



Cabinet

Item
9(i)

13th July 2016

Report of	Head of Operational Services	Author	Matthew Young
Title	North Essex Parking Partnership - Lead Authority		
Wards affected	Not applicable		

This report concerns the decision on whether the Council remains as lead authority for the North Essex Parking Partnership (NEPP) if a further four year extension to the Joint Agreement is offered by Essex County Council (ECC)

1. Decision(s) Required

- 1.1 That the Council confirms its willingness to act as lead authority for the NEPP if a further four-year extension to the Joint Agreement is offered by ECC. This would extend the agreement until March 2022.
- 1.2 That the Council develops, as lead authority, a separate agreement for off-street NEPP services with its partner authorities.

2. Reasons for Decision(s)

- 2.1 To ensure that the Council's position on lead authority of the NEPP is clear when the proposed new agreement from ECC is received.
- 2.2 To ensure that the costs of the off-street service are fairly allocated according to usage and need.

3. Alternative Options

- 3.1 The Council indicates that it no longer wishes to act as lead authority.

4. Supporting Information

- 4.1 The NEPP was formed in April 2011 and reports to a Joint Committee (JC) of ECC under a seven-year agreement.
- 4.2 The six District and Borough Councils in North and West Essex are Members of the JC and are represented by Councillors at the Committee meetings. These Councillors must be 'Executive Members', in other words members of the Cabinet. Essex County Council (ECC) attend the meetings as observers and this is normally the Portfolio Holder responsible for Highways & Transportation.

- 4.3 The JC meets four times a year, with its AGM in June. The NEPP JC receives operational, financial and other relevant reports from officers. The officers are employed by Colchester Borough Council which is named in the Joint Committee Agreement (JCA) as 'lead authority'. Each of the District and Borough Councils (the "client authorities" of NEPP) has a client officer with whom the NEPP officers maintain regular contact and an officer from ECC also attends.
- 4.4 ECC has an Agreement with the NEPP JC to delegate the delivery of its on-street parking function. The NEPP provides these services in the districts/borough of Tendring, Colchester, Braintree, Uttlesford, Harlow and Epping Forest. ECC has also delegated powers to make parking Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO) to the NEPP. These are the underpinning regulations for the making of parking restrictions/permissions such as "yellow lines" and parking bays and permit areas.
- 4.5 Members of the NEPP JC can also elect to have their off-street car park services provided as an annex to the JCA. This option has been taken by Colchester, Braintree, Uttlesford and Harlow and Epping Forest.
- 4.6 Following the conclusion of the on-street contract extension the discussions will commence on the arrangements for the off-street services and the plan is to no longer use an annex to the JCA and negotiate a separate agreement with the lead authority's off-street partners. This will allow an agreement to be agreed that better represents the needs and usage of the authorities involved.
- 4.7 The current JCA includes an option to extend for a further four years when it terminates in March 2018. ECC have indicated their intention to take up that option and offer both the North and South partnerships a further JCA through to March 2022.
- 4.8 The Council has invested a significant amount of staff time and energy in making the partnership work and improved the enforcement operation in all areas, both on the street and in the back office systems used. It has also created effective processes to maintain signs and lines across the partnership area and create new Traffic Regulation Orders that did not exist before the NEPP came into being.
- 4.9 Furthermore, when the Partnership commenced the on-street service it was running at a deficit of approximately £600k and predicted to increase further. This has been turned round over the five years of the existence of the NEPP to run at a significant surplus for the last three financial years.
- 4.10 These surpluses are invested back into parking schemes across the borough and district areas covered by the NEPP as well as maintaining the existing signs and lines. To give some idea of the positive impact that this has made the schemes developed and introduced in Colchester are listed in Appendix One to this report. These are addition to the major review of the Colchester Residents' Parking schemes which had been promised since 2001 and was finally delivered and part-funded by the NEPP in 2014.
- 4.11 Therefore, to maintain the stability and continuity of the service it is recommended that the Council continues to act as lead authority.
- 4.12 This also confirms the Council's reputation as a provider of efficient and effective services outside its geographical boundaries.

5. Proposals

- 5.1 That the Council confirms that it will act as lead authority for the NEPP if a further four-year extension to the Joint Agreement is offered by ECC.

6. Strategic Plan References

- 6.1 Ensure transport infrastructure keeps pace with housing growth to keep the Borough moving.

7. Consultation

- 7.1 The NEPP JC has considered this matter and is comfortable with Colchester remaining as the lead authority.

8. Publicity Considerations

- 8.1 There is no publicity required at this stage of the renewal process.

9. Financial implications

- 9.1 There are no direct financial implications as a result of the decision in this report. Any financial implications arising as a result of the contract extension will be provided in the report to the 12 October Cabinet meeting.

10. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

- 10.1 An updated Equality Impact Assessment for the NEPP is available here <http://www.colchester.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=5106&p=0>

The decisions will not impact on the promotion of equality or discriminate in relation to gender, gender reassignment, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, age and race/ethnicity.

11. Community Safety Implications

- 11.1 There are no community safety implications as a result of these decisions

12. Health and Safety Implications

- 12.1 There are no Health and Safety implications as a result of these decisions

13. Risk Management Implications

- 13.1 There is no extra financial risk for the Council is being lead authority as any deficits incurred by the NEPP are shared equally amongst all partners. Furthermore, the on-street account has been in surplus for the last three financial years.
- 13.2 There is a reputational risk in running services beyond the Council's geographical boundaries as it widens the scrutiny the service receives from the partner Councils and the local media outlets. This is mitigated by ensuring that a comprehensive communications plan is in place and operating effectively.