

NORTH ESSEX PARKING PARTNERSHIP JOINT COMMITTEE FOR ON-STREET PARKING

**4 October 2012 at 1.30pm
Rowan House, Colchester**

Present: - Councillor Susan Barker (Uttlesford District Council)
Councillor Penny Channer (Essex County Council)
Councillor Martin Hunt (Colchester Borough Council)
Councillor Neil Stock (Tendring District Council)
Councillor Gary Waller (Epping Forest District Council)

Apologies: - Councillor Jon Clempner (Harlow District Council)
Councillor Derrick Louis (Essex County Council)
Councillor Robert Mitchell (Braintree District Council)
Councillor Wendy Schmitt (Braintree District Council)

Also Present: - Mr. Trevor Degville (Parking Partnership)
Ms. Vicky Duff (Essex County Council)
Mr. Robert Judd (Colchester Borough Council)
Mr. Joe McGill (Harlow District Council)
Mr. Paul Partridge (Braintree District Council)
Ms. Emma Day (Parking Partnership)
Ms. Hayley McGrath (Colchester)
Mr. Andrew Taylor (Uttlesford District Council)
Mr. Ian Taylor (Tendring District Council)
Mr. Richard Walker (Parking Partnership)
Mr. Matthew Young (Colchester Borough Council)

Apologies: - Mr. Qasim Durrani (Epping Forest District Council)
Ms. Liz Saville (Essex County Council)

11. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Susan Barker, in respect of being a Member of Essex County Council, declared a non-pecuniary interest in the following items.

12. Have Your Say

Mr. Bob Russell, MP for Colchester addressed the Committee to speak about two issues.

Mr. Russell's first issue concerned the Royal Mail building at Moorside, Colchester. Mr. Russell said changes to the way customers receive Royal Mail parcels has meant an increase in car journeys by customers to the Moorside site, yet due to the parking restrictions in the vicinity (there is only two spaces available to the public one of which is for disabled parking), the parking available to customers is totally inadequate.

Moorside was covered by a 8am – 6pm parking ban, and given the Royal Mail had no spare ground to designate for customer parking, Mr. Russell asked that the Committee amend the parking restrictions to enable customers to park for up to a maximum of thirty minutes.

Mr. Russell's second issue concerned John Harper Street, off North Station Road, a small road that provided access to the local primary school.

Mr. Russell said of the ten parking spaces in the Street, there used to be three spaces made available for customers to the nearby shops in North Station Road, but this parking facility had been removed. Mr. Russell asked the Committee to consider the reinstatement of the three parking spaces that would help go towards providing an economic boost to the area, but would not negatively affect those already parking in the Street.

Councillor Stock said he was a frequent customer to the Moorside Royal Mail site and agreed with Mr. Russell that the parking provision provided by the Royal Mail was inadequate. Councillor Stock supported Mr. Russell's request for parking in the area to be re-assessed.

Councillor Barker said that it was usual practice for traffic regulation requests to be registered with the Parking Partnership for an assessment to be made.

Councillor Hunt confirmed that he would look at both areas with officers before Colchester's prioritised list of traffic Regulation Orders are reported to the next Sub Committee meeting on 18 October.

13. Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 21 June 2012 was confirmed as a correct record.

14. Counsels Advice

The Joint Committee noted the advice from Counsel about Membership of the Joint Committee and the ability to vote, that in order to vote on the North Essex Parking Partnership Joint Committee the member needed to be an Executive Member of the partner authority.

Mr. Judd explained that this was a requirement of the Legal Agreement between Essex County Council and the partner authorities.

It appeared that in regards to Braintree District Council, they had sought to delegate the power to vote to Councillor Mitchell rather than make him a full Cabinet Member, which is not sufficient to satisfy the legislative requirements, and still means that he is unable to vote at any meeting of the Joint Committee.

Mr. Judd confirmed this issue was now being dealt with by Philip Thomson (County Solicitor) and Terry Osborne (Monitoring Officer) who will seek to discuss this issue directly with Braintree.

RESOLVED that the advice from Counsel was noted.

15. Risk Management Strategy

Ms. McGrath, Risk and Resilience Manager (Colchester) presented the Risk Management Strategy and Risk Register.

The strategy was a regular item for review and provided an effective risk management process on a continuous cycle of identification, controlling, monitoring and reviewing of potential risk issues.

Ms. McGrath explained the scoring system and mentioned the new risk added to the register, risk 2.15, 'The changes to the cash collection processes of the lead authority and impact on the service, financially or procedurally'.

In regards to the controls for risk 1.1, Councillor Barker said that for each authority to have to nominate a substitute member was impractical, that the Partnership's Legal Agreement allowed for any Cabinet member with Executive Powers to be able to substitute for a NEPP Member. Councillor Barker agreed with the control over publishing dates and documents in good time and asked that every effort was made to ensure compliance.

Mr. Young (Colchester) agreed with Councillor Barker, saying there is now a media awareness of NEPP, and supported the view of working within governance arrangements to maintain the reputation of the partnership.

Ms. McGrath confirmed that in regards to risk 2.2, the cost of insuring for loss of income for off-street parking is negligible. Machines are insured on an individual basis with insurance payouts dependent on usage. The cost of insuring these machines was a small part of the Council's overall premium. Mr. A. Taylor (Uttlesford) said a Business Continuity Plan was the key to risks such as 'Inability to access buildings and systems required files and computers to provide the service'. Mr. Young (Colchester) said this risk needed to be extended to include systems failure.

Councillor Stock said the risk 1.8 'Decisions are taken on a political basis as opposed to being considered on their own merits' was confusing. The membership of the Joint Committee is politicians, so voting on all decisions is a political process. Councillor Stock also said voting on a party basis was not a good thing. Councillor Stock commented that given the suggested changes and amendments to the register, the note at the bottom of each page of the register 'Agreed by Committee: 4 Oct 2012, was presumptuous.

In response to Members concerning the overall content of the register, Ms. McGrath said if it made the document more manageable for Members it could be divided into two parts, Strategic and Operational risks. Councillor Waller said he was happy for all the risks to remain in the register.

Councillor Barker and Councillor Stock agreed that risks 1.4 and 1.8 should be combined, with every effort made to separate politics from the risks.

Councillor Stock said that in regards to risk 1.1 and concerning substitute members, he believed risks around meetings not being quorate was more important, and should be included within the risk.

Mr. McGill (Harlow) said risk 2.1 'High Staff Turnover' should at least be a medium risk, not a low risk as stated.

Councillor Waller thanked officers for the hard work in putting together the register, and asked that the Joint Committee are emailed an amended copy of the register taking account of the comments of members and officers.

RESOLVED that the Joint Committee;

- i) Considered the Risk Management Strategy and Risk Register.

- ii) Requested that the comments of members are reflected in the amended register, and the amended register is emailed to members for information.
- iii) Agreed to a further update in 6 months time.

16. Annual Statement of Accounts 2011/12

Ms. McGrath presented the report on the Annual Statement of Accounts 2011/12, notifying the Joint Committee of the completion of the 2011/12 audit and publication of the audited Annual Return.

RESOLVED that the Joint Committee noted the publication of the audited annual return.

17. Harwich Quay Parking Concession

Have Your Say

Mr. David Flavell, a member of Harwich Town Council attended the meeting and spoke on the following item.

Mr. Flavell said the Harwich parking bays in question are located on along the quayside, with one (12 off-street spaces) managed by Tendring District Council, and the second bay (12 on-street spaces) managed by the North Essex Parking Partnership. Each scheme has different parking tariffs and this leads to a lot of confusion by motorists.

Mr. Flavell said he disagreed with the paragraph 2.5 of the report that suggested that there was no evidence to suggest the different tariff is in any way confusing to drivers.

Mr. Flavell said the confusion was having a negative impact on local trade and business and the night time economy.

Harwich Quay Parking Concession

Councillor Barker said that Councillor Callender was in dialogue with Councillor Louis at Essex County Council to consider a solution to this problem, possibly a Land Asset Transfer of Highway Rights.

Mr. I. Taylor (Tendring) said the area in question had taken a large income spike, with road improvement works in the area helping to increase use and income. Mr. Taylor said the area in question was never a part of the NEPP Business Case that it was an off-street scheme, but fortuitously, it had provided income to the partnership. Mr. Taylor said the majority of business in the area is the night time economy of bars and restaurants.

Mr. Taylor suggested a compromise of providing free parking in the area after 5pm and this would help the night time economy, whilst saving the partnership the cost of visiting the area at night.

Councillor Waller said he would support the 5pm free parking as suggested by Mr. Taylor.

Councillor Stock said it was particularly important to resolve this problem to help the night time economy and regenerate the area.

Councillor Hunt said he had voted in favour of changing the scheme at the last meeting and his

view had not changed, supporting the proposal put forward.

Mr. McGill (Harlow) said no charging after 5pm was common in the local neighborhood shopping centres in Harlow Town, an initiative used to attract visitors to the area at night time.

Mr. Walker (NEPP) said it may be possible to implement the changes within 21 days in time for the Harwich Sea Shanty Festival.

RESOLVED that the Joint Committee considered the report and the comments from officers, and voted in favour of introducing a daily no-charge policy to the parking bay at Harwich Quay after 5pm (FOUR voted FOR).

18. CCTV car – Options Appraisal

Mr. Richard Walker (Parking Partnership Group Manager) presented the report on the CCTV Car Options Appraisal that provided an update on previous reports to all options for the possible funding of a CCTV Car.

Mr. Walker gave an appraise of the options available, Partnership Joint Lease, Purchase and Lease Back, Outright Capital Purchase, Enforcement by Officers or “Do Nothing”.

Mr. Walker provided an estimate of financial implications, that took into account the funding and budgets from known projects and claimed returns from similar operations. The options were based on a like for like comparison with the proposed outsourcing solution, where the risk is carried by the contractor.

Members were asked to review the options outlined and the associated risks, and consider if the recommendation that a CCTV Car be procured is a viable option for the Partnership, or whether the Partnership should progress with one of the other options.

Mr. Walker confirmed that the South Essex Parking Partnership operated a CCTV Car under the outright capital purchase option.

Councillor Barker believed that the Partnership Joint Lease was the preferred option for a one year contract during which time an appraisal could be made to determine whether to extend or cancel the contract.

Mr. I. Taylor (Tendring) suggested the Partnership make a request to the South Essex Parking Partnership to loan their CCTV Car to gauge public reaction and monitor the number of tickets issued, and then evaluate before deciding on what option to take. Mr. Partridge (Braintree) suggested a pilot of one day a week in North Essex.

Mr. Walker (Parking Partnership) said the South Essex CCTV Car was closed to monitoring areas outside of the South Essex boundary, though there are private companies who would provide a trial.

Councillor Stock said he was opposed to the introduction of a CCTV Car, and if it was agreed to implement such a scheme he didn't personally wish to see the car operating in the Tendring district. Councillor Stock did not believe CCTV Cars had any redeeming features, was just a 'spy car' used to generate income, and it was not addressing the fundamental issue of trying to eliminate inappropriate and dangerous parking.

Mr. I. Taylor (Tendring) said Councils are very wary of introducing CCTV Cars, that appear to

give no mercy and whilst parking enforcement by its very nature is not popular, this form of parking enforcement only worsens the public's negative perceptions at a time when we need to be trying to improve the image.

Ms. Vicky Duff (Essex County Council) confirmed to Councillor Stock that in terms of risks, accidents and danger in the 'KEEP CLEAR' areas outside schools, this was in the main anecdotal and not evidence based. There is a widely held view by the public of a perceived problem regards to child safety, though the evidence available does not support this view. Nevertheless, this is a huge issue, and there is a need to do something to improve the situation. Ms. Duff said statistically there are very few collisions or accidents outside of schools.

Mr. Walker confirmed to Councillor Waller that the incentives offered to the contractor, as illustrated in the options appraisal are industry standard.

Councillor Barker said if the one-year option was agreed, officers should still use the time to consider other options thereafter, for example, the installation of fixed cameras at schools, and before the end of a one year contract the other options could be assessed before a final decision was taken.

Mr. McGill (Harlow) said the views of Councillor Clempner had been expressed at the last meeting, but it was Harlow's view that a longer term contract may provide better value for money to the Partnership should they proceed with the contract. Mr. McGill said a return on the capital outlay would be expected to happen very soon and the Partnership could then consider giving a contribution of the income to each district, for them to re-invest in highway improvements.

Mr. Walker stressed that the Partnership needed a clear policy on enforcement, though the current resources did not allow for them to physically monitor all the schools in North Essex.

In conclusion Councillor Stock said he believed this introduction of a CCTV Car was knee-jerk reaction and would prefer that a further appraisal is undertaken to look at fixed and mobile enforcement cameras and further more, that consultation is undertaken to contribute to a more evidence based decision.

Councillors Barker, Waller and Hunt were agreed to option of a Partnership Joint Lease for an initial period on one year, in which time a detailed assessment could be made of all the other options available.

RESOLVED that the Joint Committee;

- i) Considered the report from the Parking Partnership Group Manager outlining the different procurement options and associated risks.
- ii) Agreed to the introduction of a Partnership Joint Lease for a period of one year (THREE voted FOR, and ONE (Councillor Stock) voted AGAINST.
- iii) Requested that a further, more detailed options appraisal is carried out during the one year trial period of CCTV Car operation.
- iv) Requested Essex County Council officers to provide a definitive list of responsibilities for Essex County Council (Traffic Regulation Orders), The North and South Parking Partnerships and the Local Highway Panels.

19. Pricing Elements

Mr. Richard Walker (Parking Partnership Group Manager) presented the report on the Pricing Elements that set out the scale of fees and charges for 2013/14 for On-Street parking items.

Members were asked to consider the fees and charges shown in the report and decide what the future pricing structure should be.

Resident Parking and other permits

Members considered the Table of Prices within appendix B of the report.

Councillor Stock asked why the % increases in the permits charges was not consistent, given that in some cases the % increase was large though the income generated from the increase would be small.

Councillor Barker said this was all to do with the “harmonizing” of the charges across the partnership. That said whilst ‘harmonizing’ was something the partnership would work towards, she felt out of reasonableness, and given the decision to be taken was about price increases, that Uttlesford Resident Permit prices rather than remaining static should be increased by a couple of pounds.

Mr. I. Taylor said harmonizing was an oddity and that the prosperity of different areas across the County was very different and needed to be reflected in the pricing. Mr. McGill said harmonizing will be difficult with the Partnership needing to demonstrate the pricing structure related to the individual area(s).

Councillor Barker said harmonizing was not about profit; the partnership is not looking to make a profit, but about providing a more structured approach to the overall scheme. Mr. I. Taylor (Tending) said a more strategic approach was needed when setting the overall pricing structure.

The second resident permit price of £58 (from £41.25) for Braintree was queried, showing a far greater than average increase in price, and it was agreed to amend this price in line with the average increases.

Councillor Waller agreed to the removal of the Visitor Permits for Epping Forest District Council from the Table of Prices, standardising instead on the scratch-card book system used across the partnership.

In respect of the parking permits highlighted for discontinuation at Harlow, officers agreed to a moratorium period of one year where they would look to phase out these permits, existing holders being allowed to continue but no new permits to be sold.

In addition it was queried whether Disabled Badge Holders should continue to receive a concession. In phasing out the concession, officers agreed to a moratorium period of one year where they would look to phase out these permits. It was agreed that any phasing out would be supported by a robust equality impact assessment.

Officers would check to see the number of each type of permit sold and report back to a future meeting.

Waiver Certificate

Members considered the new traders permit known as a Waiver Certificate, for use at empty properties and for frequent visits.

Individual Elements – Kerb Side Machine-Managed Parking (KSMMP)

Members considered if kerbside management should be introduced. The Partnership Business Case stated that the Partnership would identify suitable areas within North Essex for on-street kerb side machine managed parking to be considered. KSMMP is a more efficient process in terms of turnover of spaces and enforcement in order to assist local traders.

Members said no other options are mentioned in the report and requested an options appraisal to include the financial implications.

RESOLVED that the Joint Committee;

- i) Agreed to the fees and charges for 2013 and as set out in the report, subject to the changes and amendments agreed by members, as notated within the minute.
- ii) Agreed for officers to consider the appropriateness of the current pricing policy to determine a structured process of converging the pricing and conditions over the coming year, whether to allow concessionary permits, and to whom, and at what level.
- iii) Agreed for the Kerbside Machine-Managed Parking scheme to be deferred pending a full appraisal of the options available together with the financial implications.
- iv) Agreed to the introduction of the new traders' permit known as a Waiver Certificate for use at empty properties and for frequent visits.

20. Urgent Items – Deputy Chairman

Councillor Martin Hunt was appointed Deputy Chairman for the ensuing Municipal Year.

21. Operations Report for On-Street Parking

Mr. Walker (Parking Partnership) presented the Operations Report, an update on the Parking Partnership on-street operational issues since the last meeting, including updates on recruitment, accommodation, performance, backroom operations and the future work.

Mr. Walker provided an update set of on-street and off-street performance statistics including data from September.

Mr. Walker confirmed that the number of cases at the appeal stage was 0.06% of the overall number of cases. The percentage represented approximately 21 cases, with 13 found in favour of the motorist or not contested, and 8 in favour of the Partnership.

RESOLVED that the Joint Committee noted the update and progress on the Parking Partnership operations for On-Street Parking, since the last Committee meeting.

22. Progress of the South Essex Parking Partnership (SEPP)

Ms. Vicky Duff (Essex County Council) gave a verbal update on the progress to date of the South Essex Parking Partnership.

The SEPP is in a year of transition, and though a different operating model to NEPP was only just at the stage of adopting the process for introducing Traffic Regulation Orders.

Ms. Duff said Essex County Council continued to be subject to large reorganisations, and there remained issues for the many past promises of finances for the introduction of traffic schemes. Funding these promises has/is proving difficult.

Unlike NEPP, in South Essex, all initial enquiries for Traffic Regulation Orders are channelled through the Essex Customer Liaison Service, where an assessment is made. If the scheme does not meet the County funding requirements it is passed to SEPP who undertake a prioritisation process.

RESOLVED that the Joint Committee noted the progress to date of the South Essex Parking Partnership.

23. Shared Resources – North and South Essex Parking Partnerships

Mr. Richard Walker (Parking Partnership Group Manager) gave a verbal summary of the resources shared between both Essex Parking Partnerships.

These included a shared website, shared policies, and a shared strategy to provide consistency across the County.

It was anticipated that in the future shared resources could include operational resources.

RESOLVED that the Joint Committee noted the shared resources of both Essex Parking Partnerships.

24. Epping Forest District Council Merger

Mr. Richard Walker (Parking Partnership Group Manager) gave a verbal update on the Epping Forest District Council Merger.

Mr. Walker said the merger had gone smoothly and the data transfer was now complete.

RESOLVED that the Joint Committee noted the successful completion of the Epping Forest District Council Merger.

25. Forward Plan

Mr. Walker presented the Forward Plan to the Joint Committee, a document providing an update on future meetings and reports, to be reported to the Committee on a regular basis.

Mr. Judd asked Client Officers to note the changes to future client officer meetings.

RESOLVED that the Joint Committee noted the current Forward Plan.