the quality of life.

3.2 Thriving places for people to live

As per the paragraph 3.1, section 2 of the report, in particular paragraph 2.3e concerns revised LHI criteria as per Members suggestion. If approved, these would refer to CCC's corporate priorities, including 'Thriving places for people to live'.

3.3 The best start for Cambridgeshire's children

As per the paragraph 3.1, section 2 of the report, in particular paragraph 2.3e concerns revised LHI criteria as per Members suggestion. If approved, these would refer to CCC's corporate priorities, including 'The best start for children'.

3.4 Net zero carbon emissions for Cambridgeshire by 2050

As per the paragraph 3.1, section 2 of the report, in particular paragraph 2.3e concerns revised LHI criteria as per Members suggestion. If approved, these would refer to CCC's corporate priorities, including 'Zero carbon emissions by 2050'.

4. Significant Implications

4.1 Resource Implications

Regarding paragraph 2.3d, in the past County's webpage called "Improving the local highway" was created to help Applicant's explore common highway issues and suggested resolutions. It was done to reduce the level of application pre-engagement required. Also, should information available on the website be not explanatory enough, Applicants are to liaise with Local Highway Officers in the first instance. Depending on the level of pre-engagement advice needed, it is likely to have both cost and staff implications.

4.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

4.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

4.4 Equality and Diversity Implications

There are no significant implications within this category. Section 2 of the report, in particular paragraphs 2.3e and 2.4, outlines suggested improvements that will have a positive impact.

4.5 Engagement and Communications Implications

There are no significant implications within this category. Section 2 of the report, in particular paragraphs 2.3c and 2.3d, outlines suggested improvements that will have a positive impact.

4.6 Localism and Local Member Involvement

Members have been consulted as part of this refinement process.

4.7 Public Health Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

4.8 Environment and Climate Change Implications on Priority Areas:

4.8.1 Implication 1: Energy efficient, low carbon buildings.

Positive/neutral/negative Status: neutral

Explanation: The LHI process does not involve physical buildings, only infrastructure on the public highway.

4.8.2 Implication 2: Low carbon transport.

Positive/neutral/negative Status: neutral

Explanation: Depending on the infrastructure implemented there could be an increase to walking and cycling, however this is very dependent on the wishes of the local community.

4.8.3 Implication 3: Green spaces, peatland, afforestation, habitats and land management.

Positive/neutral/negative Status: neutral

Explanation: The LHI process involves small scale local infrastructure on the public highway. There is no impact on wider green spaces etc.

4.8.4 Implication 4: Waste Management and Tackling Plastic Pollution.

Positive/neutral/negative Status: neutral

Explanation: The LHI process does only involves localised community infrastructure on the public highway.

4.8.5 Implication 5: Water use, availability and management:

Positive/neutral/negative Status: neutral

Explanation: The LHI process does only involves localised community infrastructure on the public highway.

4.8.6 Implication 6: Air Pollution.

Positive/neutral/negative Status: neutral

Explanation: Depending on the infrastructure implemented there could be an increase to walking and cycling, however this is very dependent on the wishes of the local community.

4.8.7 Implication 7: Resilience of our services and infrastructure and supporting vulnerable people to cope with climate change.
Positive/neutral/negative Status: neutral
Explanation: The LHI process does only involves localised community infrastructure on the public highway. There is no impact on this implication.

Have the resource implications been cleared by Finance? Yes
Name of Financial Officer: Sarah Heywood

Have the procurement/contractual/ Council Contract Procedure Rules implications been cleared by the LGSS Head of Procurement? Yes
Name of Officer: Gus de Silva

Has the impact on statutory, legal and risk implications been cleared by the Council's Monitoring Officer or LGSS Law? Yes
Name of Legal Officer: Fiona McMillan

Have the equality and diversity implications been cleared by your Service Contact? Yes
Name of Officer: Elsa Evans

Have any engagement and communication implications been cleared by Communications? Yes
Name of Officer: Sarah Silk

Have any localism and Local Member involvement issues been cleared by your Service Contact? Yes
Name of Officer: Richard Lumley

Have any Public Health implications been cleared by Public Health? Yes or No
Name of Officer:

If a Key decision, have any Environment and Climate Change implications been cleared by the Climate Change Officer? Yes or No
Name of Officer: n/a

5. Source documents guidance

5.1 Source documents

Local Highway Improvement (LHI) Proposed Member Working Group committee report

5.2 Location

[Document.ashx \(cmis.uk.com\)](http://Document.ashx (cmis.uk.com))

APPENDIX A - Revised LHI criteria

Your scheme should meet the four aims of the LHI initiative as set out below. You will be asked to demonstrate how your scheme fulfils these criteria on the application form. Later your application will also be scored based on these criteria, by the LHI Member Advisory Panel for your area.

1. Is this a persistent highway problem

- Evidence that the problem has persisted for some time and the degree to which the problem will be addressed by the proposal should be fully detailed. A description of any measures that have been implemented in the past with limited success should also be included where possible, such as Community Speed Watch for speeding related issues.

2. What are the current safety hazards and how will your application improve road safety?

Applicants should identify the road safety aspects of their proposal, the hazards that currently exist and how the proposal could contribute to their reduction, or general improvement of road safety. The County Council has an [online interactive map](#) that contains accident data from the last five years, which can be used to evidence the current need for improvement.

3. How will the local community benefit?

Does the wider community, particularly those directly affected, support this scheme proposal?

How important is this issue on a local level? Evidence that your proposal is supported by the local community including your County Councillor will be required, along with the level of local consultation that has been carried out.

4. Does the scheme have added value?

Reflect on your application. With regard to County's vision for Cambridgeshire, how does your application contribute to one or more of the corporate priorities, as listed below?

- A good quality of life for everyone
- Thriving places for people to live
- The best start for children
- Zero carbon emissions by 2050

APPENDIX B - Current LHI criteria

Your scheme should meet the four aims of the LHI initiative as set out below. You will be asked to demonstrate how your scheme fulfils these criteria on the application form. Later your application will also be scored based on these criteria, by the LHI Member Advisory Panel for your area.

1. Is this a persistent highway problem

Evidence that the problem has persisted for some time and the degree to which the problem will be addressed by the proposal should be fully detailed. A description of any measures that have been implemented in the past with limited success should also be included.

2. What are the current safety hazards and how will your application improve road safety?

Applicants should identify the road safety aspects of their proposal, the hazards that currently exist and how the proposal could contribute to their reduction, or general improvement of road safety.

The County Council has an [online interactive map](#) that contains accident data from the last five years, which can be used to evidence the current need for improvement.

3. How will the local community benefit?

Does the wider community, particularly those directly affected, support this scheme proposal?

How important is this issue on a local level? Evidence that your proposal is supported by the local community will be required, along with the level of local consultation that has been carried out.

4. Does the scheme have added value?

You should highlight any other particular benefits of your proposal such as:

- Collaboration between organisations in submitting an application.
- Applicants providing funding contributions in excess of the minimum 10% and in proportion to their annual precept, if the applicant is a parish or town council
- Evidence that the applicant has pursued alternative options to solve the issue, such as Community Speed Watch for speeding related issues.
- Evidence of significant local and / or member support.

APPENDIX C - FAQs for Panel Members

Q1. What happens in an LHI panel?

A1. Members weigh up the available evidence from reports and presentations to assess and assign scores to each LHI bid.

Q2. What report do officers provide to help in this process?

A2. You will be provided with the technical appraisal spreadsheet containing information of bids within your district area. This summarises information about them, including objectives, proposed solutions and officer comments about delivery, effectiveness, safety and maintenance.

Q3. Who makes the presentations?

A3. A representative of the group or organisation that submitted the LHI bid usually presents and may be accompanied by a colleague or elected councillor.

Q4. How does the scoring system work?

A4. You judge each bid against four criteria: persistent problem; road safety; community improvement; added value. These are the categories used on the LHI application form.

Q5. Are all criteria equally weighted?

A5. Yes

Q6. Can I take into account the technical feasibility of a scheme in my scoring?

A6. No, schemes have already been through a technical feasibility by officers prior to this point, so you should score as if the scheme is technically feasible

Q7. Can I give a lower or higher score on the grounds of cost?

A7. No.

Q8. Should schemes be scored relative to each other?

A8. No, the schemes should be scored individually against the standards

Q9. Should I score all the bids?

A9. No, you must not score bids that are within your division

Q10. How is the scoring used?

A10. Scores from panel members for each bid are totalled and divided by the number of members scoring to create a rank order of overall scores

Q11. How does the allocation of funding work?

A11. The higher scored bids are funded down to the point where all available county funding has been allocated

Q12. Does the LHI panel make the final decision?

A12. No, the results of the panels' scoring are presented to the Highways and Transport Committee for a decision to proceed with the schemes that fall within the budget

Q13. Will my scores be published?

A13. No, only the aggregated scores are published for each scheme