

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

**28 October 2021 at 1.00pm**

**Held in Committee Room 1, Causeway House, Bocking End,  
Braintree CM7 9RW.**

## **Members Present:**

Councillor Simon Crow (Colchester Borough Council)  
Councillor Richard Freeman (Uttlesford District Council)  
Councillor Alastair Gunn (Harlow District Council)  
Councillor Sam Kane (Epping Forest District Council)  
Councillor Michael Talbot (Tendring District Council)

Councillor Richard van Dulken (Braintree District Council)\*

\*Councillor van Dulken attended as a non-executive, non-voting representative of Braintree District Council

## **Substitutions:**

None.

## **Apologies:**

Councillor Sue Lissimore (Essex County Council)

## **Also Present:**

Richard Walker (Parking Partnership)  
Liz Burr (Essex County Council)  
Carol Clayman (Braintree District Council)  
Trevor Degville (Parking Partnership)  
Amelia Hoke (Epping Forest District Council)  
Owen Howell (Colchester Borough Council)  
Linda Howells (Uttlesford District Council)  
Miroslav Sihelsky (Harlow District Council)  
Ian Taylor (Tendring District Council)

#### **104. Minutes**

*RESOLVED* that the minutes of the meetings held on 24 June 2021 and 10 August 2021 be approved as accurate records.

#### **105. Traffic Regulation Order Update and Application Decision Report**

The recommendations for Traffic Regulation Orders [TROs] from each partner authority were presented for approval.

Proposed TRO T22604988, recommended for approval by Harlow District Council, was raised. The initial recommendation for a resident permit area was being amended to be replaced by a junction protection/extension of double yellow lines, based upon consultation.

Proposed TRO T225009910 [waiting restrictions on Broomstick Hall Road, Waltham Abbey] was recommended for deferral by Epping Forest District Council, as this would be affected by a wider review which was to be carried out.

*RESOLVED* that the recommendations from partner authorities all be approved, subject to the one amendment that TRO T22604988 be modified to be junction protection/extension of double yellow lines.

#### **106. Consideration of Objections – Epping Forest District Amendment 16**

Mr Richard Risdon attended and, with the consent of the Chairman, addressed the Joint Committee in support of the proposal for a single yellow line parking restriction on Purlieu Way, Theydon Bois. Mr Risdon argued that the NEPP's consultation process only asked for objections, and not for statements in support of the proposal.

Mr Risdon spoke to refute allegations that bullying behaviour had been used on residents in order to gain support for the proposal for single yellow lines and explained that he had apologised to the one resident with whom heated words had been exchanged.

Parking problems continued to affect Purlieu Way, along with problems for refuse collection vehicles. Some vehicles were parked on the street for days. Mr Risdon argued that, as only 5 out of 48 properties only had one off-street parking space, the only serious problem would be to ensure parking for visiting care workers. Mr Risdon stated that he had recorded 37 households in favour of the scheme, and that the objections recorded were overstated and misguided.

Mr Geoffrey Sanders attended and, with the consent of the Chairman, addressed the Joint Committee. Mr Sanders argued that the objections were predictable and that no proposal would be able to gain total support from all residents, stating further that there were enough residents supportive in order to allow the scheme to go ahead. Mr Sanders told the Joint Committee that six of the objections were

from residents of Harewood Hill, an adjacent street and were related to a perceived knock-on effect of a single yellow line being introduced to Purlieu Way. Mr Sanders asked why residents of Harewood Hill would be concerned about such effects on on-street parking, if there were no problems relating to parking on Purlieu Way.

Mr Sanders related that he had experience of care visits and that he had never encountered any problems with such visits where restrictions applied.

Mr Radek Nešpor attended and, with the consent of the Chairman, addressed the Joint Committee to oppose the proposed restriction. As a resident of eight years, he explained that he had not experienced any parking problems, either prior to the Covid-19 pandemic or now. Mr Nešpor posited that a restriction would not be workable as there was not sufficient space for all residents to park upon their own properties; residents without options would then be forced to give up their cars.

Mr Nešpor gave the view that single yellow lines with one-hour restrictions would be against best practice, as such measures were not currently recommended, and that objections from residents of Harewood Hill were probably as a result of fears that they would start to experience overflow parking from Purlieu Way.

Ms Sue Kingscote attended via Zoom and, with the consent of the Chairman, addressed the Joint Committee to oppose the proposed restrictions, giving the view that there was not a problem with commuter parking. Residents were the ones who parked on street and Ms Kingscote opposed any restrictions which could pressure residents into having to pave over front garden space in order to increase their off-street parking capacity. Pressures would be highest on those with large families, and this might cause residents to start parking on adjacent streets.

Mr Michael Taylor attended and, with the consent of the Chairman, addressed the Joint Committee to oppose the proposed restriction, giving his situation where, should the restriction be approved, he would need to pave his front garden over in order to provide the space necessary for his son to park his car, once he passed his test. This type of action would damage gardens and lower property values.

Mr Taylor informed the Joint Committee that he had been subjected to bullying, to pressure him into supporting the restriction. He had received an apology, but other neighbours had been pressured and Mr Taylor argued that this made the estimated levels of support unreliable and that genuine views should be sought by contact between the NEPP and affected residents.

The Chairman summarised the options available to the Joint Committee as being to approve the restriction as laid out, seek options for amending its details, or to refuse it entirely.

A Joint Committee member asked whether, if the restriction was approved, width and colour of the road markings could be chosen which were appropriate for a

conservation area, avoiding harsh colouring. It was confirmed by Trevor Degville, NEPP Parking Technical Manager, that this could be done.

The Joint Committee discussed discrepancies raised regarding levels of support and opposition and asked for confirmation of details of the NEPP surveying and consultation carried out. Trevor Degville, NEPP Parking Technical Manager, explained that the process for considering waiting restrictions necessitated a petition to be submitted calling for them. This had been received, but it was noted that some signatories had subsequently changed their minds. The important factor regarding objections to schemes proposed and consulted upon was the strength of arguments put forward, rather than the weight of numbers of objections.

Richard Walker, NEPP Group Manager, explained that, following the Joint Committee's decision to approve consultation on whether to proceed with a single yellow line restriction, he had delegated powers to proceed with introducing the restriction, if no weight of objections were received. Owing to the weight of arguments made by objectors, it was appropriate that this matter was instead referred back to the Joint Committee for a decision to be made. One option was for a further survey to be carried out of affected parties, consulting more widely in neighbouring roads and writing personally to each household.

The Joint Committee discussed the options, with a view being given that more information and consultation was needed. In response to questions, the Group Manager confirmed that there was no formal requirement to look at a potential new parking regulation for Harewood Hill, but that this could be considered if a wider view was taken relating to the restriction currently under consideration for Purlieu Way.

*RESOLVED* that the Joint Committee approve option 3.3, as detailed in the report [to 'alter the current proposals to take into account the views that have now been expressed'], directing officers to seek an alternative or amended form of restriction for Purlieu Way, and to include neighbouring roads such as Harewood Hill in the subsequent consultation on this new restriction proposal.

## **107. Financial Update**

Richard Walker, NEPP Group Manager, presented the latest financial position of the Partnership, which continued to be kept under review. The update which would be provided at the next meeting would include a list of project spending from reserves.

Enough penalty charge notices [PCNs] had been issued to ensure income was maintained, assisted by the use of ParkSafe cars. Increases enforcement has, in some areas, led to a reduction in PCNs issued, as compliance levels rose in response to enforcement. Enforcement assets were then able to be reallocated to other problem areas. A Joint Committee member suggested that the NEPP should look at increasing the number of enforcement vehicles, potentially using Partnership reserves. Questions were also asked as to the use to which existing enforcement

vehicles were put, the Group Manager explained that more vehicles had been purchased as Covid-19 precautions meant that only one person per car had been possible during lockdowns. Owing to overlapping of shifts, vehicle use was high. It was noted that the use of ParkSafe survey cars could lower the need for foot patrols.

It was highlighted that kerbside parking payments had reduced to nothing during lockdowns, however these were now returning to normal levels. It was stressed that the NEPP looked to ensure that kerbside charges mirrored charging in off-street parking places. The pricing strategy would be brought to the Joint Committee at its December meeting.

During this year, the Partnership was forecasting to take £29k from its reserves to improve parking signage.

Answering questions on financial trends in the budget, the Group Manager explained that the chief concern was if there was poor weather in early 2022, which would hamper enforcement and NEPP activities. The Joint Committee would be kept apprised of the Partnership's financial position.

The Joint Committee discussed options for use of electric vehicles [EVs]. The Group Manager explained that this was an aim for the future, but that new contract vehicles had not yet been taken on, as officers were first awaiting a decision as to approval of a new Parking Partnership agreement. Investment was being put into EV charge points in Colchester, and the aim was to convert to EV use as soon as was possible. The Joint Committee discussed potential options for rolling out further EV charge points in the future. The Chairman confirmed that Essex County Council and Highways continued to look at options and were in ongoing dialogue to move forward. The Group Manager explained that the NEPP Project Manager is looking to create an EV Project Officer position.

*RESOLVED* that the NEPP's financial position, as at the end of Period 5 [August] 2021, had been noted by the Joint Committee.

#### **108. Annual Report 2020/21**

Richard Walker, NEPP Group Manager, informed the Joint Committee that the full report was now online, with a continuation of quarterly updates being published throughout each year, plus update newsletters to stakeholders. This approach was praised by Joint Committee members.

#### **109. Essex Parking Partnerships post 31 March 2022**

Richard Walker, North Essex Parking Partnership [NEPP] Group Manager, presented the report and the formal proposal, from Essex County Council [ECC], regarding the creation of a new NEPP/Joint Committee Agreement to succeed the current NEPP Agreement.

The Joint Committee was informed that ECC wished to continue the work of the NEPP in a similar form to that in operation at present, with a new agreement to last for five years, with the option for a three-year extension. The partners within the current NEPP would be invited to become members of the future NEPP partnership.

Key issues were highlighted by the Group Manager, including the need for the new agreement to reflect legislative changes, and arrangements regarding any surplus/reserve funds which might be accrued by the new NEPP. It was proposed that any surplus would be declared prior to the setting of new Traffic Regulation Orders [TROs] each year and that surpluses would be shared between the NEPP and ECC. The Joint Committee would retain decision-making powers regarding TROs.

It was suggested that there could be a joint panel (including the chairmen of the North and South Essex Parking Partnerships and an ECC representative, possibly the relevant portfolio holder) to discuss use of any reserves. It was proposed that the new NEPP would retain up to £300k in reserves, along with the £100k ECC cashflow reserve, with any reserves over £300k [not including the ECC cashflow reserve] being shared between the NEPP and County Council [a 55%/45% split] with the NEPP share supporting the TRO function, with Essex County Council to meet any TRO costs in excess of this. The Group Manager emphasised his view that this was the best possible proposal that the NEPP partners and officers could have expected to receive from ECC.

Liz Burr, Head of Network and Safety/Traffic Manager [Essex Highways], thanked NEPP officers for their work to reach this point. The aim was to produce a proposal which would be a 'win' for all partners and stakeholders. It was confirmed to the Joint Committee that the ability for deficit funding would be maintained and that the new NEPP would retain control over TROs and other measures at its disposal, including the potential to help in providing charging points for electric vehicles.

Some Joint Committee members voiced support for the potential ways for NEPP to work with ECC in identifying uses for reserve funds, including with the area's local highways panels. One suggestion was for any surplus from the NEPP to be ringfenced and split for use between the NEPP partner authorities for use on projects chosen by their respective local highways panels. This could offset the reduction in ECC funding which had been carried out before the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Joint Committee discussed the process used to produce the proposals offered by ECC, with dissatisfaction being voiced that the proposals had been crafted centrally, without consultation with the partner district and borough councils, and then sent to the NEPP and SEPP [South Essex Parking Partnership] for approval or rejection. A comparison was drawn with ECC's consultation over its environmental services provision, which had included envisioning events with the tier 2 local authorities. It was queried why something similar had not been done in this instance, to give the opportunity to discuss the needs of each council and ensure that they were met by the new agreement. Committee members also voiced dissatisfaction that the draft proposals had not been produced earlier and that they would only be able to be fully considered when Cabinets consider them for approval. Earlier circulation of proposals, it was argued, would have given partner authorities an

opportunity to give input and to conduct cost/benefit analyses on the potential options and alternatives to a new NEPP agreement.

The Group Manager underlined the unique nature of on-street parking as an ECC responsibility, with the NEPP being a vehicle which allowed all partner local authorities to have a say. The £1m deficit run by the former parking service, which had been run in-house, had been eradicated in the first three years of the NEPP's operations, with the Partnership developing into an award-winning service operating with a small annual surplus.

A Joint Committee member asked, if any funding had previously been provided by the district and borough councils, whether this should be repaid to them before any excess reserves were transferred over to ECC.

The Joint Committee discussed the process whereby the proposals would now be taken to the Cabinets of each local authority for consideration. It was confirmed that the Joint Committee was not being asked to approve the proposals, but to recommend that they be sent to the respective Cabinets, with a recommendation that they give approval, and to gain their views.

*RESOLVED* that the JOINT PARKING COMMITTEE: -

- 1) Has noted the contents of the Essex County Council Cabinet Report.
- 2) Has agreed to support the future parking partnership arrangements from 1 April 2022.
- 3) Recommends to the Partner District and Borough Councils of the North Essex Parking Partnership in the North Essex Area to support the establishment of arrangements set out in the Essex Offer Letter.
- 4) Recommends their joining up to the new Agreement at the earliest opportunity

## **110. Update on Obstructive Parking**

Richard Walker, North Essex Parking Partnership [NEPP] Group Manager, gave a summary of the situation, the history of the last Department for Transport [DfT] consultation on options such as decriminalisation of obstructive parking, and a brief update on this issue, including the prospect of enforcement options regarding moving traffic offences. It was confirmed that one option being considered, by DfT, as to whether the requirements for advertising Traffic Regulation Orders could be simplified and updated to reflect changes in how the public accesses information.

The Group Manager gave assurances that the Joint Committee would continue to receive updates on any developments.

The Joint Committee discussed the possible implications of decriminalisation and the abilities that this would open up for patrols and enforcement by the NEPP.

#### **111. Forward Plan 2020-21**

It was confirmed that the Partnership's pricing strategy would be brought to the Joint Committee at its meeting on 9 December 2021.

*RESOLVED* that the Forward Plan 2020-21 be approved, subject to the addition of the Partnership's pricing strategy to the agenda for its meeting on 9 December 2021.