

Report to the Cabinet

Report reference: C-032-2014/15
Date of meeting: 3 November 2016



**Epping Forest
District Council**

Portfolio: Safer Greener and Transport

Subject: North Essex Parking Partnership – Extension of Joint Committee Agreement for a further four years

Responsible Officer: Qasim (Kim) Durrani (01992 564055).

Democratic Services: Gary Woodhall (01992 564470).

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

- (1) To note that the delegated authority from Essex County Council (ECC) to the North Essex Partnership (NEPP) for the administration of on street parking arrangement comes to an end in March 2018 and ECC, following a review of the arrangement, has decided to extend this up to 2022, subject to the approval of the Joint Committee of NEPP in December; and**
- (2) To delegate to the Portfolio Holder for Safer Greener and Transport the authority to agree the four year extension at the Joint Committee meeting in December 2016 from 2018 to 2022; and**
- (3) To note the dissatisfaction of the Council at the lack of performance of NEPP within the District and ask the Portfolio Holder to get assurance of improved performance.**

Executive Summary:

The North Essex Partnership (NEPP) was created in 2011 when Essex County Council (ECC) took back the on-street parking arrangement from District and Borough Councils. It consists of six authorities: Epping Forest District Council, Harlow District Council, Uttlesford District Council, Braintree District Council, Colchester Borough Council and Tendring District Council. Colchester Borough Council is the lead authority and all the staff is employed by them. The Partnership is governed by the Joint Committee which consists of Portfolio Holders from all the constituent members as well as ECC.

NEPP was set up for an initial seven year period with an option to extend by another four years. ECC has during 2016 carried out a review of the performance of NEPP and decided to offer the four year extension. This will be discussed at the December 2016 Joint Committee meeting and a joint decision taken on the extension. It is for this reason that all Portfolio Holders representing the member authorities are required to come with the necessary delegated authority.

By granting delegated authority to the Portfolio Holder for Safer Greener and Transport the Council will ensure that it is a full partner in the management of NEPP and be responsible for the on-street parking arrangements within Epping Forest District.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

The responsibility for on-street parking arrangement is that of ECC who has elected to delegate this to NEPP for a further four year period. In order for the Council to benefit from this arrangement the Portfolio Holder has to have delegated authority at the December Joint Committee meeting to agree to the extension on behalf of Epping Forest District.

Other Options for Action:

The Council can refuse to be part of the next four year extension. However NEPP will continue to operate on-street parking enforcement in the Epping Forest District. This will mean that the Council will have no influence over the decision made by NEPP within the administrative boundary of the District.

It is in the gift of the County Council how it wishes to operate the on-street parking arrangements. Whereas the Council would like to perform this function itself the current preference for ECC is to continue with NEPP.

Report:

1. At the time NEPP was set-up in 2011 Epping Forest District was the only authority in Essex that had an outsourced operation, Vinci Parks Limited were the contractors. In order to avoid financial penalties for early termination of the contract the Council joined the NEPP at the end of the contract with Vinci Parks in October 2012.

2. NEPP is operated under a legal agreement between the six district and borough councils and ECC. Colchester Borough Council is the lead authority responsible for the delivery of on-street enforcement and associated functions. The initial term of the contract was seven years with a possibility for a further four years extension. The initial contract term will end in March 2018

3. ECC has carried out a review of the Partnership, facilitated by Blue Marble, which included officers from all the districts and borough councils. All options available to ECC were considered and the conclusion of the review is to extend NEPP for another four years, with revised terms (**recommendation 1**).

4. At the time the on-street arrangements were taken back by ECC there was an estimated deficit across the County of circa £ 1 million. In NEPP area alone the total deficit was £600,000. Some areas of the County and indeed NEPP generate more on-street income than others, and this variation allows ECC to balance the costs of enforcement. If the on-street operations were split into individual districts then it would be difficult for ECC to operate on a balanced budget.

5. At the time of its creation, in addition to the £600,000 deficit which was underwritten by ECC for the first two years, NEPP inherited a backlog of defective signs and lines and a haphazard approach to implementation of new traffic controls and parking restrictions across the area. It is worthwhile to note the success achieved by NEPP:

- Full recovery of the £600,000 deficit and operating on a balanced budget;
- delivery of 432 signs and lines improvement schemes;
- 163 new Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO) in the whole partnership, out of which 82 were in Epping Forest District;
- creation of capacity to undertake large area wide schemes - Loughton Broadway Parking Review being currently carried out in the District; and
- creation of budget surplus to introduce new TRO.

6. If the Council were to decide to not be part of NEPP then, based on the information and feedback from other district and boroughs and ECC, it is very likely that NEPP will accept the four year extension. This will mean that the on-street arrangements in the District will continue to be managed by NEPP, run by the Joint Committee consisting of other local authorities, and the Council will have no input or influence over the decisions made within the Epping Forest District. It is recommended that it is far better for the Council to be in the Partnership than not. This will enable the Council to influence decision making, it is for this reason that it is recommended to give delegated authority to the Portfolio Holder (**recommendation 2**).

7. The District has within its administrative boundary: seven London Underground Stations and one mainline station at Roydon whereas Sawbridgeworth main line station is just across the border in Hertfordshire. The proximity to London and access to M25 and M11 represents unique challenges for the highway network within the District. There is a strong feeling among Members that NEPP and ECC have failed to recognise these key features and continue to treat the District as the rest of Essex, which is neither fair nor appropriate. Members would like reassurance from the Portfolio Holder that NEPP will take steps to address these concerns (**recommendation 3**).

Resource Implications:

No additional resource impact on the Council. The current planned Loughton Broadway Parking Review can continue until completion.

Legal and Governance Implications:

The Joint Committee is an Executive Committee and the Council is represented by the Portfolio Holder for Safer, Greener and Transport. ECC will revise the terms of the agreement with the lead authority, Colchester Borough Council, these will be reviewed by the Councils Monitoring Officer before being agreed.

Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:

Free flow of traffic, congestion parking and making and updating Traffic Regulation Orders.

Consultation Undertaken:

Blue Marble carried out a review of both, North and South, Partnerships in which officers from all districts and boroughs and ECC participated.

Background Papers:

Cabinet reports setting out the reasons for joining NEPP.

Risk Management:

As a full member of the NEPP this Council is responsible for covering any financial loss that the Partnership makes in any one financial year, this is the condition on which the County Council has delegated this responsibility. As the notice of withdrawal from NEPP has to be conterminous with the end of a financial year it is the case that Council will be liable, proportionally, for the loss made by NEPP in any financial year. However the on-street management account of NEPP has been in a surplus over the past three years and the Joint Committee has dedicated £100,000 in a reserve fund to cover any losses.

Due Regard Record

This page shows **which groups of people are affected** by the subject of this report. It sets out **how they are affected** and how any **unlawful discrimination** they experience can be eliminated. It also includes information about how **access to the service(s)** subject to this report can be improved for the different groups of people; and how they can be assisted to **understand each other better** as a result of the subject of this report.

S149 Equality Act 2010 requires that due regard must be paid to this information when considering the subject of this report.

Appropriate provision is made for people with disabilities to park on the public highway.