

## **Report to the Cabinet**

**Report reference:** C-054-2020/21  
**Date of meeting:** 21<sup>st</sup> January 2021



**Portfolio:** Environment & Technical Services – Cllr. N Avey  
**Subject:** Highway Ranger Service Update  
**Responsible Officer:** Mandy Thompson (01992 564076).  
**Democratic Services Officer:** Adrian Hendry (01992 564246)

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### **Recommendations/Decisions Required:**

**To note the good progress of work that the Highway Rangers have made since the transfer of service from Ringway Jacobs to the Council.**

### **Executive Summary:**

The Highway Ranger services is provided by Essex Highways through each of the Local Highways Panel for district and borough Councils. Across Essex a number of authorities deliver the service in house. Epping Forest District was one of the few authorities where the service was provided by Ringway Jacobs.

Following a joint agreement, the service was transferred from Ringway Jacobs to Epping Forest District Council on 1 April 2020. Despite the onset of Covid-19 and the challenges it has presented the Council has been successful in setting up the new service. Funding for the Rangers is provided by Essex County Council. However, EFDC has allocated some additional funding to do some additional work which is over and above their core duties.

The purpose of this report is to provide a progress report to Members.

### **Reasons for Proposed Decision:**

To provide an update to Members on the successful launch and ongoing work of the Epping Forest Highway Rangers

### **Options for Action:**

To not provide an update to Members. This has been discounted as this is a new service and it is felt that Members should receive an update.

### **Report:**

1. Essex Highways operate Highway Rangers in each local authority area. This is a small, two operatives, team that carries out low level highway repair and maintenance works. The intention is to deliver effective local repair and maintenance works in local communities.
2. The scope of the work that can be undertaken by the Highway Ranger service is

determined by the fact that it must be achievable by 2 people and a van, who carry a small selection of hand tools. Requests for Highways Rangers should be limited to work on public highways. The Rangers do not undertake excavations or works that require traffic management such as pot-hole repair which remain the responsibility of the Essex Highways.

3. Following the successful appointment to the two posts the service was fully transferred to the EFDC. The team sits within the Environmental Protection and Drainage Team and is working well; the transition of the service has been smooth, and it has bedded in well within the wider team.

5. The attached PowerPoint presentation (appendix 1) details the work carried out by the team since its implementation in September. Additional works carried out include clearing 3 offensive graffiti incidents for Safer Communities, installing a new dog waste bin for Parking team, repair of stone planters for Grounds Maintenance and some hedge work.

6. Cabinet has allocated £1,000 for repair and installation of new Finger Posts, to be share funded by Town and Parish Councils. Some finger post repairs, and renovation work has been carried out with plans to replace in 2021.

7. The team have been providing support to the restoration of both Epping and Waltham Abbey High Streets in addition to their routine work, an additional benefit to the Council of the service transferring to EFDC. Once these areas are complete other town centres will be addressed, Officers are liaising with Ongar Town Council on high street improvement works.

8. The web page report form is working well 92 online and internal reports have been received since the launch of the Service. However, not all reports are appropriate for the team, 16 requests have been rejected for reasons that have included major works for Essex Highways on fast roads and resurfacing, cutting back private hedges and the repair of a private wall.

9. Picture posts of the work of the rangers have been posted on social media and have been well received.

### **Resource Implications:**

The Service is funded through an £80k ECC Revenue Budget and will be carried out in partnership with Essex County Council. Additional funding was agreed at February Cabinet for the set-up costs of the service.

£1000 match funding for Finger Posts has been allocated from within existing budget provision.

### **Legal and Governance Implications:**

The responsibility for carrying out capital improvement schemes or ongoing maintenance of the public highway is that of the Essex County Council. ECC has established Local Highway Panels in each local authority which manages and recommends for consideration for approval by the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport at Essex County Council.

The LHP is also responsible for the funding and works carried out by Highway Rangers.

### **Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:**

The nature of schemes carried out by Rangers improves and enhances highway safety,

casualty reduction and pedestrian walkway improvements. These by their nature improve safety for users and enhance the public realm.

By having the service delivered directly by EFDC the response times are quicker and the local knowledge gained by the Rangers has proven invaluable in achieving good outcomes.

**Consultation Undertaken:**

None

**Background Papers:**

Appendix 1 PowerPoint presentation

**Risk Management:**

The Ranger service is delivered by the Council in partnership with ECC. If the Service is not properly managed and supervised, then there is a reputational risk for the Council. This risk is mitigated by embedding the Ranger team with the Environmental Protection and Drainage Team. Adequate supervisory and management oversight of the Service is maintained, and all necessary statutory compliance and health and safety systems are put in place which are routinely monitored.