

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

**10 December 2020 at 1.00pm**

**Online meeting, held on Zoom and broadcast via the  
YouTube channel of Colchester Borough Council.**

## **Members Present:**

Councillor Richard Van Dulken (Braintree District Council)  
Councillor Deryk Eke (Uttlesford District Council)  
Councillor Mike Lilley (Colchester Borough Council) (Deputy Chairman)  
Councillor Robert Mitchell (Essex County Council) (Chairman)  
Councillor Michael Talbot (Tendring District Council)

## **Substitutions:**

Councillor Danny Purton for Councillor Michael Danvers (Harlow District Council).

## **Apologies:**

Councillor Nigel Avey (Epping Forest District Council)  
Councillor Michael Danvers (Harlow District Council).

## **Also Present:**

Richard Walker (Parking Partnership)  
Lou Belgrove (Parking Partnership)  
Liz Burr (Essex County Council)  
Jason Butcher (Parking Partnership)  
Trevor Degville (Parking Partnership)  
Rory Doyle (Colchester Borough Council)  
Qasim Durrani (Epping Forest District Council)  
Jake England (Parking Partnership)  
Linda Howells (Uttlesford District Council)  
Samir Pandya (Braintree District Council)  
Miroslav Sihelsky (Harlow Council)  
Ian Taylor (Tendring District Council)  
James Warwick (Epping Forest District Council)

## **81. Minutes**

*RESOLVED* that the minutes of the Joint Committee meeting held on 1 October 2020 were confirmed as a correct record.

## **82. On-Street Budget Update**

Richard Walker, NEPP Group Manager, and Lou Belgrove, NEPP Business Manager, introduced the report and issued an update, summarising the effects of Covid-19 restrictions on the budget, especially regarding a loss of income from residents' parking permits.

A deficit of around £500k was expected by the end of 2020-21 and the plan to mitigate and meet the deficit was outlined, including ways to recover lost income. Renewals of resident parking permits would commence in the coming year, although there would be no way to recover income lost from kerbside parking and MiPermit schemes.

The Partnership's future-proofing work was explained, with some spending brought forward and funded by reserves, with reserves still available for project spending. The Chairman confirmed that the Parking Partnerships had ensured that there would be no knock-on budgetary effect on the County Council through the effect of Covid-19 restrictions on parking.

The Group Manager explained that the proposed structure of a 'new' Parking Partnership would allow the Partnership to keep up to £300k of profits from each operating year in order to meet any future costs.

Joint Committee Members expressed their appreciation for the work done by the Partnership to navigate through the Covid-19 situation and for presenting clearly the situation to the Committee. In response to Members' questions, the Group Manager explained that a small number of staff had been furloughed, primarily on the enforcement side. Covid-19 had had an impact on the families of several officers, but all members of staff were now back at work.

*RESOLVED* that the Joint Committee: -

- (a) Noted the financial position at the end of period 7 (October) 2020/21
- (b) Would look to approve the Partnership's 2021-22 Budget at its meeting on 18 March 2021.

## **83. NEPP Surplus Fund – Project Progress Reports and Variable Messaging System [VMS] Recommendation**

Jason Butcher, Parking Project Manager, explained what VMS was, and that their expense and the existence of cheaper alternatives meant they were considered to be unaffordable, given the current financial situation.

It was confirmed to the Joint Committee that existing VMS were still valid but, for cost reasons and the availability of more effective options, new systems would not be recommended for approval. The reserve funding provisionally allocated to VMS bids were recommended for reallocation to other types of schemes which supported the alternatives to costly VMS. The benefit of less resource-intensive options, such as online/smartphone updates and information provision, especially when linked to bay sensors, were extolled. These included live updates and the ability to redirect service users to other options where availability of spaces was greater.

It was confirmed by the Chairman that no existing VMS were proposed for removal, but as stated earlier, no new schemes were being considered at this time. Future project work options would be dependent upon the financial situation in which the Partnership found itself, with more information expected to be available by March, such as whether any Government grants were to be issued.

*RESOLVED* that the Committee: -

- (a) Noted the project progress reports in Appendix A in addition to the project timeline in Appendix B and table of programmed and un-programmed projects in Appendix C.
- (b) Rejected the three 'Conditionally Approved' variable messaging funding bids in Appendix D and that these be removed from the surplus fund programme.
- (c) Approved that the total funding for these variable messaging funding bids be retained, pending a further summary report, to support the future expansion of current projects, such as Park Safe Schools and the data-led enforcement system.

#### **84. Obstructive Pavement Parking Update**

The Group Manager gave an update on the situation regarding potential changes to regulations and enforcement relating to obstructive and pavement parking. Not much movement had been made on this issue since the last Joint Committee meeting, however the Parking Partnership had submitted its response to the consultation and this would be available for viewing on the Colchester Borough Council website, on the 'Consultations' webpage.

The Partnership's view was in favour of decriminalizing obstructive pavement parking, with enforcement powers to be granted to the Partnership, in addition to those currently held by the Police. This would allow for flexibility and assessment of local circumstances in order to provide enforcement options where obstructive parking was unreasonable and/or dangerous. A blanket ban on pavement parking was not advocated by the Partnership, as the priority was to prevent obstruction, rather than prevent all pavement parking, as a blanket ban would be overly-restrictive and cause many problems, including with loading and unloading vehicles and enforcement.

The consultation had received around 15,000 responses and around 230,000 free text comments. Specific proposed approaches for London, Scotland and Wales had been detailed.

A response was expected from the Department for Transport later in 2021. The Group Manager informed the Joint Committee that he had also submitted a personal response, and a response had likewise been submitted from the South Essex Parking Partnership.

## **85. Forward Plan 2020-2021 and Meeting dates for 2021-22**

Owen Howell, Democratic Services Officer (Colchester Borough Council) introduced the proposed dates and noted that venue details had been removed to prevent confusion as to whether meetings were to be in-person or online. Meetings would continue to be held online via the Zoom platform until such time as in-person meetings could restart. Hybrid meetings were possible and had been trialled already by Colchester Borough Council.

[Note for information: current regulations allowing for remote attendance at Joint Committee and Council meetings will lapse by May 2021, unless extended by Government. Should no extension be granted, meetings will need to again be held in-person and remote attendance would not be permitted]

The Joint Committee discussed the parking implications and needs for any vaccination and testing centres, especially given the mobility difficulties which may be suffered by many in the most at-risk cohorts expected to receive early vaccination. The work of Shane Taylor, Parking Project Engineer, and Trevor Degville, Parking Technical Manager, in carrying out Traffic Regulation Order [TRO] work during lockdown was praised and the Chairman emphasised the Joint Committee's keenness to assist, in addition to promoting how the Parking Partnership and its parking schemes could help improve parking across the areas it covered.

*RESOLVED* that the Forward Plan 2020-21 and meeting dates for 2021-22 be approved.