

Equality Impact Assessment - LHI

Key service delivery objectives and outcomes *

Describe the objectives the service is working towards and the current outcomes being achieved, to give context to your proposal. If this is a new service and these needs/objectives have never been met before, please state this instead of describing the current outcomes

The existing Local Highway Improvement (LHI) initiative provides the opportunity for local groups, including Parish and Town Councils to promote local highway improvements in their community that would not normally be prioritised nor funded by the County Council. Through the initiative external groups are invited to apply for funding of up to £15,000 per project, subject to those groups providing at least 10% of the total cost of the scheme. The schemes are community driven, giving local people influence over bringing forward highway improvements. The County Council contributes around £820,000 towards each round of the LHI initiative, with the rest of the funding being provided by the applicant on a scheme-by-scheme basis. This amounts to a total available budget per LHI cycle in the region of £1,100,000. This results in sufficient funding to deliver around 70 schemes countywide per cycle out of the 170 applications received. As the above application figures highlight the LHI process is popular and consistently oversubscribed. The existing process is also acknowledged as being both complex and time consuming for all parties, as a result Members of the Highways and Transport Committee requested the opportunity to review and improve the LHI initiative. The key issues the committee were looking to understand, and address included; why certain types of projects take longer to be delivered, the time and resources needed from all parties involved in the process to progress an application, and how to improve how applications are scored and assessed.

Key service outcomes *

Describe the outcomes the service is working to achieve

Improvements to the existing LHI process.

What is the proposal *

Describe what is changing and why

Following a number of cross party member working groups the following changes have been proposed –

Proposed change Introduction of two process routes, Non-complex and Complex Schemes - Submissions will be divided dependant on the nature and extent of works and will be processed as either Non-complex or Complex applications, (see appendices). Non-complex applications will be assessed using a prioritisation matrix by officers and ranked accordingly. Complex applications will follow the traditional route and be assessed by the relevant area member panel. The Non-complex process is made up of the following types of application: parking restrictions such as double or single yellow lining, street

lighting, speed limits such as 40mph buffer zones passive traffic calming measures including signs and lining Mobile Vehicle Activated Signs. The Complex Schemes process encompasses all forms of physical traffic calming or improvement work such as - raised features, central islands, priority chicanes, pedestrian crossings foot/cycle paths. It was agreed that the newly introduced processes would be reviewed by a subsequent LHI MWG after the 23/24 LHI programme had been approved for delivery to explore what could be improved further. These changes are expected to make the process more efficient for officers in the application / feasibility phase and allow members more time on panel days to assess those more complex schemes which have more of an impact on local communities.

Change to risk contingencies for financial estimates will be dependent on the type of application. This will vary, for Non-complex schemes the risk contingency priced will be set at 10%, for Complex schemes the contingency will be set at 23% which is in line with current government guidance when delivering construction projects with a considerable number of unknowns. This change will allow more accurate budget setting at project inception which should make the delivery timeline shorter, and allow better management of unknown risks.

Change to funding amounts depending on type, either Non-complex or Complex Scheme. Previously the amount was set at £15,000 for every type of application. The County contribution for Non-complex projects will be reduced to a maximum of £10,000, while for Complex projects the maximum contribution will be increased to £25,000. The overall level of funding for the LHI process will remain the same. This change will allow more accurate budget setting at project inception, better management of unknown risks and address inflationary related cost increases.

Use of an agreed prioritisation matrix to score and rank Non-complex applications, with delegation to officers, (see appendices for example). The matrix will be used to score and rank the Non-complex applications, with those above the allocated funding amount being progressed. Using this process should allow work to start sooner.

A set budget for each district area will be agreed by members and set aside to fund this part of the process. Whilst delegated to officer's members will have oversight and the criteria to be used by officers has been reviewed and approved by the MWG (Member Working Group). Once officer scoring has been completed the MWG will reconvene to review the submitted scores and prioritised list of schemes to ensure consistency before they are submitted to H&T for approval. These changes are expected to make the process more efficient for officers in the application / feasibility phase and allow members more time on panel days to assess those more complex schemes which have more of an impact on local communities.

Percentage funding amount per District to be set aside for Non-complex / Complex Scheme LHI's. Looking at the previous year's applications (2022/23) a 50% split was agreed to be appropriate. Half the funding allocated for each district will therefore be ringfenced for Non-complex, and the other half for Complex Schemes for 23/24. It is recommended that this is reviewed annually and adjusted as appropriate. Depending on the breakdown of scheme applications received it will be possible for different funding splits for each of the 5 districts. This will be agreed with Chair and Vice Chair of Highways & Transport. This is required to enact the changes to the LHI process. The overall amount allocated and spent in each district area will remain the same as in previous years.

Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) - Introduce two Key Performance Indicators a cyclic qualitative survey distributed to applicants upon completion of the programme for that intake. This will be sent out six months after work has been completed on site. A second KPI will measure delivery performance of the overall LHI programme against a baseline programme for that intake as follows - 'Where a financial and programme baseline is set, the cumulative percentage of projects that are on time and within budget.' These changes will allow the communities which apply to feedback on their experiences using the process, and this feedback will be used to positively shape the LHI process going forward. The second KPI will allow members to objectively scrutinise delivery of the LHI programme to agreed timescales.

Member Panel Scoring at panel days is to be more open and collaborative going forward with time set aside for members to discuss the merits of the applications presented and their own individual scores / views towards that application. Scoring itself will be done subjectively and individually by each member. This is to ensure scoring is consistent across the panel and allows members the chance to talk through similar schemes and how they have scored them to make sure the applications have received due consideration and scrutiny as a group.

Member Panel – Cambridge City It has been agreed that two Cambridge City Cllrs will sit on the member panel and assess / score Complex applications in addition to the elected County members. This is reverting to a previous LHI format to address the fact the City contributes the third party funding in entirety in the Cambridge City area. This was requested by the City Council to make sure there is adequate understanding of where the allocated funding is being spent.

Member Training on the scoring process is to be delivered by officers for those members sitting on the area panels in advance of the panel days. This will deliver a consistent scoring approach. This is to ensure scoring is consistent across the panel and allows members the chance to talk through the process to make sure they are clear prior to applicants presenting their bids.

Member panel scoring sheets / criteria to mirror the prioritisation matrix where feasible, (see appendices). This is to make sure that applications are being scored consistently by members and officers, whichever part of the process the application is assessed under (Non-complex or Complex Scheme).

Applications to be presented virtually and online. Applicants will be required to present their bids virtually and submit their applications via an online form. The virtual meetings allow applicants added flexibility as they do not have to travel to present their bid in person and it is hoped this will encourage applicants to present themselves, rather than officers presenting on the applicant's behalf. There is the option of getting members / officers in a room physically at New Shire Hall or in the relevant district area where possible. This will be at the discretion of each area panel. Officers will present applications where it is not possible for the applicants to present themselves, but this will be by exception.

Amendments to Application process. As well as being changed to an online form for the applicant to populate applicants will also be required to – A) Provide confirmation that in instances where applications cross parish or ward boundaries both parishes and local members are in support of the applications. B) Confirm that they have discussed the scheme

with the local member and that they understand and are in support of the application. C) Provide confirmation upfront with their submitted application for how they are funding their proportion of the project. For example, this could be a written statement confirming they have the funding available to spend via available S106 funding or by raising their precept. This is to prevent applications where the applicant does not have any funding in place and needs to apply to a third party to secure funding, such as Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) bidding, which causes delays to the delivery of the LHI programme. D) The applicant will be asked to confirm that they have informally consulted with local stakeholders who would be affected by the proposed scheme and have their support for the application, as well as detailing exactly what level of consultation has taken place to date. These changes will ensure that schemes are funded which are supported by local communities and are suitable for delivery.

Scheme withdrawal. If once approved for funding officers identify that a scheme needs to be materially different to the one submitted by the applicant, as a direct result of an issue which the applicant had control over, then the scheme will be withdrawn in consultation with Chair & Vice Chair of H&T. The applicant will be encouraged to reapply in the next LHI round. This prevents schemes that do not have the support of the local community, and which would need to be materially different to progress, as they weren't what the funding was originally allocated for.

Community groups and other parties. The current LHI Initiative allows for one scheme application per year per Parish or one application per County Cllr in Town or City areas and five schemes per County Cllr for Cambridge City (no Parish Councils). This recommendation would adjust the process to allow for a community group to make one additional funding application only, per respective parish, town, or city, (this does not apply to Cambridge City).

Proof of funding and payment. It was felt this needed to be considered earlier in the process, rather than once the project is completed in certain instances. It is suggested that where the applicant funding contribution is being provided by a third party; other than a parish, town, or city council, that the agreed funding amount is invoiced once the design has been approved, a cost for the work has been agreed and a delivery date provided to the applicant, this will be before work starts on site. This is to address concerns that invoicing at the end of the project once complete on site may lead to difficulties in recouping the applicant contribution and is based on similar past experiences.

What information did you use to assess who would be affected by this proposal? *
e.g. statistics, consultation documents, studies, research, customer feedback, briefings, comparative policies etc.

Discussions internally with various CCC teams and officers. Feedback received from applicants such as parish councils and City Cllrs regarding the existing process. Discussion and feedback from members who have participated in the LHI process. A cross-party member working group which met regularly throughout July & August 2022 and was set up to review the existing process and suggest changes to H&T. Sitting members discussed issues with the parishes they represent and fed back to the group. The group then reviewed proposed changes and arrived at a majority decision regarding which ones would be proposed to H&T. Officers also scrutinised and soft tested the process changes to make sure they were fit for purpose and workable.

Are there any gaps in the information you used to assess who would be affected by this proposal? *No

Does the proposal cover *☐ ☐ ☒ All service users/customers/service provision countywide

Which particular employee groups/service user groups will be affected by this proposal? *

e.g. all staff in 'X' team, all staff in 'y' location, all customers receiving 'x' service, all customers in 'y' area

This proposal potentially impacts all residents / users in Cambridgeshire as anyone can apply to the LHI process for funding. This is however a bottom up process which relies on individuals, parishes, towns, cities or community groups to actively apply for funding to deliver highway improvements in their community. The change also affects the internal team which will deliver the work although it is a revised, rather than completely new process.

Does the proposal relate to the equality objectives set by the Council's Single Equality Strategy? *Yes
Council's Single Equality Strategy

Will people with particular protected characteristics or people experiencing socio-economic inequalities be over/under represented in affected groups? *

Does the proposal relate to services that have been identified as being important to people with particular protected characteristics/who are experiencing socio-economic inequalities? *No

Protected characteristics

Does the proposal relate to an area with known inequalities? *No

What is the significance of the impact on affected persons? *

The aim here is to focus your mind on the lived experiences of the people impacted by our decisions, understanding they are part of these people's wider lives. Think about how serious the impact of this change will be, not by itself but as part of wider cumulative impact. For example, disabled people's lives cost more, and disabled people are often poorer, than non disabled people. So a cut to a service that disabled people use is likely to be part of a cumulative experience of financial difficulties and challenges to living as full a life as possible

The aim of the revised LHI process is to make it easier for users to apply, and to ensure the process reaches a wider audience than it does currently by allowing more groups to apply. The changes which are initially requested by the local communities who apply for funding will be delivered in a more timely manner than they are through the current process, and this means a positive impact on communities sooner.

Category of the work being planned *

Is it foreseeable that people from any protected characteristic group(s) or people experiencing socio-economic inequalities will be impacted by the implementation of this proposal (including during the change management process)? *No

Identifying impacts on specific minority / disadvantaged groups

Provide an explanation as to why this proposal will not have an impact on each of the following characteristic/group of people.

Where the same explanation applies to more than one group you can reduce duplication by referencing against the relevant characteristic/group where that information has already been stated

Age

There is the potential that moving the process to wholly online will have a negative impact on users who aren't as confident using IT equipment. This is more prevalent amongst the elderly who are less inclined to use technology. Should this situation arise officers will be contactable for further discussion via email, and this will be clearly flagged on the online application form to assist the individual making the application. If needed the officer can make the online application on the individual's behalf in cooperation with them, or input from a paper copy provided to the applicant to complete in lieu of the online form. It has been agreed that the digital approach is more acceptable in general and reduces the amount of duplication amongst applicants, officers and members, making the process as efficient as possible up front.

Disability

There is the potential that moving the process to wholly online will have a negative impact on users who aren't as confident using IT equipment. This is more prevalent amongst certain groups who are less inclined to use technology or find it difficult to do so. The online forms and approach will be made as accessible as possible for people with disabilities in line with CCC policies on the subject. Should a situation arise where there are issues with the online approach for the applicant then officers will be contactable for further discussion, and this will be clearly flagged on the online application form to assist the individual making the application. If needed the officer can make the online application on the individual's behalf in cooperation with them, or input from a paper copy provided to the applicant to complete in lieu of the online form. It has been agreed that the digital approach is more acceptable in general and reduces the amount of duplication amongst applicants, officers, and members, making the process as efficient as possible up front.

Gender reassignment

No direct impact to this user group

Marriage and civil partnership

No direct impact to this user group

Pregnancy and maternity

No direct impact to this user group

Race

No direct impact to this user group

Religion or belief (including no belief)

No direct impact to this user group

Sex

No direct impact to this user group

Sexual orientation

No direct impact to this user group

Socio – economic inequalities

No direct impact to this user group