

NORTH ESSEX PARKING PARTNERSHIP JOINT COMMITTEE FOR ON-STREET PARKING

**23 June 2022 at 1.00pm
Colchester Town Hall, High Street, Colchester CO1 1PJ.**

Members Present:

Councillor Nigel Avey (Epping Forest District Council)
Councillor Richard van Dulken (Braintree District Council)
Councillor Richard Freeman (Uttlesford District Council)
Councillor Martin Goss (Colchester Borough Council)
Councillor Carlo Guglielmi (Tendring District Council)
Councillor Alastair Gunn (Harlow District Council)
Councillor Dan Land (Essex County Council)

Substitutions:

Councillor Nigel Avey for Councillor Sam Kane, Councillor Carlo Guglielmi for Councillor Alex Porter.

Apologies:

None.

Also Present:

Richard Walker (Parking Partnership)
Christine (Lou) Belgrove (Parking Partnership)
Jason Butcher (Parking Partnership)
Rory Doyle (Colchester Borough Council)
Jo Heynes (Essex County Council)
Amelia Hoke (Epping Forest District Council)
Owen Howell (Colchester Borough Council)
Linda Howells (Uttlesford District Council)
Michael Kelly (Harlow District Council)
Hayley McGrath (Colchester Borough Council)
Samir Pandya (Braintree District Council)
Miroslav Sihelsky (Harlow District Council)
Ian Taylor (Tendring District Council)

119. Appointment of Chairman

RESOLVED that Councillor Dan Land be appointed Chairman of the Joint Committee.

120. Appointment of Vice Chairman

RESOLVED that Councillor Sam Kane be re-appointed Vice Chairman of the Joint Committee.

121. Have Your Say

Mr Richard Risdon attended and addressed the Joint Committee on the matter of the potential for installation of single yellow lines on Purlieu Way, Theydon Bois and to respond to the Partnership's review of parking issues on Purlieu Way. Mr Risdon argued that previous objections from a few residents had resulted in no restrictions being laid down in past years, and that a survey that he had conducted more recently had shown a 79% level of support for single yellow lines from residents of Purlieu Way. Mr Risdon stated that the results given from the Partnership's recent consultation exercise had listed negatives associated with the installation of single yellow lines, but had not detailed any of the positives. Mr Risdon contended that the survey carried out by the Partnership had not included important questions such as a question covering how many parking spaces residents had on their properties.

Mr Risdon urged the Joint Committee not to let the voices of objectors [to single yellow line installation] obscure the views of those who supported the use of single yellow lines, and requested that the Joint Committee conduct a review of the Parking Partnership's actions on this matter.

Richard Walker, Group Manager, gave assurance that the Partnership's work on addressing the situation on Purlieu Way would be brought to a future meeting of the Joint Committee for consideration. Changes in parking habits caused by changes during and after the pandemic would also need to be considered.

With the permission of the Chairman, Councillor Richard van Dulken addressed the Joint Committee to suggest that the placement of ticket machines in car parks be designed to minimise the effects of direct glare of sunlight, which could often obscure the machines' screens.

122. Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 17 March 2022 be approved as an accurate record.

123. NEPP Annual Governance Review and Internal Audit Report '21-22

Hayley McGrath, Corporate Governance Manager [Colchester Borough Council], introduced the report and explained her role in providing assurance and guidance to the Joint Committee on matters relating to governance, audit, and risk management.

The Joint Committee were informed that the Partnership was not required to produce an Annual Governance Statement, as its turnover was not large enough to make this mandatory, but as best practice an annual governance review was conducted, involving officer interviews and examination of any issues or concerns reported. A summary of arrangements was then given to the Joint Committee. Colchester Borough Council carried out audits using a company called 'TIAA'. The Parking Partnership habitually performed well in the audit process, with only a number of minor recommendations being made. This had led to full audits being conducted biennially, rather than annually. Key areas such as finance were also covered by the audit process of Colchester Borough Council, as the Partnership's Lead Authority. The audit report indicated the strength of the Partnership's policy framework and governance arrangements, and it could be confirmed that there were no issues highlighted in the audit process for 2021-22. The last full audit had been conducted in the previous year, and no issues of concern had been raised. There was no constitutional need for an annual audit; the key issue was for partners to have sufficient assurance for their individual Annual Governance Statements.

RESOLVED that the Joint Committee notes the Annual Governance Review of the North Essex Parking Partnership and has reviewed the Internal Audit report for the Partnership.

124. Annual Review of Risk Management Report

Hayley McGrath, Corporate Governance Manager [Colchester Borough Council], introduced the report and explained the importance of maintaining a rigorous risk strategy and strategic risk register. The register was owned by the Joint Committee, which could request changes be made to it. The recommended changes to the register were shown and the Joint Committee asked to consider whether it was happy to approve these. The recommendations were detailed, and the numbering convention used in the register was explained. Recommended changes included removal of a strategic risk relating to Covid-19, and removal of a risk relating to Government changes, as this was not a specifically identified risk, but a general concern about unspecified changes which might, at some point, occur. A further recommendation was for two risks, relating to possible changes to funding and income, to be combined.

The Corporate Governance Manager confirmed that there were no recommendations to change the scores of individual risks and that, where changes were recommended in these reports, they would be noted in the text of such reports.

RESOLVED that the Joint Committee endorses the Risk Management Strategy for 2022-23 and agrees the Strategic Risk Register, subject to the recommended amendments.

125. Finance Report – End of Year and Reserves 2021-22

Richard Walker, NEPP Group Manager, presented the background to this item, and highlighted noteworthy points including the drop in 'bad debt' which had been caused by the drop in Parking Charge Notices [PCNs] issued (due to the Pandemic). The numbers of PCNs being issued were increasing, resulting in 'bad debt' levels returning towards a normal level. Christine Belgrove, Business Manager, gave assurance that the Partnership had broken even following the Pandemic, which left it in a good position moving forward.

The Joint Committee discussed the way in which the budget figures were listed, and officers explained that the figures shown in red were also in brackets, which meant that they denoted positive amounts, rather than negative totals.

RESOLVED that the Joint Committee noted the NEPP's financial position at the end of the financial year for 2021-22 and the current Parking Reserve position.

126. Traders' Permit pricing review

Christine Belgrove, Business Manager, explained that this item had been brought to the Joint Committee following its past request for Traders' Permit pricing to be looked at in greater depth and brought back to the Joint Committee following the Joint Committee's previous consideration of permit prices in general.

The Partnership was examining potential ways in which to advertise and market Traders' Permits and recommended that prices be set at a low level, and then uptake monitored to ascertain the optimal level for pricing. It was thought that the low uptake of Trader Permits may be a result of a lack of advertising of the scheme. Richard Walker, Group Manager, explained that there was a dispensation scheme in place for traders to buy days of parking in areas covered by Resident Parking schemes and that the NEPP were looking to encourage traders to move to using Trader Permits instead, where this would be cost-effective for them. Christine Belgrove, Business Manager, confirmed that the NEPP would offer Trader Permits as an option to those applying to use the dispensation scheme, and could work to tighten the wording of the terms and conditions in order to ensure that only legitimate traders could be issued with these permits.

A Panel member agreed that the scheme was not well known, noting that there were currently only three Traders' permits in use, with the maximum issued in a year in recent times being only eight. This was argued to be evidence that a different approach should be sought. The past use of 'waiver' certificates by traders parking in areas covered by residents' parking schemes. This could potentially be a costly

option for traders needing access for an extended period of time, such as when craftsmen and tradesmen required access for lengthy work on historic buildings. The Joint Committee discussed the differences between the needs of those who required long-term access and those who only required short visits. A Joint Committee member contended that the definition of traders, as given at 4.4 in the report, was somewhat ambiguous and could be taken to cover delivery drivers. The Joint Committee discussed the approach taken by the Partnership to delivery drivers parking in restricted areas. Officers confirmed that those who required parking for deliveries to be made did not require permits for this, and explained that there were timed exemptions which applied to single yellow lines, with street signage to indicate any specific restrictions applying to parking for the purposes of loading or unloading.

The Joint Committee discussed the possible issue that might arise if members of the public applied for Traders' Permits in order to use them on their personal vehicles to allow them to be parked in areas covered by Residents' Parking schemes for a lower cost than the cost of a Resident Parking Permit. A member of the Joint Committee highlighted one instance of misuse of a Trader Permit of which he was aware, and argued that the price of Traders' Permits should not be set lower than the cost of a Resident Parking Permit, so as to prevent the misuse/abuse of the scheme, which would be unfair to residents who paid for Resident Parking Permits. There was agreement on this point by the Joint Committee, with a request made for officers to examine ways to close potential loopholes such as this.

A Joint Committee member moved a resolution that called for officers to design a wholly new scheme for Traders' Permits, in order to address the concerns raised and avoid loopholes which could cause unfairness. The new scheme could then return to the joint Committee for approval. It was argued that this would be a convenient time to do this, given that only three Trader Permits were currently issued for use by the NEPP. The Group Manager gave assurance that the existing three permits in use would be honoured whilst a new scheme was drafted.

RESOLVED that the Joint Committee instructs officers to produce wording for a new Traders' Permits Scheme and to bring this to a future meeting of the Joint Committee for approval.

127. Update on Obstructive Parking

Richard Walker, Group Manager, provided background to this item and explained that there had still been no decision by Government as to putting forward proposals to amend the way in which obstructive and/or footway parking was enforced. A potential option was for footway parking to be made an automatic offence, with other options being to give local authorities a duty or discretionary powers to carry out enforcement against obstructive and footway parking, with the ability to allow footway parking in circumstances where this did not cause an obstruction to either road users or to the footway.

The Joint Committee was informed that evidence from work done on this issue in Wales had shown that there were difficulties in separating offences relating to roadway obstruction from those relating to footway obstruction. The Partnership's policy would need to be revisited once the Government made a decision on this issue.

A Joint Committee member emphasised the need for the Partnership to retain the ability to issue and enforce junction protection orders.

128. Forward Plan 2020-21

Owen Howell, Clerk to the Joint Committee, explained that the future dates given for meetings to be held in 2022-23 were dates proposed for the Joint Committee for the expected new North Essex Parking Partnership, which would succeed the current NEPP, should the new NEPP Agreement be ratified by the partner local authorities. It was explained that the first meeting of the new Partnership would need to be an Annual Meeting, under the terms of the draft new NEPP Agreement.

In response to questions, the Clerk explained that future meetings, wherever possible (and dependent on the venues' technical systems) would be run as hybrid meetings. This would allow officers, visiting councillors and members of the public to attend remotely, using Zoom. It was explained that members of the Joint Committee still needed to attend in person in order to be recorded as being in attendance and in order to be able to vote. Should members of the Joint Committee not be able to attend in person, they could still join the meeting remotely and, with the Chairman's permission, participate in debate, but would not be counted as having attended and would not be permitted to vote.

It was noted that the Forward Plan included in the agenda had erroneously been titled as the Plan for 2021-22. This would be rectified.

RESOLVED that the Joint Committee notes and approves the North Essex Parking Partnership Forward Plan for 2021-22.