

Committee	FULL COUNCIL
Date	21 September 2021
Agenda Item	16

Invitation to join Highways devolution scheme

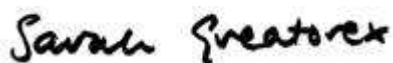
Back in June 2019, Essex County Council and the Essex Association of Local Councils joined early adopter West Bergholt Parish Council to formally launch an innovative highways scheme devolving some decision-making down to our local communities. This has evolved into the Highways Devolution programme. We are currently inviting new Parishes in Essex to take part.

The scheme helps participating Parish and Town Councils across Essex County Council's jurisdiction, to improve their area based on the local community's knowledge and needs. Focused on the local delivery of smaller-scale works such as verge and vegetation work, traffic sign maintenance and minor footway repairs, the scheme allows local councils who choose to participate to improve their street scene quicker than the county council can in many cases. This in turn will enable the ECC to focus on delivery of the larger, more complex highway works such as road resurfacing and other capital projects, which have a wider impact and need more specialist skills, resources and equipment.

HTC has been told that if it were to join this scheme, the sum of £8000 would be made available to cover the cost of doing the devolved work. ECC cannot however confirm whether the funds will continue to be available in 2022, nor can they tell us exactly what areas would be looked after in this way if we were to go down the devolution route.

Although this might seem an attractive proposition, the costs of implementing at are likely to far exceed the £8000 offered. For any new work taken on, to be done by an extra part-time employee at HTC, we would need a further set of equipment – vehicle, trailer, hedge-cutters and other equipment, and would also be responsible for the disposal of the materials cut. If pavements or sections of road had to be closed, there would also be a cost. Anyone carrying out this kind of work would need to be trained to work at heights and to handle potentially dangerous equipment, as our groundsmen are.

Recommendation : that HTC declines the invitation to carry out work devolved from Essex Highways.



Sarah Greateorex Town Clerk