

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

**14 March 2013 at 1.30pm  
Latton Bush Centre, Harlow**

Present: - Councillor Susan Barker (Uttlesford District Council)  
Councillor Penny Channer (Essex County Council)  
Councillor Phil Waite (Harlow District Council)  
Councillor Nick Turner (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)

Also Present: - Ms. Emma Day (Parking Partnership)  
Mr. Qasim Durrani (Epping Forest District Council)  
Mr. Robert Judd (Colchester Borough Council)  
Mr. Joe McGill (Harlow District Council)  
Ms. Hayley McGrath (Colchester Borough Council)  
Mr. Paul Partridge (Braintree District Council)  
Ms. Liz Saville (Essex County Council)  
Ms. Samantha Sismey (Colchester Borough Council)  
Mr. Andrew Taylor (Uttlesford District Council)  
Mr. Ian Taylor (Tendring District Council)  
Mr. Richard Walker (Parking Partnership)  
Mr. Matthew Young (Colchester Borough Council)

### **32. Declarations of Interest**

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

### **33. Minutes**

*RESOLVED* that the Committee;

- i) Confirmed that the minutes of the meeting held on 13 December 2012 was a correct record.

In reference to the minutes, Mr. Walker explained that the bidding process for the CCTV Car will conclude on Monday 18 March, 2013. Councillor Barker asked members to consider the areas they would like to see covered by the CCTV Car and report this to Richard Walker via their Client Officer.

- ii) Noted the minutes from the Client Officer Meeting held on 24 January 2013.

### **34. Annual Governance Statement**

Ms. Hayley McGrath, Risk and Resilience Manager, presented the Annual Governance Statement that provided the Joint Committee with an introduction to the annual governance review. This was necessary so that the Joint Committee could provide a formal assurance about its governance arrangements as part of the process to the annual closure of accounts.

Ms. McGrath explained that the outcomes of the review will be reported to the Joint Committee at the June 2013 meeting, who will consider the findings and agree any proposed actions. The Statement will then be signed-off by the Chairman of the Joint Committee.

Given the concerns stated about the Partnerships finances, Ms. McGrath explained to Councillor Mitchell that the review is to determine whether the processes are in line with the Joint Agreement, but did not address the outcomes of a process.

Mr. I. Taylor (Tendring) said there still remained inconsistencies in the way the budget(s) are presented and this leads to confusion. Mr. Taylor said auditing the processes is a standard procedure, but that the real issue was the accountable income and expenditure for the year.

*RESOLVED* that the Committee noted the requirement to undertake a review of the governance arrangements of the North Essex Parking Partnership.

### **35. Forecasted Financial Position for 2012-13**

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

Mr. Walker said the On-street account is projecting a deficit of £251k by year end, £185k worse than the business plan position, and mainly due to the significant fall in income from Penalty Charge Notices (PCN).

Mr. Walker said whilst the operation is now fully resourced, the shortfall in enforcement officers throughout the year had had a detrimental knock-on effect on income. Nevertheless, it was agreed by officers across the region that a higher percentage of motorists are now paying charges at discounted rates. Officers have made changes within the operation with focus on smarter enforcement that will have a positive effect on income.

Mr. Walker explained that the transitional impact of Epping Forest District Council joining the partnership had been huge in terms of both logistics and finance. The surplus generated was £4k, far less than the anticipated £32k built into the business plan. He said the Partnership are continuing to find ways of reducing expenditure to mitigate against the overall shortfall in PCN income, and already the decision has been made not to recruit to two vacant posts, to be deleted from the establishment.

In response to Councillor Turner, Mr. Walker explained that the estimated income from PCNs was based on achieving £26 per PCN. The average amount of money collected per PCN by District could be seen on the final column of the table included in the Operational report.

Councillor Mitchell said a more informed judgement could be made on the actions required concerning the drop in PCN income if the Committee were provided with comparative statistics on the numbers of notices issued against the number of Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs) deployed. Councillor Mitchell felt that given the Committee had previously been told the problem was the lack of income and was due to the shortage of CEOs (that at one point was 18 FTEs below the establishment level) and because of this had requested more information on staffing levels versus income levels and the overall effect on the budget, these should have been presented to the Committee. Councillor Mitchell said that the Committee needed a more

detailed financial breakdown of the indirect costs noted in paragraph E of the report.

Mr. Walker said the details of the CEO deficit had been discussed at the recent Client Officer Meeting and officers have been tasked with a series of actions as noted in the agenda. Mr. Walker said the value of PCNs collected by individual CEOs ranged from £21k - £70k. He said that as part of their smarter approach to enforcement, evening enforcement was being examined and risk assessments undertaken in regards to safety issues. The resultant doubling-up on CEOs at certain times and more effective shift patterns operating in prime locations will hopefully show an improved trend. The vacant Enforcement Managers post at Epping Forest was considered surplus to requirement and has been deleted from the establishment. Ms. Sismey said the bottom-line for the budget had not changed in-year that the £160k deficit was as agreed from the outset of the year. It has however been necessary, due to the Epping Forest merger, to weight the supplies and services costs noted on the budget paper because of the merger. Mr. I Taylor (Tendring) said it would be helpful that where the original budget figures are changed, that the changes are noted for information. Mr. A Taylor (Uttlesford) agreed that it was an unusual approach to change the budget figures are not note the changes and reasons on the report. Councillor Barker said the report should provide the original budget line, plus the current budget line, with all virements and changes noted.

In response to Councillor Mitchell and concerns about the escalating postage costs due to the requirement to reply formally to permit holders by first class mail, Mr. Walker said the requirement was prescribed in the statutory guidance. Mr. Walker said that whilst officers could make a collective representation from NEPP and SEPP (South Essex Parking Partnership) to the Secretary of State for Transport, he would in any case write to the Chairman of PATROL (Joint Committee for the civil enforcement of 'Parking and Traffic Regulations Outside London') to include this item on the agenda at the June meeting in Birmingham. Mr. Walker also explained that a reduction in advertising costs by advertising on-line is not likely to come into force until 2015.

Mr. I. Taylor (Tendring) said that despite the conversations at the recent Client Officer Working Group, the Joint Committee is still not addressing the issue of the need for a business plan around enforcement. He said tinkering around the edges of enforcement will not reduce the deficit sufficiently to avoid failure and officers needed to consider fundamental change options such as staff cutting and outsourcing. Retaining an operational business around enforcement was unsustainable. Councillor Barker said a breakdown of enforcement costs for the May workshop was needed.

Mr. Young (Colchester) said the transitional costs picked up by the partnership for Epping Forest had been underestimated, and that the size and poor state of the operation meant the implementation of the transfer had drawn on large internal resources. Mr. Young also expressed disappointment that the line of questioning suggested that the Client Officers had not briefed members on the outcomes from the recent Client Officers Working Group meeting.

Mr. Young (Colchester) presented the 2013/14 Budget (as shown in Appendix C of the report). He confirmed that officers will be looking to reduce costs e.g. fuel, equipment and employee costs, increase income, analyse staffing levels, introduce smarter enforcement and consider other innovative ways of generating income. The outcomes will be presented to the Committee at the May workshop.

In response to Mr. I Taylor (Tendring), who said an expectation of breaking even around enforcement was doomed to failure and that he had always been sceptical of the balanced budget being sold to the Partnership, Mr. Young (Colchester) said cost reduction in all areas of

the service are going to be considered.

Councillor Turner said Tendring had not budgeted for any Partnership deficit, and that if any deficit materialises Tendring will withdraw from the Partnership.

Councillor Waite said he would be concerned if the Partnership starts cutting CEOs posts that as the major income generators officers should be looking at maximising income from this resource. Mr. Young said the intention is to introduce smarter enforcement with fewer CEOs.

Mr. Walker (NEPP) confirmed to Mr. P Partridge (Braintree) that the Partnership hold a separate budget for Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO) as was reported separately to the TRO Sub Committee.

Ms. Sismey (Colchester) said the large increase in Other Support Services is due to the increase in insurance and stationery costs.

Mr. Young (Colchester) confirmed to Mr. I Taylor (Tendring) that the local pay award of 1.5% was built into the 2013/14 Budget.

Ms. Saville confirmed that the NEPP, as part of their rationalisation of back-office functions and processes, and as an opportunity to increase income, had entered into an agreement with Essex County Council to process bus lane enforcement.

*RESOLVED* that the Joint Committee;

- i) Considered and noted the forecasted financial position for 2012/13, and the 2013/14 Budget.
- ii) Agreed (following on from the Client Officer meeting and the suggestion of a work shop session to discuss policy, the remit of NEPP and the budget) to hold the workshop at County Hall on Wednesday 22 May 2013 at 10.00am. The Committee emphasised the need to discuss the most effective use of CEOs at this workshop.
- iii) Agreed that NEPP would write to the Secretary of State for Transport concerning the huge postal costs involved in complying with statutory guidance and the need to formally write by first class mail to parking permit holders, whereby on-line communication where possible would do the job at little or no cost.

It was also agreed that all local MPs are sent copies of the correspondence, and that the letter should make reference to a requirement for CEOs to be able to issue parking enforcement notices to vehicles parked on pavements, as is allowed in London.

- iv) Agreed that the Client Officers Group should meet bi-monthly, specifically to monitor the budget position.

### **36. Operational Report**

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

In response to Councillor Barker regards to the high percentage of challenges and

representations received on-line by Tendring residents, Mr. I Taylor (Tendring) said this was due to Tendring introducing web based challenges long before many other authorities.

Councillor Mitchell said the charts showing on-street PCN issue levels would benefit from monthly PCN numbers being labelled.

Councillor Mitchell said enforcement will be unsustainable if the high percentage of PCNs continue to be paid at discounted rates. In response to Mr. I Taylor (Tendring), Ms. Day (NEPP) said the use of Agency Bureau services to respond to enquiries on parking enforcement was costing £2.90 per letter, including £0.46 postage.

*RESOLVED* that the Joint Committee considered and noted the Operational Report for On-Street Parking, since the last Joint Committee meeting in December 2012.

### **37. Forward Plan**

*RESOLVED* that the Joint Committee noted the current Forward Plan.

### **38. Urgent Item**

Mr. Walker (NEPP) presented an urgent report to the Joint Committee in respect of Harwich Quay. The report asked Members to consider agreeing to providing parity of tariffs at Harwich Quay, and to decide whether to agree to introduce a no waiting / no loading restriction on the highway at the same location.

Mr. Walker confirmed to Councillor Turner that the 5pm cut-off time (thereby parking is free after 5pm and up until 8am) was agreed at the Joint Committee meeting on the 4 October 2012.

*RESOLVED* that the Joint Committee;

- i) Agreed to provide parity of tariffs at Harwich Quay to bring into line with the nearby car park.
- ii) Agreed to introduce a no waiting / no loading restriction on the highway at the same location.

