

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

**16 March 2023 at 1.00pm  
Braintree District Council Offices, Causeway House,  
Bocking End, Braintree CM7 9HB.**

**Members Present:**

Councillor Richard van Dulken (Braintree District Council)  
Councillor Richard Freeman (Uttlesford District Council)  
Councillor Kane (Epping Forest) [Vice-Chairman]  
Councillor Dan Land (Essex County Council) [Chairman]  
Councillor Alex Porter (Tendring District Council)

**Substitutions:**

There were no substitutions at the meeting.

**Apologies:**

Apologies were received from:  
Councillor Goss (Colchester Borough Council)  
Councillor Stacy Seales (Harlow District Council)

**Also Present:**

Richard Walker (Parking Partnership)  
Jason Butcher (Parking Partnership)  
Rory Doyle (Colchester City Council)  
Jake England (Parking Partnership)  
Jo Heynes (Essex County Council) [Attended remotely via Zoom]  
Amelia Hoke (Epping Forest District Council)  
Owen Howell (Colchester Borough Council)  
Michael Kelly (Harlow District Council)  
Samir Pandya (Braintree District Council)  
Ian Taylor (Tendring District Council)

### **137. Have Your Say**

Mr Richard Risdon attended and, with permission from the Chairman, addressed the Joint Committee to raise his concerns regarding the way the Partnership had conducted the processes relating to decisions made relating to potential installation of parking restrictions on Purlieu Way, Theydon Bois. Mr Risdon claimed that the process had wronged him and fellow proponents of introducing a parking restriction. This included the ignoring of an initial survey, carried out by Mr Risdon, which indicated 79% of residents supported introducing parking restrictions, and the widening of the NEPP's own survey to include Harewood Hill. Mr Risdon claimed that the original approval of the Traffic Regulation Order [TRO] for the restrictions had been later countermanded and withdrawn by officers in 2020/21, and alleged that the Joint Committee had not been consulted. Mr Risdon complained that a subsequent report commissioned by the NEPP had covered the arguments put forward in favour of restrictions but had compiled statistics which had been used to argue that there was no case for restrictions. Mr Risdon argued that there continued to be a parking problem on Purlieu Way and challenged the Joint Committee decision from 19 December 2022 [to cancel the introduction of parking restrictions] and the survey methodology used to consult with residents prior to that meeting, held to answer a call-in of the decision to approve a pilot eighteen-month restriction. Mr Risdon complained that he had not been notified of the JPC meeting held on 19 December 2022, and had thus been excluded, along with fellow petitioners for a TRO. Mr Risdon further raised concern that a number of objections presented on 19 December 2022 came from Harewood Hill residents, and that two statements were made by occupants of the same household on Purlieu Way. Mr Risdon requested that the Committee declare that the survey held in December 2022 be declared invalid and that a new survey be agreed between himself and the NEPP Group Manager, to be conducted in October 2023.

Mr Richard Kempley attended and, with permission from the Chairman, addressed the Joint Committee to raise his concerns regarding the NEPP not proceeding with implementing parking restrictions on The Summit, Loughton. Parking by non-residents was causing problems for residents, including by obscuring motorists' vision, and had led to 90% of residents recording their support for restrictions, which then further increased, with parking issues continuing to get worse. Mr Kempley argued that the cost of restrictions should not be a greater concern than safety, regarding statements that the scheme would not be self-financing, asked why an alternative restriction had not been considered and suggested an alternative which could be brought in. Mr Kempley stated that much of the problem was from parking of vehicles by the staff of Woodcroft Hall School, which did not have its own car park, and which had apparently told staff to park in The Summit. Mr Kempley explained that the 'Have Your Say' link on the NEPP website was not functioning and asked the Joint Committee to review its decision.

Ms Sue Griffiths attended and, with permission from the Chairman, addressed the Joint Committee to request parking restrictions be introduced on The Summit, Loughton and to raise concerns as to how the NEPP had approached the subject. 25 of 27 households on The Summit had participated in a petition, in December 2022, calling for parking measures to be introduced and Ms Griffiths criticised the lack of transparency and due process. Problems were exacerbated by car cleaning vans which used The Summit to wash cars parked by non-residents. Ms Griffiths related that NEPP officers had advised that residents should park on their driveways rather than seek restrictions, even though other parts of Loughton were already covered by parking restrictions. Ms Griffiths had been told initially by a NEPP officer that the restrictions were to proceed, but was later told that objections had been received and the scheme withdrawn. Ms Griffiths had been told by the NEPP that notices and letters had been used to inform residents, but she explained that she and other residents had not received anything.

The Clerk read out a statement from Mr Nigel Conway, who had written to complain that recent changes in the area had led to an excessive parking problem develop in The Summit, Loughton, with many vehicles using it as a car park for the local school. This could cause problems for emergency vehicle access and car cleaning of non-resident cars in the road exacerbating this. The NEPP had previously been contacted concerning a residents' parking scheme, with a NEPP consultation claiming that letters had been sent to all residents about the application, however Mr Conway stated that these had not been received by anyone. Proof was requested that the sending of these letters had been implemented, and Mr Conway complained that the process had been abused. A full consultation was requested, and Mr Conway asked that this be confirmed in writing.

The Clerk read out a statement from Mr Ivan Browne, who wrote regarding the parking situation on The Summit, Loughton. Mr Browne noted the proposals in 2022 for parking restrictions on Baldwins Hill, off which The Summit is located, to manage parking issues. Mr Browne described the problems caused by parking on The Summit relating to the local school, and to walkers (following 'pay and display' being introduced to forest car parks, as well as parking by patrons at the local pub. Mr Browne described extreme congestion being caused, as well as dangerous parking, especially on corners, making access difficult for emergency vehicles or refuse collection vehicles to pass by. Problems continued to increase and Mr Browne voiced concern that residents had not been consulted, and that residents had not received any letters or written confirmation relating to the situation on Baldwins Hill. The application for restrictions on The Summit had been turned down and no explanation given, which caused Mr Browne to question whether the correct processes had been followed, due to a lack of transparency in decision making by the NEPP. As the situation was worsening, Mr Browne requested that a new consultation process be started with residents of The Summit, to find the best way to manage parking there. Mr Browne noted that the 'Have Your Say' link on the website was not currently functioning.

Richard Walker, Group Manager, responded to the statements regarding The

Summit, Loughton, explaining that the process for introducing TROs was tightly regulated and required consultation after they were approved. If objections were then received, these would then have to be addressed, where valid. The wider TRO which had been proposed for Baldwins Hill was then described. Jason Butcher, Group Development Manager, explained that the Baldwins Hill TRO had been approved by the Joint Committee in October 2021, and it was expected that this would increase the use of The Summit for parking by non-residents. It was normal process to letter drop details of proposed TROs to local residents, and on 24 March 2022 the proposal was advertised. 72 objections were received regarding the proposal for parking restrictions on Baldwins Hill, so a much smaller scheme was then proposed for the few properties on that road which did not have off-street parking. Therefore, it was not considered necessary for related scheme in The Summit to proceed. It was noted that 11 objections had been received to the initial proposal of parking restrictions on The Summit.

The Group Project Manager explained that a new TRO for permit parking in The Summit would be possible, if requested and brought back to the Joint Committee for consideration, but cautioned that any scheme was not likely to be self-financing.

### **138. Minutes**

Owen Howell, Clerk to the Committee, explained a non-substantive amendment made to the minutes, to better reflect the views given by the Joint Committee member from Epping Forest, relating to Purlieu Way, Theydon Bois.

*RESOLVED* that the minutes of the meeting held on 19 December 2022 were approved as an accurate record, with the aforementioned amendment.

### **139. Urgent Item**

A member of the Joint Committee raised concerns regarding the Partnership's financial situation and requested that a standing item be on every Joint Committee agenda to show the financial position. The member alleged that the Partnership could potentially be operating with a budget deficit for the year closer to £1m than to the level estimated by officers. The Chairman explained that the Partnership's financial position would be covered in the following item.

### **140. Permit Fees and Charges**

Richard Walker, Group Manager, introduced and explained the report, which took the place of the usual financial statement, which was included on the agenda for each Joint Committee meeting. This report had a tighter focus on a combination of factors. Cost of living issues, inflation, a number of pay rises imposed and increased salaries to address recruitment problems had affected the Partnership's financial position. Increased costs had also been encountered relating to commencing new areas of business.

With reserves currently standing at £337k, the NEPP's projected budget deficit at year end of 2022-23 was given as around £680k. This would leave a deficit of around £350k if all reserves were used to address the deficit.

The Group Manager explained the terms of the current NEPP Agreement, which directed that, for districts where deficits were built up, action plans would be drawn up, brought to the Joint Committee for approval and put into action. If deficits still remained after two years, the next action would be to increase contributions from each partner authority.

The possibility of a deficit was foreseen and had led to the discussion on 19 December 2022 of the merit of looking at the levels of fees and charges. That Joint Committee meeting approved an examination of the subject. The methodology used to calculate new price levels was explained, as were the effects of inflation on the costs experienced by the NEPP.

The Joint Committee were presented with the projected financial implications of two options for raising the fees and charges [either by the Retail Price Index [RPI] or the Consumer Price Index [CPI]] and of then harmonising the levels of fees and charges across all partner authorities. The figures shown were explained, including the cumulative effects expected on the NEPP's finances over future years. The Group Manager recommended that the Joint Committee approve Option One, which would see an increase in fees and charges by CPI for the remainder of 2022-23, followed by harmonisation for future years.

The Joint Committee asked questions regarding forecasts for the future and what projections were held regarding the expected capacity for new TROs in the future. The Group Manager underlined that the NEPP could not guarantee any new TROs would be possible if the Joint Committee did not approve an increase in fees and charges. The difficulty in forecasting financial implications, not least because new schemes usually entailed increased costs and income.

The Joint Committee discussed what kind of remedial actions could be taken to address deficits occurring for individual local authorities. The Group Manager explained that the NEPP Agreement did not specify actions to take in such situations, but an 'all in it together' approach continued to be pursued in seeking amendments to fees and charges. The alternative would be to view and set pricing, local authority by local authority.

The Joint Committee discussed the options given and whether the recommended Option One would allow the NEPP to eradicate the forecast deficit in its budget. The Group Manager agreed that this was the view of officers and explained the legal requirements on the Partnership regarding budget deficits, with the Partnership having two further financial years to address a budget deficit which occurs. A Committee member suggested that Option Two [raising fees and charges by RPI] should be engaged, to ensure any deficit is addressed.

The Group Manager was asked about performance measures and metrics used by the NEPP to assess its performance, answering that the NEPP participated in national benchmarking, and specific benchmarking against Norfolk and Gloucestershire. The NEPP performed well compared to the Gloucestershire service, with both gaining around £34 from each Parking Charge Notice [PCN] issued. Norfolk has sought advice from the NEPP and the NEPP maintained an issue rate of PCNs which was similar to the national average.

The Group Manager addressed comments from a Joint Committee member who argued against the issuing of third resident parking permits to wealthy households, and for increasing the prices of second and third permits, especially where there was limited on-street parking for residents. The Group Manager explained that one of the proposed changes was to make it harder for people to 'game' the system by continually changing, online, the vehicle to which permits applied, in an attempt to allow multiple cars in one household to use the same permit. It was confirmed that households could purchase a second permit for a second vehicle, with a third permit being at the discretion of the individual local authority. Colchester had previously barred any issuing of third permits for households, which was an option open to each local authority partner.

A Joint Committee member noted the income stream provided to the NEPP by the payment of PCNs and asked for information on the trend in PCN income over the past year. Jake England, Group Operating Manager, explained that the budget had forecast around £2.2m in income from payments of PCNs issued, which had been the level achieved before the pandemic. The NEPP was looking to see if an increased efficiency in use of data and Civil Enforcement Officers [CEOs] could lead to more effective enforcement operations. It was confirmed that the banding of levels at which PCN value was set was set by national government and could not be varied by the NEPP, which already set its PCN charges at the top of each band. Change in PCN bands was not expected in the near future.

A Joint Committee member asked for detail as to new areas of business which had been highlighted as contributing to the deficit. The Group Manager explained that one of the main developments had been the setting up of the Digital Team, including a pilot project using camera placements in Dovercourt and Winstree Road [Stanway, Colchester]. These had been very successful in pushing behaviour change in the areas in which they were used. Costs had come from installing and then moving cameras to new areas, following improvements in parking behaviour where they had been used. Issues continued to arise outside schools and the new service and cameras helped the NEPP to conduct enforcement in more places. It would take some time to optimise the cameras' placement and movement, but costs would diminish once that was achieved. It was not possible to say what pressure this would put on the deficit until a full year of operations had occurred. The cost of the whole unit could be given, but it was not yet possible to separate out the costs only associated with the new use of cameras at school sites.

The Group Manager was asked why this increase in fees and charges was needed, given that the budget presented for approval by the Joint Committee on 19 December 2022 had been described to the Committee as being balanced for 2023-24. A Joint Committee member stated that they had doubted the budget was a balanced one, and gave a view that the deficit would likely be closer to £1m for 2023-24, potentially leading to partner authorities needing to contribute more money to eradicate the deficit. The member complained that there were no accounts or accounting data to examine, given that the NEPP partners would be liable for any deficit, and that his requests for accounts had not been met. The member gave his view that on-street and off-street operations in the NEPP should be done by separate officers and challenged officers' projections for PCN income in the coming year, suggesting that the Joint Committee should not approving the recommendations until more accounting information was provided by the NEPP to its member local authorities. The member stated that residents could vote to remove parking permit schemes, if permit prices were raised and suggested that the NEPP shrink its operations to reduce costs, including a halt on recruitment.

The Group Manager addressed the points made, pointing out that when the NEPP budget for 2023-24 was drafted, there was no indication that additional pay rises would be introduced [such as via the pay agreement agreed between the lead authority and the union Unison]. In an uncertain and chaotic economic environment, this could not be predicted. Updates had been provided to the partner local authorities' client officers [COs], with the COs agreeing with how the NEPP would address this situation, and agreement being given as to how permit prices would be reviewed. If the fees and charges for permits remained unchanged, the Group Manager argued that it was more likely that the budget deficit would increase.

The member raising concerns stated that it was the Group Manager's job to predict what would happen in the future and asked why the NEPP was in the current position. The Chairman noted that different members of the Joint Committee potentially had different interpretations of the situation and noted the wealth of data and information presented within the report before the Joint Committee, noting that ways to present data in a more easily understandable format should be looked at.

Jo Heynes, Interim Head of Network and Safety [Essex Highways] explained that much work had been carried out on the budget by Essex County Council [ECC] with the NEPP Group Manager and his colleagues. All aspects of the budget had been challenged, and the option presented was the most balanced option found to address the expected deficit which had recently arisen. The Interim Head of Network and Safety underlined that the additional costs which had arisen, especially the staff-based costs, were entirely outside the control or ability of the Group Manager to predict. Increasing fees would be unpopular, but ECC was confident that this was a good option to enable the NEPP to recover its financial position. It was noted that permit fees and charges had been static for a long time. Rory Doyle, Strategic Director [Colchester City Council [the lead authority]], addressed the challenge to

provide a greater level of operational financial detail, stating that the level provided was usually sufficient, but pledging to work with the other partners to provide more detail for assurance. The member who had expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of budget information provided asked why the NEPP and ECC had been working together without involving all of the partner local authorities within the NEPP. The Interim Head of Network and Safety explained that the NEPP exercised powers delegated to it by ECC, which was why ECC was invested in ensuring that the Partnership remained sustainable and was focussed on its long-term sustainability.

The Chairman summarised the concern that had been raised by one member, regarding a perceived element of confusion and concern regarding what could be thought of as over-optimism regarding income from PCN payment. There was a need to ensure that all partners could see and understand the finances of the NEPP.

Questions were asked and clarification given as to the projections and information contained within the report's tables, such as the fees and charges to which increases would relate. If increases were approved for 2023-24, the increased rates would not go into effect until June, followed by full years of increased rates, showing why Table 1 showed projections for the initial part year increase, followed by cumulative full-year increases for the years to follow.

*RESOLVED* by the JOINT COMMITTEE that: -

- (a) The relevant permit prices, fees and charges be raised in line with Option One within the report presented and in line with the Consumer Price Index;
- (b) Permit prices, fees and charges be harmonised across the local authorities within the North Essex Parking Partnership for the year 2024/25 onward, as described within the report;
- (c) An administration charge be introduced for making a change to a vehicle registration mark on any permit.

The Joint Committee voted to reject the recommended introduction of a transaction fee of 10p per transaction to cover the cost of the On-Street MiPermit Pay to Park, and Visitor Permit services.

The Joint Committee was offered a range of implementation dates/windows for the increase in relevant permit prices, fees and charges, as had been approved by the Joint Committee at this meeting. Proposals were put to the Joint Committee, in turn, for implementation between weeks commencing 29 May and 12 June 2023, or implementation 'now', or implementation in June/July 2023. The three options put forward were rejected by the Joint Committee.



#### **141. 'No Stopping' Cones Policy Report**

Jason Butcher, Group Development Manager, presented the report and explained the charges proposed. One Joint Committee member queried whether the pricing would cover all costs. The Group Development Manager explained how the service worked, with staff often able to deliver to customers by providing cones from satellite sites, rather than home base. Officers had used their best estimates to set prices and the Joint Committee could set new increased prices if it wished to do so. Currently there was no charge levied on the borrowing of cones from the NEPP. Each lost cone cost the NEPP around £10.

*RESOLVED* by the JOINT COMMITTEE that the proposed temporary 'No Stopping' cones policy be approved.

#### **142. TRO Scoring Methodology Report**

Jason Butcher, Group Development Manager, introduced this item and the main differences between the proposed methodology and that which was currently in use. The changes were to tighten the process for future TROs.

A Joint Committee member asked for an extra line to be added, to show whether the local parish council/s supported the TRO, stating that ideally this would include a points weighting, if possible. The Group Development Manager agreed that an extra line could be added but explained the concern that, if it were assigned a score, this would be outweighed by other criteria.

The Group Development Manager answered questions and explained that the new methodology would make it easier to make judgements on scoring.

*RESOLVED* that the JOINT COMMITTEE approves the proposed new TRO application scoring methodology.

#### **143. Obstructive Parking**

Richard Walker, Group Manager, confirmed that there was no news regarding this issue. A Committee member noted that he often received complaints regarding obstructive parking.

#### **144. Forward Plan 2022-23**

*RESOLVED* that the Joint Committee notes and approves the North Essex Parking Partnership Forward Plan for 2022-23, and the amended two meeting dates for the

2023-24 year, which had been altered so as to avoid clashes with meetings of the South Essex Parking Partnership.