

**NORTH ESSEX PARKING PARTNERSHIP
JOINT COMMITTEE FOR ON-STREET PARKING**

**13 December 2012 at 3.30pm
Civic Offices, Saffron Walden**

Present: - Councillor Susan Barker (Uttlesford District Council)
Councillor Penny Channer (Essex County Council)
Councillor Tony Durcan (Harlow District Council)
Councillor Peter Halliday (Tendring District Council)
Councillor Martin Hunt (Colchester Borough Council)
Councillor Robert Mitchell (Braintree District Officer)
Councillor Gary Waller (Epping Forest District Council)

Apologies: - Councillor Derrick Louis (Essex County Council)
Councillor Phil Waite (Harlow District Council)

Also Present: - Ms. Emma Day (Parking Partnership)
Ms. Vicky Duff (Essex County Council)
Mr. Qasim Durrani (Epping Forest District Council)
Mr. Robert Judd (Colchester Borough Council)
Ms. Emma Powell (Parking Partnership)
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. Joe McGill (Harlow District Council)
Mr. Paul Partridge (Braintree District Council)
Ms. Liz Saville (Essex County Council)

26. Declarations of Interest

Councillors Barker and Durcan, in respect of being Members of Essex County Council, declared a non-pecuniary interest in the following items.

27. Have Your Say

Mr. Stephen Thomas

Mr. Stephen Thomas addressed the Committee in respect of Common Hill West. Mr. Thomas said residents had parked on a paved area of common land since at least the 1950s, though it was accepted that this was not an ideal situation aesthetically when all the cars are parked.

Mr. Thomas said residents hopes were dashed at a November meeting when it was decided that whilst residents parking spaces would be created, there would be only spaces for eight cars, with residents parking available only from 5pm to 8am Monday to Friday, and all day on Saturday and Sunday.

Mr. Thomas said many essential journeys are undertaken by residents outside of these times, and when they return to their homes they will find their parking space taken-up by someone

else. Mr. Thomas said it would also be tempting for non-residents to use a parking space during the residents parking hours given the ineffectiveness of the parking enforcement.

Mr. Thomas said the car parking space allocation will allow one space per household, plus two additional spaces, one at either end of the resident's parking spaces, to be allocated by Uttlesford District Council. Mr. Thomas said this allocation needed to be looked at again to find a more equitable solution.

Mrs. Katherine Whitbourn-Gregory

Mrs. Whitbourn-Gregory addressed the Committee in respect of Common Hill West. Mrs. Whitbourn-Gregory said as a resident in Common Hill West she was concerned about the future effectiveness of parking enforcement in the area.

Mrs. Whitbourn-Gregory said the current parking arrangements are well managed between the residents with parked cars providing a barrier against all sorts of anti-social behaviour, some of which has previously been reported to the Police, who had not acted upon as they are not resourced sufficiently to deal with all non-serious crime.

Mrs. Whitbourn-Gregory feared that illegal night-time parking, beyond 5pm Monday to Friday will become a serious issue for the residents.

Councillor Douglas Perry (Uttlesford)

Councillor Perry addressed the Committee in respect of Common Hill West. Councillor Perry said the issues of parking in this area are not new, with the Council seeking Counsel Advice on parking on common land three times in the past twenty five years.

Whilst Councillor Perry had sympathy for the residents in this area, the fact was no-one is permitted to park on this common land, though the new scheme will allow for one parking space per household to park there at the permitted times.

Councillor Alastair Walters (Uttlesford)

Councillor Walters addressed the Committee in respect of Common Hill West. Councillor Walters reiterated Councillor Perry's remark, that it was an illegal act to park on this common land, though the Council are now trying to find a solution with the use of parking permits.

Councillor Walters said each household will have a dedicated parking space, plus there will be a further two spaces for allocation. The permits provided for parking to the residents will have the same conditions as apply to all other permits and Councillor Walter believed that this was unworkable, asking for the conditions of the permits to be reconsidered.

Mr. Ron Couchman

Mr. Couchman addressed the Committee in respect of a parking restriction scheme in Clavering. Mr. Couchman said a parking restriction scheme was needed outside of Clavering Primary School. Mr. Couchman said serious congestion was being caused outside the school at school opening and closing times, and this was being exacerbated by pre-school classes.

The local Highway Panel had referred this problem to the Parking Partnership. Mr. Couchman said they had been advised that a new scheme will be introduced in March 2013, but asked if there is budget provision, could the implementation date with an enforcement presence be

brought forward.

Mr. Peter Blomley

Mr. Peter Blomley addressed the Committee in respect of a parking restriction scheme in Clavering. Mr. Blomley said that Clavering Primary School has no parking provision, and with a very narrow access road the current situation was appalling.

Mr. Blomley said he believed creating a parking restriction zone in the vicinity will only make the situation worse.

Councillor Barker said enforcement officers will be patrolling this area and the scheme will be monitored for effectiveness.

Councillor Heather Asker

Councillor Asker addressed the Committee to request a parking resident's scheme. Councillor Asker said a parking resident's scheme was needed for residents living in properties at the upper end of Castle Street, on a stretch of road running from there to the junction of Little Walden Road and Catons Lane.

Councillor Asker said a stretch of roadway for residents parking in the area will alleviate the problems for current car owner residents with no parking facility.

Councillor Asker said a request for a feasibility study had been made to Mr. Shane Taylor of the Parking Partnership, and formally asked for this request to be taken forward.

Councillor Robert Eastman

Councillor Eastman addressed the Committee in respect of parking in the Castle Street area. Councillor Eastman said the Parking Partnership had informed him that due to limited parking in the vicinity, 6-hour permits are issued (4 per 24 hour period) rather than one 24 hour permit.

Councillor Eastman said he felt this was unnecessarily unwieldy and warranted 24 hour permits.

Mr. Richard Walker (Parking Partnership) confirmed to Councillor Eastman that 24 hour permits will be introduced in Uttlesford District from April 2013, as agreed by the Committee at the meeting on 4 October 2012.

In response to Councillor Eastman in respect of parking vehicles and vehicle registration recognition to pay by text, Councillor Barker said the scheme will be introduced in 2013, and will allow motorists to initially pay by text and then top-up by text. This will allow motorists to top-up remotely and avoid the need to return to their vehicle.

Councillor Alan Dean

Councillor Dean addressed the Committee in respect the concern he has for the traffic chaos caused by motorists parking to go to the Tesco Express in Cambridge Road, Stansted.

Councillor Dean requested that the current parking scheme in the area needed changing. In the long-term, Councillor Dean said redevelopment in the area will relieve the current traffic chaos. In the short term he believed a solution would be to extend the existing car park to

provide better access.

Councillor Dean said the residents parking scheme in Lower Street, Stansted also needed reviewing.

Councillor Dean said whilst he was making these requests to the Committee, he wasn't sure of the process for dealing with parking issues, how things worked and who did what.

Councillor Barker said the Parking Partnership is aware of the problems raised by Councillor Dean. The Parking Partnership had just completed a consultation exercise in the Cambridge Road area and a report relating to the objections received will shortly be considered. Changes in Lower Road have also been requested and the Parking Partnership has started work in this area. The consultation for Lower Street should occur in the New Year.

28. Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 4 October 2012 was confirmed as a correct record.

29. Call in of decision – CCTV Car Options Appraisal

The Committee considered the minutes and notes from the Call in process relating to the decision on the CCTV Car – Options Appraisal.

RESOLVED that the Committee;

- i) Noted the call in process to the decision relating to the CCTV Car – Options Appraisal.
- ii) Agreed to continue with the implementation of the CCTV Car scheme (**UNANIMOUS**), with the condition that the CCTV Car is not initially used in the Tendring District, and that Tendring will reconsider its position when the first quarter's operation of the CCTV car is reviewed in October 2013.

30. Operational Report / Budget forecast outturn 2012/13

Mr. Richard Walker, Parking Partnership Group Manager introduced the operational report.

Recruitment

Members discussed the issues around recruitment and the long length of time it appeared to be taking to get to full strength, that of 63 full time equivalent enforcement officers.

Ms. Emma Powell, Enforcement Manager, Parking Partnership said the recruitment process, including advertisements, short listing, interviews, offers and notice, usually took a minimum of three months. A new set of applications are currently at the interview stage and the new appointments are likely to start work from the end of January 2013. Advertisements for future vacancies will then commence at the beginning of February 2013.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Tendring) said more information was needed so that Members and officers could make a more informed judgement on staffing levels versus income levels and the overall effect on the budget.

Financial position – recruitment / Penalty Charge Notices

Councillor Mitchell asked how was it that the budget was already overspent although the staffing levels had never reached full establishment, and currently stood at 50.5 full time equivalent enforcement officers, a shortfall of 12.5 full time enforcement officers. Councillor Mitchell asked how the shortfall in staff was impacting on the service, why hadn't the Parking Partnership considered agency staff and what was the impact on Off-Street parking.

Councillor Barker asked whether the staffing shortfall was the reason for the fluctuation in Penalty Charge Notices (PCN) issued (On-Off Street Parking combined), with Councillor Mitchell adding whether the areas where the number of PCN issued are down are the same areas that are short in staffing numbers.

Mr. Walker (Parking Partnership) said whilst it is possible to monitor by district, the number of PCNs issued against the number of enforcement officers employed in the area, geographical, operational and local differences makes it difficult to make a direct comparison between districts. For example, the average income per enforcement officer ranges from £19-27k in Tendring, to £21-37k in Harlow, to £28-43k in Braintree and Uttlesford, to £36-71k in Colchester.

Mr. Walker said historic data showed that the level of income generated by agency staff was greater in Off-Street Parking areas, as these officers probably preferred enforcing in car parks. Whilst this trend no longer exists with the establishment made up of Parking Partnership staff, deployment / shift patterns are being looked at to stay ahead of the motorists. The intention is (for example, in Epping Forest / Harlow) to get officers deployed in busy areas, to avoid travelling time and thereby increase surveillance and maximise the income generated.

Councillor Mitchell said the ability to introduce flexibility into the deployment arrangements was very good, but there remained a need to see this reflected in further budget detail as soon as possible, and this was a concern as districts are now in the budget setting process.

In response to Councillor Halliday, Mr. Walker said the under spend would reduce to a nil deficit with a full establishment of enforcement officers. Mr. Walker also confirmed to Councillor Waller that Colchester is now employing a dedicated member of staff to organise and manage the recruitment process, though Ms. Powell confirmed at each stage of recruitment they receive on average 150 applications and from this conduct 35 interviews, a very long process. That said, with recruitment stages now overlapping, the time of each stage is being kept to a minimum. Councillor Durcan suggested that the Parking Partnership contact the Human Resources Service at each district to determine if they could help with the recruitment process.

In summary, members remained concerned about the budget deficit for 2012-13 and were of the opinion that officers, before the next meeting of the Joint Committee, and as a matter of urgency, needed to examine in detail all expenditure, including establishment and income levels by area and overall, to establish a way forward for the remainder of 2012-13 and 2013-14. In respect of Off-Street Parking there was also concern about the dramatic increase in Off-Street PCNs issued in Colchester in 2012, whilst all other districts saw a decrease, most noticeable Epping Forest, as expressed by Mr. Durrani (Epping Forest).

Following the request from Mr. Ian Taylor (Tendring) to form an Officer Working Group (comprising of the Parking Partnership Group Manager and Client Officers from each partner authority, including Essex County Council) to examine the issues raised and to recommend a way forward, Councillor Barker agreed this should be organised as soon as possible, though the Chair for the working group should be agreed between the participating officers.

Performance

It was acknowledged at the Client Officers meeting the week prior to the Joint Committee meeting and reiterated by Members that the statistical and performance data provided within the main report required amending, and that in some cases the data was meaningless.

Mr Walker provided Members with some additional information on the cost of Civil Enforcement Officer (CEO) service (£1.15m) and the income generated by the officers (£1.38m) for 2011/12, plus the range of income generated by CEOs at Colchester £36-£71k, Tendring £19-27k, Braintree / Uttlesford £28-43k and Harlow £21-37k. Further graphs were also provided showing trends (by district) of the annual total of PCNs issued since 2009 and the total number of PCNs issued between April and November each year since 2009. It was agreed that the new information did provide data by which trends could be identified and judgements made.

Back Office

In response to Councillor Mitchell, Ms. Day explained that to cope with the extra demand from the steady increase in the office workload due to the inclusion of Epping Forest District Council and an increase in administrative caseload, the service was utilising the skills of former employees and inviting them to help during peaks in workload, mainly on a Monday and Tuesday.

Budget

Councillor Barker said whilst the recruitment process continued, that given the budget was already overspent, Members needed confidence that when the Parking Partnership was fully staffed this will impact positively on the overall budget.

Councillor Halliday said whilst budget shortfalls remain Members need to know how long will it be before the books balance and that districts will need to know estimate outturns very shortly for their own budget process. Councillor Halliday said the budget process needed to be addressed immediately and agreed to officers meeting as soon as possible to determine a way forward and to address any potential financial liability.

Councillor Durcan and Mitchell concurred with Councillor Halliday, saying tangible evidence was needed as soon as possible in order that the correct budget decision was made by each district council.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Tendring) reiterated the need for an Officer Working Group to examine the issues raised and to recommend a way forward, adding that he would be happy to volunteer to chair the working group.

Mr. Young (Colchester) said that as Colchester was the Parking Partnership's lead authority, he felt the Working Group should be led (chaired) by Colchester. Councillor Halliday, whilst appreciating that Colchester was the lead authority, envisaged the working group working at a higher level as an independent critical friend, so the chairmanship didn't necessarily need to come from the lead authority.

Mr. Walker confirmed that the procurement process for a CCTV Car was underway. Councillor Barker asked the partner authorities to consider 'hot-spots' in their districts and forward details to the partnership for future reference.

Mr. Walker confirmed the reason for the CCTV Car is to keep traffic flowing and increase traffic safety. Mr. Ian Taylor (Tendring) said the CCTV Car would not only be deployed outside schools but could also enforce parking restrictions in e.g. bus lanes and clearways.

Mr. Walker presented the forecast outturn position for 2012-13 at period 8.

Councillor Mitchell said an accounts statement should be presented to the Joint Committee on a quarterly basis, to include trends and profit and loss, and with an accountant in attendance to provide the necessary professional advice and guidance. Also, with regard to the current budget, what steps are to be made to bring the over spend to nil balance. Councillor Halliday added that future reports needed to be presented in the form of a tracker account, with adjusted outturns.

RESOLVED that the Joint Committee;

- i) Considered and noted the Operational Report for On-Street Parking, since the last Joint Committee meeting in October 2012.
- ii) Noted the North Essex Parking Partnership forecast outturn position for 2012-13 at period 8.
- ii) Agreed to an Officer Working Group (comprising of the Parking Partnership Group Manager and Client Officers from each partner authority, including Essex County Council and the Chair to be agreed by the working group) being formed to examine the issues raised for On and Off Street parking concerning recruitment, income from PCNs and the overall budget, and to report back to the March meeting of the Joint Committee.

31. Forward Plan

Mr. Judd (Colchester) confirmed that the Forward Plan will be updated to reflect the meetings undertaken by the Officer Working Group.

Mr. Judd also confirmed that the draft Forward Plan for 2013-14 will be presented to the March meeting.

RESOLVED that the Joint Committee noted the current Forward Plan.

