

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

**1 February 2024 at 1.00pm  
Grand Jury Room, Colchester Town Hall.  
CO1 1PJ**

**Members Present:**

Councillor Mick Barry (Tendring District Council)  
Councillor Graham Butland (Braintree District Council)  
Councillor Goss (Colchester Borough Council)  
Councillor Neil Hargreaves (Uttlesford District Council)  
Councillor Dan Land (Essex County Council) [Chairman]  
Councillor Nicky Purse (Harlow District Council)  
Councillor Ken Williamson (Epping Forest District Council)

**Substitutions:**

There were no substitutions at the meeting.

**Apologies:**

No apologies received.

**Also Present:**

Richard Barrett (Tendring District Council)  
Lou Belgrove (Parking Partnership)  
Jason Butcher (Parking Partnership)  
Richard Clifford (Colchester City Council)  
Jake England (Parking Partnership)  
Amelia Hoke (Epping Forest District Council)  
Owen Howell (Colchester City Council)  
Dean James (Harlow District Council)  
Michael Kelly (Harlow District Council)  
Angela Knight (Uttlesford District Council) [Attended remotely via Zoom]  
Andrew Nepean (Tendring District Council)  
Paul Partridge (Braintree District Council)  
Mel Rundle (Colchester City Council)  
Richard Walker (Parking Partnership)  
Damian Williams (Tendring District Council)

## **162. Have Your Say**

With the permission of the Chair, a statement was read out on behalf of Mrs Irene Laird. Mrs Laird questioned the circumstances and approach of Parking Partnership enforcement in regard to the issuing of a parking charge notice. The Chair noted that this matter would have to be addressed by Mrs Laird via the correct processes within the Parking Partnership.

## **163. Minutes**

*RESOLVED* that the minutes of the meeting held on 9 November 2023 be approved as an accurate record, subject to amendments to show Councillor Goggin as a member of Essex County Council, rather than Tendring District Council, and that Councillor Butland attended as the Joint Committee member for Braintree District Council.

## **164. Urgent Items**

The Chair noted the resignation from the Joint Committee of Councillor Sam Kane, and the vacancy this created regarding the position of Deputy Chair. No candidates stood for election to the position at this time, and it was confirmed that the position would only need to be filled at the next Annual Meeting of the Joint Committee, in June 2024.

## **165. Financial Report and Business Plan**

Tribute was paid to the work done by Andrew Small [Colchester Section 151 Officer] and Chris Hartgrove [Deputy Section 151 Officer] to redesign how financial information was provided, in response to Joint Committee concerns regarding the level of information provided. The S151 Officer explained that this would be an iterative process, with improvements continuing to be made. Finances from 2023-24 had been examined, and a budget proposed for 2024-25. A surplus of £76k for the current financial year was expected, if projections were met. This would bring the NEPP's deficit down to £84k.

The Management allocation had been revised, reducing the spend by the NEPP, and increasing the cost allocation to Colchester City Council, as more of Richard Walker's time was being allocated to work outside NEPP duties.

Bad debt provision was included, and assumptions had been examined, harmonising these with Colchester City Council's projections. Some changes had been made, relating to vacancies for Civil Enforcement Officers [CEOs], the vacancy factor from unfilled positions, and the short fall in parking charge notices due to unfilled positions in the CEO team.

Pay had been a challenge, with a core assumption of a 3% rise, based on expected inflation. The NEPP was predicted to return to a positive balance by the end of 2024-25.

In response to questions as to allocation of deficits between partners, the S151 Officer noted the clear intention of partners that they were all 'in it together', albeit with the NEPP Agreement being self-contradictory in places, and stated that the Joint Committee needed to restate and agree how to treat deficits. If the partners agreed to a sharing of deficits across all partners, then the Agreement wording would need to be examined and amended, and the amended version agreed by the NEPP partners.

A Joint Committee member gave the opinion that the NEPP was in breach of its Agreement, regarding continued Traffic Regulation Order work, and that Agreement discrepancies needed resolving. Joint Committee members agreed that the NEPP Agreement needed to be updated, to remove self-contradictions and set out the sharing between partners of any budget deficit at the NEPP, and that this should be ready for consideration at the March meeting of the Joint Committee. Any changes would require approval by Essex County Council [ECC]. The Chair agreed to raise this, and would let the Joint Committee know if there were any difficulties.

Richard Walker, Head of Parking, confirmed that the £140k expected income from changes to on-street parking charges, as laid out in a later report on this agenda, had been included in the financial information given. A discussion was held regarding the assumption that the Joint Committee would approve the measures that would lead to the expected income increase. Officers noted that this decision had been brought to the Joint Committee at its meeting in October 2023, but the Joint Committee had deferred it, and then cancelled its December meeting.

A Joint Committee member asked why more clarity was being given to financial breakdowns by district, arguing that this was a hard task, and that there were more important things to do.

PCN figures were stated to be under expected levels. A Committee member argued that the £576k of PCN income predicted for the next three months seemed very optimistic, especially given the time of year. Monthly finance reports were requested by the Committee member, with the outturn position for period 11 to be provided in early March, for consideration before the next Joint Committee meeting. The Head of Parking explained there was now a larger deployment of Civil Enforcement Officers [CEOs] than when the forecasts had been made. The S151 Officer described work done to explore improving the quality of financial reporting. A Committee member suggested making a resolution to call for timely monthly financial reports, to be circulated to all partner local authorities.

Following questioning, the Head of Parking explained the change to his role, increasing the time spent on work for Colchester City Council, and thus reducing the portion of his salary paid for by the NEPP. This had been reflected in the figures relating to the management allocation in the finance report. Queries were raised by the Joint Committee as to whether budget lines had been finessed, with insufficient leeway. A Committee member raised the view that an assumption of a 3% pay increase was too low, which was significant due to the cost of salaries

being the NEPP's biggest cost and risk. A request was made for 'worst case scenario' projections to be provided to the Joint Committee members prior to the next meeting. Further assurance was requested regarding the expected increase in PCN income from employing more CEOs. The Group Operating Manager explained that the Budget did give worst case scenario projections, including full employment and no vacancy factor savings. More detail could be shared regarding CEO employment and PCN expectations. The employment of new CEOs had an almost immediate effect on PCN income, as they immediately commenced supervised work. Forecasts of PCN income had already been revised downwards, in line with the Joint Committee's views, but based on full staffing of CEO posts.

The new reporting of bad debt provision was welcomed, and the income to cost ratio of employing more CEOs discussed. The removal of 'data-led services' costs from the finance report was queried.

The Head of Parking explained that the NEPP transformation programme was due to start in the coming week, with details kept confidential until all staff affected had been talked to. Some of what was covered by 'data-led services' had moved to other budget areas. A Committee member asked when the Joint Committee could examine the transformation proposals, and the Head of Parking offered to discuss the details outside of the public session of this meeting. The Group Operating Manager explained that the restructure was to meet the requirements of the new Business Plan, but would be ready for scrutiny and potential changes.

The Group Development Manager emphasised that the Business Plan was designed to meet what members had said they wanted from the NEPP. The service provided was currently costing too much to deliver, so this needed to be addressed sooner rather than later. This meeting gave the Joint Committee the opportunity to discuss any issues with the Business Plan. The Joint Committee member for the Lead Authority noted that operational details as to how a service was delivered were down to the service provider, to deliver against the expectations of the client. Assurance was given that all possible information would be provided to the NEPP partners. Joint Committee members accepted that some transformational details would need to be confidential, but asked for sight of information on the programme, to gain assurance.

*RESOLVED* that the JOINT COMMITTEE: -

- a) Notes the forecast outturn for 2023/24 as of 31st December 2023 (Period 9);
- b) Approves the draft Budget for 2024/25, including the projected impact on the Parking Reserve balance;
- c) Directs that financial outturn updates be circulated to all NEPP partners following the end of each accounting period throughout the financial year;

- d) Directs officers to provide recommendations as to amendments to the NEPP Agreement, which would remove any contradictions in content, and add clarity regarding the division of any deficit between the partner local authorities of the NEPP.

## **166. NEPP Business Plan**

Richard Walker, Head of Parking, introduced the proposed Business Plan, noting the high turnover in Joint Committee representatives and giving the background to the creation and success of the NEPP, up to the disruption caused by the Covid 19 pandemic. The pandemic/Covid 19 measures, subsequent delay in approving increases to fees and charges, and an increase in Traffic Regulation Order [TRO] spending had caused a decrease in reserves and increase in costs. An example was the cost of moving cameras between school sites, along with the funding of off-street operations and indirect costs.

The NEPP was obliged to follow statutory guidance, interpreted by the Joint Committee, on how to operate, including enforcement and patrols. Other actions are optional, which was where savings were to be sought. This included the 3PR Scheme, where the dedicated officer who had left was not to be replaced. The vacant Data Officer role had been left unfilled and the Group Development Officer was to leave the NEPP. The budget for roles was to be reviewed as the NEPP progressed.

The Technical Service was described. TROs were being considered, looking at those which would be self-financing separately to those without immediate income. A couple of new schemes had now been put forward and were covered in the appropriate report. Costs of maintenance for existing TROs had been reduced, by reducing the maintenance work done on signs and lines. This would not be possible to continue into the long term, as it would seriously reduce the ability to conduct enforcement. Money had been allocated towards this work.

Additional work was carried out by the NEPP with NEPP partners to help the local authorities produce parking strategies. The rescue plan was for the remainder of 2023-24 and for 2024-25 onwards, showing what was needed in regard to generating income. Essex County Council [ECC] expected annual increases to fees and charges, and the NEPP had already agreed its increases in these areas, over inflation, for the coming years. The current deficit arose in part from delaying the approval of these increases. Compound increases in permit fees, with a booking fee to cover transaction costs, were not being recommended at this time.

The Head of Parking laid out the differences between the areas covered by the NEPP and the South Essex Parking Partnership [SEPP]. The NEPP was mostly rural, whilst the SEPP mostly covered urban areas. Higher costs and difficulties in enforcement were encountered in rural areas. The Head of Parking confirmed that the NEPP had looked at options, such as using part-time officers on more localised areas. Some were employed in this way, with all CEOs receiving full training and

equipment. The Group Operating Manager added that flexibility was a requirement of the job market, and was supported by Colchester City Council, with flexible and part-time contracts. The NEPP had been working, with recent success, to understand what CEOs wanted, with CEOs having other priorities in addition to flexibility. Other options were being explored.

The Joint Committee discussed the reductions in employment and service provision. The Head of Parking was asked whether a risk assessment had been carried out on the plan to end use of camera schemes outside schools, and how the staff structure had been set up to cater for additional ECC work which had been promised but not delivered, before the work had been confirmed. A request was made for a breakdown of recharge amounts relating to specialist services, and their destinations. The Head of Parking explained that the new NEPP Agreement included the suggested need to conduct activities such as the additional camera operations on behalf of ECC. An extra structure had been put in place to allow the NEPP to extend its camera usage. ECC had not however provided the work expected, and so the structure was reviewed as part of the transformation process. Recharge amounts could be provided, such as for Democratic Services support, and others, on non-direct recharges, although it had been noted already that these amounts were reducing, despite other costs increasing.

The Joint Committee representative from Uttlesford discussed the current consultation that authority was conducting regarding off-street parking. The MiPermit fees and credit card charges were currently being absorbed by Uttlesford District Council, but the proposal was to pass on the MiPermit fee of 10p to the customer, whilst continuing to absorb credit card fees. Use of cashless payment was preferred, as it minimised costs of collecting payments.

The Head of Parking referred to information previously circulated, regarding the National Parking Platform, which would mean that people could use any parking app to pay for parking in any pay-for-use car park. Service charges were now being looked at, and the system was being managed by the Department for Transport. A report would be brought to the next Joint Committee meeting. If the NEPP were to sign up to the scheme by Easter, this would be without charge. If signing up after Easter, it would cost £10k. This would need to be considered.

*RESOLVED* that the JOINT COMMITTEE adopt the NEPP Business Plan for 2024/25.

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

Mr Malcolm Ireland attended and, with permission of the Chair, addressed the Joint Committee to speak in support of the potential Traffic Regulation Order [TRO] T23516631, regarding The Street, Takeley. Mr Ireland stated that 80% of residents, and the local parish council, were in favour of this scheme, and argued that this was the only way to prevent fly-parking by airport users. Mr Ireland noted the

recommendation for rejection of the proposed scheme, in context that the NEPP scoring for this TRO matched the score given to other schemes which were then recommended for approval. Mr Ireland described the regular problems caused by fly-parking, which were serious and constant every day in Summer and during holidays, and were experienced at other times also. Cars were parked and then left for weeks on The Street. Mr Ireland argued that the proposed scheme would generate regular income for the NEPP and offered funding for this scheme from local sources. Mr Ireland emphasised the isolated nature of the area, with nowhere else nearby to park.

The Chair thanked Mr Malcolm for his statement and asked the Joint Committee representative from Uttlesford District Council to respond. Councillor Hargreaves thanked Mr Ireland for attending and explained Uttlesford District Council's ongoing work, including the engaging of consultants, to look at fly parking across the whole area. The Council's view was that the problem should be looked at across the area, rather than in just the single street, where a TRO being introduced would likely move the problem elsewhere. A solution was being sought for the whole area, which was why Uttlesford District Council was not supporting the potential TRO in favour of which Mr Ireland had spoken. Cost of scheme was not at issue, and it was noted by Councillor Hargreaves that it was not possible for residents to buy parking schemes.

Another Committee member asked if there was an alternative to rejecting the TRO in question, such as approval for now, followed by review when a wider solution was proposed. Concern was shown for the residents who were dealing with the problems of fly parking. The Chair suggested that a decision on this TRO proposal be deferred.

Jason Butcher, Group Development Manager, gave the background to this report, and the consideration of it at the previous meeting of the Joint Committee. TRO applications were now split into self-financing and non-self-financing. The report now indicated where TROs were expected to generate immediate payback. The approach taken to junction protection was outlined. Each scheme included a cost estimate. It was explained that the general approach in the past had been for the Joint Committee to ratify the recommendations put forward by each NEPP partner authority, but that the Joint Committee could go against these if it wished so to do.

The Joint Committee representative for Braintree District Council asked whether the timings relating to overnight parking availability for proposal T11992100 could be altered to 6pm until 8am, with the potential for charging bays to be used at that location. The Group Development Manager gave assurance that the timings could be amended, and that consultation would take place as to these, were the scheme to be approved.

The Joint Committee representative for Braintree District Council described proposal T13349033, which did not meet the scoring criteria of the NEPP, as being a measure which would ease movement of traffic into Halstead along the A131. The Group Development Manager noted that there had been suggestions of local funding for

this proposal, as it had scored zero against the NEPP's criteria and would be against the NEPP's scoring policy. Ultimately, it was for the Joint Committee to decide if it wished to support the scheme. The representative for Braintree District Council suggested that he would be happy to ask Halstead Town Council for a financial contribution, if the Joint Committee were to approve the proposal in principle and subject to the sourcing of funding. The Group Development Manager explained that any proposed TRO schemes which were to be funded locally would not need Joint Committee approval, and proposed that this be dealt with outside of the Joint Committee meeting.

*RESOLVED* that the JOINT COMMITTEE: -

- a) Agrees to budget for any prioritised schemes within the 2024/25 financial year budget, in the absence of any surplus funds.
- b) Prioritises proposed Traffic Regulation Order schemes from the applications that have been received by the North Essex Parking Partnership, with the exception of proposals T23516631 and T13349033
- c) Notes that any applications that are "Approved" may not become sealed Traffic Regulation Orders. Any proposal will need to be advertised and any objections made during the formal consultation process considered before a Traffic Regulation Order is made.
- d) Notes that applications that have been received but do not meet the new NEPP scoring criteria are shown in Appendix C.
- e) Notes the new schemes NEPP has introduced in 2023, in Appendix D.

Following these resolutions, Owen Howell, Clerk to the Joint Committee, informed the Panel that a statement should have been read out prior to consideration of this item, having been received from Mr Geoff Smith in regard to proposal T15499454, for The Summit Loughton. The statement was then read out, outlining local objections to the lack of detail in the scheme description, and concern that lines proposed for the junctions and the possibility that these might be extended to run outside residents' properties. Mr Smith noted residents' intention to request a meeting with councillors directly involved in parking matters in the Epping Forest area, to review the issues at The Summit, including school staff parking in the road and safety issues of emergency vehicle access.

The Group Development Manager explained that a number of proposals had been made for that location in the past, and that a slightly different scheme had been put forward at the Joint Committee meeting in November 2023. The Group Development Manager suggested that the statement received might have come from a lack of clarity about the proposal. Proposed red route lines were proposed for junctions in order to assist access.



Amelia Hoke, Leisure and Parking Manager for Epping Forest District Council, confirmed that she was happy to take the proposals to local residents to consult with them and use this to set out details that would produce a scheme with which the residents could be happy.

### **168. Additional On-Street Paid parking**

Jason Butcher, Group Development Manager, explained the income-generation aspects of the proposals, and explained how the NEPP would account for any shortfalls caused by the rejection of any of the proposed additional sites for on-street paid parking. The measures were intended to assist traffic management and shift parking behaviours to favour off-street parking and away from on-street parking. Tariffs would be set aligned, but slightly higher (around 20p higher), than local off-street parking options. The Joint Committee would be asked to conduct an annual review of on-street parking tariffs, mindful of each authority's off-street orders and tariffs.

The Group Development Manager was asked whether local elected members of Essex County Council had been consulted about the proposals. The importance of local consultations was stressed. The Group Development Manager explained that these were currently officer recommendations, and that consultations would be carried out if the Joint Committee was minded to approve the recommended decisions contained within the report. The statutory process was in place to protect residents' rights to object. Consultation on all possible schemes prior to Joint Committee consideration would involve a huge amount of work. Joint Committee members stressed the importance of encouraging residents to respond to consultations, and a note of caution was sounded that it was hard to stop a scheme going ahead once it had got to the stage of formal consultation.

The Joint Committee discussed what would need to be done if some schemes did not go ahead, and projected income reduced. Richard Walker, Head of Parking, explained the cost of operations relating to TROs and the need for transformations in the service, noting that the more the NEPP reduced in size and scope, the greater reduction there would be in the work that could be done.

In light of income assumptions factored into the 2024-25 Budget, caution was urged by a Committee member that the decisions should be taken in a way that made clear there was no predetermination, and that decisions should not be made purely because they were financially driven. An informal consultation, prior to decision, was suggested by a Committee member. The Head of Parking explained that there would always, by necessity, be assumptions made within budgets as to what the organisation wished to achieve. If the income projected from the measures under discussion was not forthcoming, then other ways would need to be sought to increase income or reduce costs. Andrew Small, Colchester Section 151 Officer, confirmed that budgets all showed a set of assumptions, being a financial plan as to

what an organisation intended to do. The Budget did not commit the NEPP to specific actions, but was a statement of intent.

The Joint Committee considered the delay in resolving the matter under consideration. A Committee member urged that it be set out, in the Joint Committee resolution, that any schemes, where substantial local objections were received, be pulled out and discussed with the relevant Joint Committee partner before either going ahead or being cancelled.

The Group Development Manager was asked from where the recommendations originated, and informed the Joint Committee that some came from the local authority covering the area, and others had been put forward by NEPP officers. Some partners did not have any on-street pay-for parking contained within the report, as they were currently undergoing parking reviews. The Group Development Manager added that local support had been received for the proposed sites in Harlow. It would be for the Joint Committee to decide whether to approve the recommendations at this point, or direct that informal consultation first be carried out. A Committee member argued that consultation would give a safety net, with any objections then able to be considered in the decision making process. The Group Development Manager outlined the different forms that informal consultations could take. A Joint Committee member then recommended that the decision be approved at this meeting, so that formal consultations could then be carried out.

The Chair agreed with the view that the agenda items would have been ordered better, for this item to be considered prior to the Budget proposed, but accepted the explanation concerning the budget assumptions made. Assurance had been provided that residents would be consulted in the process, and that it would be included in the resolutions that robust local consultations would be advertised and carried out. The Group Development Manager agreed that measures could be added to include this as part of the consultations. The Joint Committee discussed how best to advertise consultations, with one view being that the NEPP should carry this out, but others being that the local councils should also take part in advertising consultations, as residents were more likely to follow social media of, and have contact with, their local council, as opposed to the NEPP.

A Joint Committee member pointed out that consultations would be guaranteed to produce a lot of objections, as no-one would want increases in parking costs. Useful responses would need to be identified. It was possible that there could be the perception that the proposed measures were an example of Colchester City Council imposing things on local residents, so the local councils would need to advertise the consultations and clarify that these were a joint action between the council in question and the NEPP.

A Client Officer described the approach of the NEPP, which had approached the partner councils' Client Officers, who then identified appropriate areas for pay-for on-street parking, which would be able to generate a return, change behaviour and

offset the cost of enforcement. The Head of Parking emphasised that the decision under consideration was policy based, with the preferred way to manage kerbside parking being to use pay-for schemes. The alternative was to use the difficult and costly method of recording vehicles parked, then patrolling later to show overstays and issue parking charge notices where necessary. Financing was always an issue, but the policy was for successful management of on-street parking, with an aim of shifting drivers to off-street parking where possible.

The Chair requested that details of the communication and consultation work to be carried out be provided to the Joint Committee.

*RESOLVED* that the JOINT COMMITTEE: -

- a) Approves the advertising of additional on-street paid parking sites across the Partnership area, as outlined in the report and to include letter drops and communications to raise awareness amongst residents
- b) Agrees that pay-to-park charges will be reviewed by inflation annually and keep ahead of car park fees locally by at least 20p in each band.
- c) Agrees to review Resident Parking and other fees and charges by inflation annually.
- d) If necessary, delegates the making of these Orders to the Chair and Head of Service.

#### **169. Obstructive Parking update**

Richard Walker, Group Manager, confirmed that there had been no progress made by Government on this issue.

#### **170. Forward Plan 2023-2024**

*RESOLVED* that the Forward Plan for 2023-24, and the meeting dates for 2024-25, be approved.

