

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

**9 January 2020 at 1.00pm
Council Chamber, Epping Forest District Council**

Members Present:

Councillor Nigel Avey (Epping Forest District Council)
Councillor Richard Van Dulken (Braintree District Council)
Councillor Deryk Eke (Uttlesford District Council)
Councillor Mike Lilley (Colchester Borough Council)
Councillor Robert Mitchell (Essex County Council) (Chairman)
Councillor Danny Purton (Harlow District Council)
Councillor Michael Talbot (Tendring District Council)

Substitutions:

None.

Apologies:

None.

Also Present:

Richard Walker (Parking Partnership)
Michael Adamson (Parking Partnership)
Lou Belgrove (Parking Partnership)
Jason Butcher (Parking Partnership)
Danielle Northcott (Parking Partnership)
Liz Burr (Essex County Council)
Qasim Durrani (Epping Forest District Council)
Samir Pandya (Braintree District Council)
Miroslav Sihelsky (Harlow Council)
Ian Taylor (Tendring District Council)
Alexandra Tuthill (Colchester Borough Council)

54. Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Joint Committee meeting held on 3 October 2019 were confirmed as a correct record, subject to the following amendments:

- a) Page 1, Members present: Add note to indicate that Councillor Robert Mitchell was Chairman.
- b) Page 5, paragraph 3: re-wording of the sentence to make its meaning clear.

55. NEPP Reserve Fund and Work Programme

Richard Walker, NEPP Group Manager, and Jason Butcher, NEPP Project Manager, introduced the report and the bids which had been received for funding from the Partnership's reserve fund.

The Group Manager particularly drew attention to the history of the NEPP, which had been founded to address and bring down the deficit which had been built up when parking services were provided directly by the County Council. That the Partnership had eradicated the deficit and built up a reserve of over £1million was a sign of success, and the reason why this item had become possible. A balanced revenue budget had been maintained, with reserves kept as an operational contingency fund which would be used to cover any unforeseen operating costs.

The operational contingency fund would continue to be held in reserve, ringfenced from the reserves being bid for. It was further recommended that £200k of the project reserve be held aside for use in case any projects needed extra funding for completion.

Since the previous Committee Meeting, the Project Manager had met with Client Officers to help identify and frame bids for funding. In the course of reviewing bid submissions, it was decided to add the category 'conditional approval' for bids which required some extra work or information gathering to be carried out before final approval, which would be delegated to the Chairman.

A summary of the bids received was given, with the scoring criteria being applied to produce recommendations to approve, reject, defer or grant conditional approval to each bid. Officers were asked whether the scoring criteria would be amended to include a scoring criterion relating to the environmental impacts of schemes. The Joint Committee asked whether such a criterion should be retrospectively applied to bids received. Officers explained that the scoring process would be fine tuned and improved for future bids, but that retrospective re-scoring of existing bids would cause delays and make it impossible to gain 'quick wins.'

The bids recommended for approval were discussed, beginning with bids one and two for car park extensions from Uttlesford District Council of 30 spaces and 27 spaces respectively.

In answer to questions from the Committee, officers showed that payback would be possible from bids one and two, and that they should have the effect of reducing demand for on-street parking. It was confirmed that there would be no land purchase required for either bid, as the land was already owned by the District and Parish Council's respectively, and that the District Council would pay back to the Parking Partnership 10% of the income from the additional spaces for the first five years. It was queried whether repayments would continue on those schemes, should the funding not be repaid fully over the first five years. A request for clarification on this point was made, and it was stressed that any terms for repayment should be formally codified to ensure certainty.

A more general point was made that some schemes would have wider positive impacts on parking in general, both within the bidding local authority and, in some cases, across the region.

Clarification as to the nature of scheme five was given, that being a bid to repurpose land adjacent to St Mary's Car Park Colchester, currently derelict, and use it as parking for residents. It was explained that this area was next to a public car park but was not part of it and so would not be providing a direct payback to the Parking Partnership in the way schemes one and two would.

The Committee were asked to consider whether they wished to approve *en bloc* the schemes recommended for approval.

One of the client officers argued that more detail was needed on bids received and on questions relating to timescales and ability to absorb unexpected costs. The Project Manager explained that general detail was supplied in the initial bids, but that it was understood that timelines and project plans would need to be drawn up for approved schemes, and that these could be reported to the Joint Committee through the existing Operational Report.

A member of the Joint Committee cautioned that giving an en-bloc approval would increase the risk that important questions may not be asked, leading to problems later in the process. It was again stressed that, if approved, all schemes proposed would need more work before they would proceed. The schemes for fixed school cameras (scheme 18) and parking bay sensors (scheme 16) were picked out and the further work which would be required, if the schemes were approved.

The Chairman recommended that the Joint Committee approve all bids which had been marked as recommended for approval. There was an understanding that additional work will then be carried out to provide additional details required and clarify such issues such as whether and what repayments are to be made back into reserves e.g. from increased parking revenues.

To avoid lengthy delays in commencing work, it was recommended and agreed that schemes marked for approval should be approved and the Joint Committee then notified should any significant problems or issues with any of them emerge in the future.

The 'conditional approval' recommendations for bids three, four and nine were explained, these bids involving proposals for implementation of variable messaging signage (VMS). More information was required as to the extent of signage required. Should conditional approval be granted, and once the additional information had been obtained, project plans drawn up and full contract value ascertained, these would be presented to the Joint Committee's Chairman for final approval. A Committee member noted that there had been some confusion in comments on these bids, and the Project Manager gave assurance that this would be rectified.

The Chairman stressed the need for deliverability to be shown for VMS and other long-term schemes. It was explained by the Project Manager that Scheme four was less comprehensive than scheme three, due to some VMS already being used in Colchester. However, this was counterbalanced by the fact that there were more routes into Colchester.

The recommendation to defer a decision on scheme 11 (formulate a Parking Strategy for Epping Forest) was explained. The initial recommendation for deferral had arisen from a need for additional information to be provided; this had been resolved and the Group Manager and Project Manager confirmed that the scheme could now be recommended for approval.

The Committee requested an explanation as to why this scheme was costed at an estimated £30k, when the Parking Partnership had assisted in the formulation of a Parking Strategy for Colchester without levying additional charges to that authority. The Group Manager explained that the £30k represented the cost of officers' time, and the duties which had to be forgone in order to assist with the Parking Strategy formulation. It was further explained that the cost of the support provided to help Colchester draft a Parking Strategy had been covered by the contributions that Colchester Borough Council had already made to the Parking Partnership.

It was confirmed that the Parking Strategy formulation for Epping Forest would be a significant, substantial and complex project, given the number of issues and variables at play.

The Joint Committee agreed to grant provisional approval to scheme 11.

The Project Manager explained why bids for funding to assist the installation of electric vehicle (EV) chargepoints had been recommended for rejection. These were schemes 12 and 21. He stated that a framework is available and free-to-the-council which could be implemented rather than bringing individual EV charging schemes for approval.

The approach to EV charging taken by Epping Forest District Council was outlined. Officers had explored options for chargepoints to be managed by an electricity supplier, with payments collected by the Council, thus avoiding punitive rates being charged. Exploratory work had been carried out, but it had then been decided that the Council would not proceed with this.

The recommendation to defer a decision on scheme 13 (St. John's Road Sports Centre – TRO works) was explained, in light of the sports centre development itself having yet to receive approval. It was explained that the work on TROs would include Traffic Regulation Orders from around that area, as these had been found to be no longer effective. The Project Manager advised that it may be better to submit the Sports Centre TRO works and a general review of TROs in the area as two different bids for funding.

Scheme 22 was recommended for deferral. As a proposed extension of the Harlow Town Park Car Park, the Project Manager advised that this scheme bid should be expanded to show the payback (business case) which could be possible. This scheme could then be resubmitted for consideration and would likely score significantly more highly.

The Joint Committee was informed that scheme 23 had erroneously been marked as recommended for approval on the summary sheets, when it should have been recommended for deferral. The issue at play was one involving the mapping software used by the NEPP and which needed resolving before approval could be recommended.

The benefits of using current software to record data relating to the effects of, and any transgressions against, Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) were discussed, and the Group Manager confirmed that much data collection occurred and that it was important to move the Partnership's use of data forward, and to best utilise the information that was collected. This was especially important, given the likelihood that there will be greater statutory requirements towards transparency and provision of data in the future.

The potential ramifications of scheme 18 (fixed school cameras) were discussed. The current situation is that the Partnership uses cameras on top of mobile units, rather than fixed position cameras. The Group Manager expanded upon this to say that the use of fixed camera points allowed the more versatile mobile units to be redeployed to areas of greater need. Once the fixed cameras had been in place long enough for schools to establish high compliance with traffic markings, cameras could potentially be redeployed to more problematic sites.

The scheme and system proposed would give the maximum possible flexibility for camera placement. The Joint Committee expressed their support for this approach.

Members of the Joint Committee questioned the arrangements and specific details of scheme 16 (on-street parking bay sensors). The Project Manager explained that the proposed use of sensors would allow for up-to-date information on availability to be provided to users e.g. to Blue Badge holders. The data collected would also prove useful in allowing TROs and parking bay placements to be tailored to better meet demand.

Sensors could be installed wherever they were warranted and, once buried, the sensors proposed for use did not protrude above the level of the road.

RESOLVED by the Joint Parking Committee that:

- (a) Provisional approval be granted to bids 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19 and 20
- (b) Conditional approval be granted to bids 3, 4, and 9.
- (c) Decisions on bids 13 and 22 be deferred.
- (d) Bids 12 and 21 be rejected.

56. On-street Financial Report

Lou Belgrove, Business Manager for the Parking Partnership, presented the report, which presented the finances of the Partnership as on 17 December 2019, period P9. It was noted that costs continued to be covered, and reserve levels preserved.

RESOLVED that the Joint Parking Committee had noted the On-street Financial Report.

57. Disabled Parking Bay Service

Richard Walker, Partnership Group Manager, introduced the proposal for the Parking Partnership to take on site inspection, TRO and delivery functions of the discretionary disabled parking bay service, currently provided directly by Essex County Council.

It was clarified that this was the part of the service which covered the installation and maintenance of discretionary bays and an outline decision was sought as to whether the Parking Partnership should take on this service provision.

The Committee members discussed the proposal, as stated in the report, and questioned the proposed arrangements for the potential transfer of responsibilities to the Parking Partnership.

Concern was raised that, whilst there were good reasons for the move to be considered, this would involve the Partnership providing personal services for the individuals requesting the bay installations.

The Partnership had not provided such a service before, and this would require collecting input from doctors and dealing with potential objections from neighbours. Community buy-in would be needed and concern was expressed that this would lead the Partnership away from its current and key responsibilities and into an activity which involved neighbourhood politics and disagreements, and potentially financially unviable community work as part of the process of installing new bays.

Members highlighted that there was currently a two- to three-year delay in getting disabled bays installed, which indicated that a large backlog would need to be taken on, in addition to the maintenance of existing bays. The member further

request information as to what the increase in issued blue badges had been following the extension of the scheme to cover those with 'hidden' disabilities, and information as to the additional staff and funding that the Partnership would be given in order to carry out the additional duties. Liz Burr, Senior Road Safety Officer at Essex County Council (ECC), gave assurance that ECC would clear the backlog before the service was transferred to the Parking Partnership. There would be a TUPE implication for the two members of staff who would transfer into the Partnership. The potential for a trial period was discussed, to first see how the service could work if operated by the Parking Partnership and the Group Manager confirmed that what was being sought was an 'approval in principle' decision. Members requested information on the expected financial impact of taking on provision of disabled parking bays and were told that a trial period would show the financial and efficiency implications of taking on the provision of this work stream.

Another member highlighted the extended length of time it took to have bays installed in rural locations and posited that if the Partnership could take on the service without incurring a financial penalty, it would make sense to do so if this would decrease the delay and increase the overall efficiency of the service.

The Chairman clarified that, in most instances where TROs and disabled bays are implemented in an area, the cost of implementing a TRO is the expensive element, in comparison to the bay/s. The Group Manager concurred and explained that, if the proposal were to be accepted, parts of the TRO discovery process will become more cost effective, easier and less costly than is currently the case. The key issue with this was identified as being where the budget for such works currently sits. He expressed the view that more information was needed about effects on the Partnership's budget and the view that more information is needed, but at the same time agreed that it made sense to take on the service, given the current work of the Partnership, and the future of the NEPP.

The Chairman expressed his support for seeking synergies and benefits from co-located working on TROs and disabled bays and moved that a trial be run, with the two officers who work on disabled parking bays to work alongside the NEPP TRO team, and the situation monitored over the coming few months, with feedback, performance and financial outcomes being reported back to the Joint Committee in March 2020.

The Joint Committee agreed that more information was needed and requested that the information gathered during the trial period be provided at its March meeting, and that additional information on blue badge application numbers be also provided, to allow a discussion as to the expected numbers of disabled parking bays expected in the future. Liz Burr agreed to see and provide the information on this.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) A trial be carried out to provide evidence of any efficiency and financial effects from taking on the provision of disabled parking bay installation and administration

- (b) A decision on this item be deferred until the Committee meeting on 19 March, when evidence can be presented to show the likely effects, and when evidence can be given relating to levels of demand/blue badge uptake.

58. Obstructive and Footway Parking Policy

Richard Walker, Partnership Group Manager, gave an update to inform the Committee that no further news or progress had been seen from Government since the Transport Select Committee had reported back in October 2019. The Partnership had laid out the considerations made in preparation for decriminalisation, and the behaviours which would and would not be subject to enforcement. This was a key part of perception management, to ensure that there was a good level of public understanding as to the Partnership's actions in the event of decriminalisation.

The Group Manager explained the general policy, considerations made of proposed exemptions and exceptions and the hierarchy of control, showing where enforcement would be likely to be considered.

The Committee noted that a final decision could not be taken until obstructive footway parking had been decriminalised, but that it was appropriate to set out general rules now, preparing people for enforcement changes and showing Government that the Partnership was ready to take on enforcement duties. By leading from the front, and in partnership with other members of the British Parking Association, it was considered that the putting in place of necessary policies would encourage Government to act. It was considered that such action would not be taken before June, thus giving time for policies to be fine-tuned, including on the exemptions and exceptions to ensure enforcement is appropriate to circumstances, including the type of street or area. More work would also be carried out on the hierarchy table.

RESOLVED that the Committee had noted the report, were satisfied with the draft policy and approved further work to be carried out on it in readiness for decriminalisation.

59. Forward Plan 2019-20

The Committee noted that an item had been scheduled on the future of the Partnership, post 2022, for the meeting on 19 March.

RESOLVED that the Forward Plan 2019-20 be approved.