

NORTH ESSEX PARKING PARTNERSHIP JOINT COMMITTEE FOR ON-STREET PARKING

**18 June 2026 at 1.00pm
Grand Jury Room, Colchester Town Hall**

Members Present:

Councillor Mick Barry (Tendring District Council)
Councillor Martin Goss (Colchester City Council)
Councillor Neil Hargreaves (Uttlesford District Council)
Councillor Nicky Purse (Harlow District Council)
Councillor Peter Schwier (Braintree District Council)
Councillor Ken Williamson (Epping Forest District Council)

Substitutions:

None.

Apologies:

None given. [But apologies given from Essex County Council, who were yet to appoint a Joint Committee member]

Also Present:

Gary Charlton (Harlow District Council)
Trevor Degville (Parking Partnership)
Jake England (Parking Partnership)
Jo Heynes (Essex County Council)
Owen Howell (Colchester City Council)
Amelia Hoke (Epping Forest District Council)
Esme McCambridge (Braintree District Council)
Hayley McGrath (Colchester City Council)
Sarah Lewin (Uttlesford District Council)
Andrew Nepean (Tendring District Council)
Richard Walker (Colchester City Council)
Danielle Wood (Parking Partnership)

237. Appointment of Chair for 2026-27

RESOLVED [unanimously] that Councillor Nicky Purse be appointed Chair of the Joint Committee for 2026-27.

238. Appointment of Vice Chair for 2026-27

RESOLVED [unanimously] that Councillor Neil Hargreaves be appointed Vice Chair of the Joint Committee for 2026-27.

239. Minutes of previous meeting

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 19 March 2026 be approved as an accurate record.

240. Annual Governance Review and Internal Audit

Hayley McGrath, Service Director – Governance (Colchester City Council), explained her role in working for the Joint Committee to ensure that any issues raised about the North Essex Parking Partnership [NEPP] were resolved. There was no formal requirement for a formal governance review, but these were carried out as being best practice. The review process was detailed, alongside the Annual Governance Statement [AGS], including any issues raised by Colchester City Council's external auditors. No issues had been raised in regard to the NEPP.

The internal audit report was examined, as prepared by Colchester City Council's internal auditors, TIAA. The NEPP had received consistent ratings of 'reasonable' or 'substantial' assurance. Owing to consistently good performance over time, internal audit reviews were carried out on a biennial basis, rather than annually.

Two recommendations from the previous audit were covered, involving cash collection and the displaying of policy information on the NEPP's website. There were now minimal issues regarding cash collection, as only two collection machines were currently operated by the NEPP, whilst the website had been updated to show the policies called for in the second of the two recommendations made.

The Committee asked what had led to only two cash collection machines now being in operation. Danielle Wood, Group Development Manager, explained that these were operated for off-street parking in Coggeshall, due to a significant reduction in numbers over recent years. The intention was to discuss with Braintree District Council the possibility of shutting down these two remaining machines.

A Committee member noted that the report showed the NEPP's governance framework as being 'partially in place', raising concern that it was not 'fully' in place. An explanation of the wording on this point in the report was requested. The Service Director (Governance) explained that, following work done after this rating, the new assessment would be that the governance framework would be considered as being fully in place, following audit findings.

RESOLVED that the JOINT COMMITTEE: -

- a) Notes the Annual Governance Review of the North Essex Parking Partnership (NEPP), and;
- b) Has considered the progress on implementing Internal Audit recommendations for the North Essex Parking Partnership.

241. Annual Review of Risk Management

Hayley McGrath, Service Director – Governance (Colchester City Council), explained the differences between operational risk, as managed by the NEPP, and strategic risk, as owned by the Joint Committee. Although there was no formal requirement, it was good practice to have a strategic risk register, regularly reviewed, and a risk management strategy. Having these things would often be useful, and they would need to be shown in instances of external funding being sought.

No process changes were recommended, but some terminology updates had been drafted, including changes to job titles. Previous reports had only shown one risk score on the register. This had been altered to show two; one being the unmitigated score and the second being the mitigated rating. Risk appetite levels were also now shown. Only 1.29 [Economic sustainability risk] remained above the organisation's appetite level even after mitigations. This was due to the nature of the risk and was due to the overall economic environment.

Risk 1.25 [Failure to return to break-even] had seen a situational change, with the NEPP in a better financial position. It was recommended that this risk be retained on the register at this time, with amended wording, whilst it was ascertained whether the better financial position was continued.

Slight wording amendments were recommended for 1.26 [Workforce resilience risk] and 1.27 [Recruitment difficulties], with the risk rating of 1.27 falling slightly.

Officers were asked what assumptions were being made about the 2026-27 staff pay award. Jake England, Service Director – NEPP, laid out that pay was decided in the Colchester City Council pay award. A rise of 2.5% was budgeted for in this year. Past pressures on pay had been absorbed by vacancy factors, to a great degree. If there were no vacancies in 2026-27, the NEPP would need offsetting strategies, leaning towards a range of smaller savings, rather than a few larger cuts. The National Joint Council decision on pay was a good indicator as to the award that Colchester City Council would make. This would be brought to the Joint Committee if it proved to be a concern.

A Committee member ventured that Colchester City Council had underbudgeted on pay for the past three years, and argued that the award would not be likely to be 2.5%, with evidence of a higher proposed award being rejected by the union working with one of the other partner councils [Uttlesford]. Officers were asked if a reserve could be held, to reduce the related risk down to Amber. The Service

Director – NEPP offered to discuss this with their finance business partner but was happy to implement such a reserve. In past years, where the pay award had been known, the NEPP had added this to its financial forecast.

Regarding the economic sustainability risk, a Committee member asked what risks faced the individual partners, and whether most of them related to Colchester City Council. The Service Director – Governance explained that the City Council held all employment and insurance risks, but urged other partners to consider other non-financial risks, such as reputational risks from parking related issues and their management. The Partnership's future was not currently at risk, but partners could pull out, so it was bet to consider the full range of risks in case any partners withdrew and had to have parking management whilst being outside the NEPP.

The Committee discussed the current method for a partner to withdraw from the NEPP, and the conditions which included a 12-month notice period and difficulties caused by this having to be triggered before annual accounts could be provided. It was noted that this was still being addressed, with changes to the NEPP Agreement being sought.

More information on Local Government Reorganisation [LGR] was expected in coming months. The Service Director – Governance informed the Committee that the interim risk report could come to the Joint Committee after six months. It was suggested that the Committee have a standing item on LGR matters for each agenda, with LGR briefings for the Committee. The Structural Change Order was expected around November. This could be agreed under the Forward Plan item.

RESOLVED that the JOINT COMMITTEE: -

- a) Endorses the Risk Management Strategy for 2026/27, and
- b) Agrees the Strategic Risk Register, subject to any requested amendments.

242. NEPP Financial Update – 2025/26 Outturn & 2026/27 M2 Position

Jake England, Service Director – NEPP, explained that Jack Burton was the new Senior Business Partner at Colchester City Council's Finance Team. The NEPP reserves had now almost reached the level of £400k that was stipulated in the NEPP Agreement. The Committee welcomed the improvement into surplus. A member argued that the NEPP partners should lobby for local control to be given over the setting of PCN [penalty charge notice] levels. The Service Director noted that all local authorities had experienced difficulties, but that the NEPP had made early savings from centralization, with a reduction in positions and the dropping of some non-statutory services. Savings and efficiencies continued to be chased.

Better use of data and information had helped the NEPP to stay ahead of issues, whilst much effort had gone into lobbying government by the LGA [Local Government Association] and BPA [British Parking Association]. The PCN model they proposed was similar to that in place for central London, seeking permission for joint committees to set the cost of PCNs. Bournemouth, Christchurch and

Poole were trialing increased PCN fines. This required much preparation, including increased signage. One trial was held last year, with another coming this year. A positive impact had been found, with increased compliance whilst car parks remained in full use. Differential ticket charges were used in different areas. BCP Council had discussed with ministers the need to be able to conduct differential pricing to address area-specific issues. The second trial would seek to confirm the findings of the first trial.

Officers were thanked for their work to turn around the financial situation at the NEPP.

RESOLVED that the JOINT COMMITTEE notes the 2025/26 Outturn and the Month 2 2026/27 year-to-date (YTD) financial position, and the impact of the Parking Reserve balance.

243. Forward Plan 2026-2027

The Committee voiced a number of views supportive of moving Joint Committee meeting start times to 10:30am, with tea, coffee, biscuits or light snacks provided instead of a lunchtime buffet, and a number of members gave support to the proposal to fix the meeting venue, rather than continuing the touring of the partner councils for meetings of the Joint Committee, with a proposal given that the venue for all meetings be changed to Colchester. Reasons for this included improving public access to meetings, technical considerations for livestreaming and remote participation of officers and members of the public, and to avoid lengthy journeys to venues to the East or West of the NEPP area.

The Joint Committee agreed that it would be sensible to have a standing item on LGR at each of its future meetings, to aid with guidance and help the Committee understand developments. A Committee member asked if it would be possible for officers to draft a position paper on the logicity of continuing the NEPP service for the future 'West Essex' unitary council, as well as for the 'Northeast Essex' unitary council, as otherwise the West Essex Council would need to set up a parking service from scratch. This might potentially give job security to NEPP officers. Jake England, Service Director – NEPP, gave his view that past conversations in Joint Committee meetings seemed to indicate support for the NEPP to continue its work, and informed the Committee that Pam Donnelly, Chief Executive Officer of Colchester City Council, was aware of this. It was not known if the South Essex Parking Partnership [SEPP] partners felt likewise, and the Service Director stated it would be worth him and Jo Heynes, Client Officer of Essex County Council [ECC] discussing this with the SEPP and then bringing an update to the Joint Committee. The Service Director described the continuation of the NEPP as a 'quick win' for the new councils, continuing the service whilst those councils decided if they wished to take parking services in-house.

A Committee member asked the Service Director - NEPP to consult on strategic risks, including the LGR effects on contracts going forward, factoring in the notice period of 12 months for partners who wished to leave the NEPP. The Service Director – NEPP noted that all Client Officers could represent their organisation's views on LGR, and the Committee reports would aim to reflect these.

The request to extend the current NEPP Agreement by 12 months was raised, with the Service Director explaining that this currently sat with ECC, awaiting some financial data from the NEPP. There was a complication in that the Agreement related to delegation of powers from ECC to the Joint Committee, and that LGR would mean all of the partner organisations would cease to exist. Conversations would need to be held with the incoming new local authorities. The NEPP was steward of the services provided, so views would be needed from the shadow authority members, once elected. A Committee member asked if a further 12 month extension would be needed. The Service Director clarified that a new Agreement would be needed, signed by the new unitary councils and drafted between their legal teams. A Committee member argued that this showed the need to get agreement to the amended terms of the NEPP Agreement, which had been drafted and were with ECC's Legal Team, to help address LGR changes.

RESOLVED that the JOINT COMMITTEE approves the North Essex Parking Partnership Forward Plan for 2026-27, subject to the change of Joint Committee meeting times to now commence at 10:30am, and for the venue to be switched to be Colchester for each meeting.