

Key Decision Required:	No	In the Forward Plan:	No
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CABINET

12 JULY 2013

REPORT OF PORTFOLIO HOLDER ENVIRONMENT AND COAST PROTECTION

A.5 PARKING STRATEGY FOR TENDRING

(Report prepared by Ian Taylor)

PART 1 – KEY INFORMATION

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To present to Cabinet a proposed Parking Strategy for Tendring.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The parking strategy provides:

- The aim, purpose and key priorities for parking in Tendring.
- Highlights the different approach and strategic requirements for parking taken by key partners such as the Highway Authority (Essex County Council) and the North Essex Parking Partnership (NEPP).
- Parking policies for Tendring that reflect the wider Council aims and priorities within the Corporate Plan.
- Detailed options and a way forward for parking on and off street to support key priorities for parking in Tendring.

The report presents the parking strategy for Tendring and makes recommendations to adopt the strategy and approve the aims and key priorities.

Agreement to the above will:

- Direct and inform the Council's management of its own off street parking facilities in various localities within the District.
- Direct and inform private car park operators of the requirements of the various localities within the District.
- Provide clear direction to support the Council in its role as a member of the North Essex Parking Partnership (for on-street parking) when seeking policies and decisions by the partnership which reflect the needs of local communities in Tendring.
- Provide clear direction on parking objectives on and off street to support tourism and regeneration strategies of the Council

RECOMMENDATION(S)

- a) To adopt the Parking Strategy for Tendring.**
- b) That no deficit position for the NEPP is being budgeted for, be noted.**

PART 2 – IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

DELIVERING PRIORITIES

The Parking Strategy for Tendring should reflect wider Council priorities contained within the Corporate Plan and Sustainable Community Strategy.

FINANCE, OTHER RESOURCES AND RISK

The proposed Parking Strategy for Tendring will ensure well managed car parks and protect budget estimates for car parks, safeguarding income important to maintaining this Council's financial strategy.

The proposed strategy will support policies designed to ensure the Council is able to influence the operation of the North Essex Parking Partnership and to evaluate the financial implications of continuing as a partner in future.

LEGAL

The options for consideration in this report are within the Council's legal powers.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Consideration has been given to the implications of the recommendations proposed and any significant issues are set out below.

The Parking Strategy for Tendring will assist in managing income and resources available to the Council within the context of TDC's current spending / service review.

Consultation/Public Engagement - The recommendations if adopted will provide regular public engagement raising the profile of parking issues and enhancing the reputation of the Council.

Crime and Disorder – Policies relating to Crime and Disorder initiatives are contained within the proposed strategy.

Equality and Diversity – Policies within the proposed Parking Strategy for Tendring support the most vulnerable members of the community with regard to their parking needs

Health Inequalities – Promoting healthier lifestyles is a policy outcome achievable from proposals within the proposed strategy

Area or Ward affected – all wards are affected by the recommendations in this report

PART 3 – SUPPORTING INFORMATION

BACKGROUND

Prior to March 31 2011 Tendring District Council directly operated and maintained 40 off street car parks throughout the District and delivered on-street parking enforcement under the terms of a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with the Highway Authority, Essex County Council.

The Highway Authority was responsible for implementing changes to Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO's) which regulate how and where parking occurs on the highway. The Highway Authority consulted directly with both the District Council and local Town and Parish Councils prior to introducing or altering TRO's.

Further to concerns about an on-going and potentially increasing operating deficit associated with the current arrangements, ECC expressed its intention to operate on-street parking enforcement at break-even cost and to this end ECC served notice of its intention to end the SLA's on the 31 March 2011.

The option for delivery of on street parking enforcement decided by the Highway Authority (ECC) was the establishment of a joint parking service for the north of Essex covering the borough and district areas of Braintree, Colchester, Epping, Harlow, Tendring and Uttlesford Councils to be hosted by Colchester Borough Council and overseen by a Joint Committee. This is known as the North Essex Parking Partnership (NEPP).

This Council made a decision to be members of the Joint Committee for on-street parking arrangements but to retain responsibility for the delivery of an off street parking service in-house.

The fact that parking issues on street were no longer directly under the control of the District Council, combined with this Council's ten year off street parking strategy ending in 2011, highlighted a need for a new Parking Strategy for Tendring.

CURRENT POSITION

The establishment of the North Essex Parking Partnership (NEPP) has introduced on-street parking policies and working practices within Tendring that tend to reflect the needs of larger metropolitan areas that require emphasis or priorities designed to reduce car travel rather than local parking priorities suitable for the needs of Tendring. Further to this, in Tendring, traffic congestion is not a major issue and does not create a negative economic impact on this District in the same way as it can in larger towns and cities.

The general requirement for the NEPP to operate on a cost neutral basis has also tended to create enforcement practices on street in Tendring that are more designed for revenue raising than to positively promote the local economy.

The first 24 months operation has resulted in more concentrated, targeted enforcement in areas likely to generate parking tickets. This contrasts with what is wanted by local residents which is general parking enforcement designed to improve traffic flow and the quality of lives for residents.

The partnership has improved the maintenance and provision of signs and lines but this does not seem to have improved income as projected and there are concerns about how sign / line maintenance will be funded in future years. The current improvement to signs and lines was funded by means of a subsidy from ECC. In future years this cost will be met by partner authorities of the NEPP.

The promised efficiency in terms of ensuring more PCN's are paid resulting in a higher income figure per PCN has also not materialised.

The current financial position and projections for the future are not easy to forecast but Tendring has consistently questioned whether parking enforcement on-street can possibly be provided cost neutral to member authorities whilst retaining the support of the local community.

Current predictions based on the most recent financial report are that Tendring could be liable for a one sixth share of an annual operating deficit of £250,000.

A working party set up to investigate concerns about the operating deficit addressed some points requiring attention but concerns remain about the lead authority (and other member authorities) willingness to take important but necessary decisions in order to reduce operating deficits.

These are:

1. Making the operation smaller as opposed to larger – smaller operation equates to smaller operating deficits.
2. Out sourcing key functions – frontline enforcement, back office administration and TRO making.
3. Introducing on-street charges to compensate for operating deficits – Pay and Display on –street and increased permit fees for residents parking. However, both of these options will prove unpopular, are contrary to local parking strategies such as those within the parking strategy for Tendring and would require a robust business case to support them as well as further capital investment to achieve.
4. Reducing costs by working in partnership with areas such as Tendring who require a far less proactive approach to enforcement. Tendring would be willing to consider operating on-street enforcement and notice processing, leaving resources to be used by the NEPP in other areas, or for the NEPP to reduce some fixed costs.

Tendring is currently negotiating arrangements to work in partnership with the NEPP to re-establish a primary role for the District Council in relation to local enforcement operations on-street within Tendring.

CONCLUSION

For any parking strategy to be successful issues relating to both on and off street parking need to be addressed. The current position in Tendring is that on street issues and priorities are being determined by a regional partnership of which Tendring is one member out of seven, whilst Tendring retains control over the majority (but not all) off street public parking provision in the District.

It is important for Tendring to be able to promote its own parking priorities and to plan for parking needs that will promote economic prosperity and well-being within all the local communities within this District.

Whilst some of the policies and priorities promoted by the NEPP are shared by the local District of Tendring many policies and priorities remain widely different.

Central Government is already considering policy changes in respect of parking that reflect those of Tendring, such as a requirement to afford more time for motorists between observation of the parking contravention and issuing of a Penalty Charge Notice.

As current members of the Joint Committee of the North Essex Parking Partnership Tendring has been able to demonstrate a successful alternative approach to many aspects of parking including measurable local support for its parking priorities. In doing so Tendring has started to convince other members of the NEPP Joint Committee of the different needs of this District in terms of parking priorities and for the parking partnership to adopt policies and priorities more akin to our own.

In many respects the same questions apply to Tendring following 24 months operation of the NEPP as they did prior to deciding to join the partnership. Namely:

- Will Tendring be required to pay a share of any deficit in the operating budget for the NEPP from 2013 /2014 onward and if so how much was this likely to be?
- Will Tendring have more influence and control on local on-street parking policy and practice by being members or would Tendring be better off outside the partnership?

The Parking Strategy for Tendring will be an additional, valuable tool for Tendring when sitting on the joint committee of the NEPP and as a means of directing the Council's future decision making in respect of membership of the NEPP and in the management of its own off street parking.

APPENDICES

Appendix A – Proposed Parking Strategy for Tendring

BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR THE DECISION

None

Tendring District Council Parking Strategy 2013-2018



Tendring
District Council



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Foreword

Most private vehicles are driven for only a small proportion of their life; the rest of the time they are parked. Parking takes up a lot of land and costs money to provide and to maintain. Parking affects everyone in the community whether we are looking for somewhere to park or coping with the impact of other people's parked vehicles.

There is a balance to be struck between both providing and restricting car parking for a number of reasons. There have been a number of policy changes over time affecting the approach to parking issues whereby roads and parking are no longer provided in line with unquestioned increases in demand, the so called "predict and provide" approach. Parking is now a topic and activity to be treated as part of a much larger system.

The availability of parking spaces for our vehicles is an important factor in determining how we travel and where we travel to. Parking availability also influences the vitality and viability of town centres, the attractiveness of residential areas, tourist and visitor strategies, regeneration proposals, crime and disorder, anti-social behaviour and a number of other issues.

It is widely accepted and acknowledged that parking plays an increasingly important role in how we live and travel and the issues affecting parking policies are best dealt with by reference to an overall parking strategy. Any strategy should be produced alongside Urban Transport Plans for towns (or the County as a whole) as well as any local Town Centre Strategies, the Community Strategy, the Councils Land and Property Strategy and our Councils Corporate Plan. Without this it may not be possible to obtain a full picture on how a balance can be struck between environmental protection, economic growth, accessibility, health improvement, so-

The purpose of this Parking Strategy is to highlight the specific parking needs of Tendring and to achieve a balance between these local needs and the wider, more strategic requirements for parking.



Background



The Tendring peninsula covers an area of 130 square miles with a population of 146,000 (2009). It is made up of a more heavily populated coastal strip, comprising of Clacton-on-Sea, Holland-on-Sea and Jaywick; Frinton and Walton; Harwich and Dovercourt and Brightlingsea; the riverside towns and villages of Mistle, Manningtree and Lawford as well as a number of inland rural villages.

Tendring attracts a large number of tourists, particularly to its seaside towns and as a result, demand for parking peaks during the Easter and May Bank Holidays and at the height of the summer season from late July through to the first week in September. The extent of this peak demand varies from area to area throughout the District. At present the Council is able to manage the seasonal demand for parking by a combination of off street car parks and a considerable amount of free on street parking.

Any parking strategy needs to acknowledge the importance of parking in our town centres, residential streets, coastal areas, villages and countryside. Policies relating to parking (whether on the highway or in off street car parks) should consider supporting wider national transport initiatives by seeking to promote alternative modes of travel where possible especially in the case of long stay parking and during periods of peak demand for parking.

However, Tendring has requirements and priorities that are specific to this District and it is recognised that failure to meet these specific requirements and to keep up with the increasing demand for adequate parking could result in lost commercial opportunities and a decline in the popularity of the District.

The parking strategy for Tendring acknowledges and reflects general parking trends and solutions but is primarily designed to highlight and meet the priorities of Tendring.

With regard to parking arrangements under our direct control, in Tendring we have sought to be flexible in our parking arrangements and wish to support both our residents and local businesses. The Council is currently providing a free Tendring householder parking permit for use on all Council owned car parks from 11.00 am to midnight and is also offering a free after 3pm parking arrangement for all car park users designed to promote the local afternoon and evening economy.

These initiatives hope to encourage local residents to spend their disposable income locally thereby boosting local businesses.

Parking Provision

Parking is essentially provided in two ways, on- street and off-street. On-street parking on the highway is the statutory function and responsibility of the Highway Authority and in Tendring's case this is Essex County Council.

On the 1st April 2011 Essex County Council delegated on-street parking management and enforcement to two partnerships, one in the south of the County and one in the north. Tendring District Council is a member of the North Essex Parking Partnership (NEPP) which manages on-street parking enforcement and the making of new Traffic Regulation Orders in respect of on-street parking.

Tendring District Council remains responsible for the operation and management of its own 40 off street car parks providing over 4,000 parking spaces for cars and coaches and commercial vehicles. This represents most of the publicly available off street parking throughout the District.

Off street parking is also provided by Parish and Town Councils and other smaller public bodies, or privately from sources as diverse as large companies (operating commercial car parks or purely for meeting business requirements) to individual small businesses and private residences.

Policies and practices with regard to parking on the highway (on-street) can influence parking provision and practice in car parks (off-street) and vice versa. The variety of parking operators highlights the importance of establishing a lead body to help determine local parking policy and practice. Locally agreed priorities and policies for parking will be most effective with the cooperation and agreement of on-street parking providers.

One of the important outcomes and next steps arising from this strategy will be to develop closer working relationships with other parking providers.

The separation of on street enforcement from off street provision and enforcement is a major contributory factor determining the need for local Districts and Borough's to set priorities for parking within their area and to formulate local parking strategies and policies.



The Parking Strategy for Tendring

The Aim

For Tendring to be regarded as a “car friendly” District recognising and acknowledging the importance of the car to the economic prosperity of this area.

Key Priorities

Tendring District Council

The key priorities for parking both on and off street reflect the Council's priorities for the District as outlined in the Corporate Plan which is to:

- **Support a thriving local tourism industry.**
- **Support local businesses.**
- **Support local residents and in particular the most vulnerable.**
- **Support crime reduction initiatives.**
- **Support the promotion of sustainable economic growth in the District.**
- **Promote healthy and active lifestyles.**
- **Encouraging local residents to visit more widely throughout the District.**

In pursuit of these key priorities and to achieve the overall aim of encouraging a more “car friendly” District, the Council has identified clear objectives or outcomes:

1. **Affordable off street parking.**
2. **Parking availability in the right places for the right vehicles – on and off street.**
3. **Enforcement practices off street that assists the operation of car parks but do not deter visitors.**
4. **Attractive and fit for purpose car parks that support tourism and regeneration objectives.**
5. **To introduce on-street parking regulations (TRO's) that support local businesses and the local economy.**
6. **To seek agreement from within the North Essex Parking Partnership for local parking policies and practices on-street that support the Tendring local parking strategy.**
7. **To reject on-street charging (pay and display)**

Tendring recognises the importance of car travel in this District as a means of boosting the local economy and is seeking parking policies designed to encourage and not to deter private vehicles.

North Essex Parking Partnership (NEPP)

The NEPP published their key priorities for on-street parking which are to:

- **Reduce congestion and the number of and severity of traffic accidents.**
- **Reduce the effect of transport on the environment.**
- **Maintain the highway assets of the county.**
- **Improve access to jobs and services.**
- **Encourage healthier travel choices and employer travel plans.**



The North Essex Parking Partnership was also set up by the Highway Authority in order to provide a cost neutral service. The need to reduce costs and to maximise income highlights the difference between the approach of the NEPP and those of the local District in terms of:

- **Parking enforcement.**
- **Parking provision on-street.**
- **Permit costs.**
- **Policies around on-street charging.**

One of the important outcomes and next steps arising from this strategy will be to seek agreement from within the North Essex Parking Partnership for local parking policies and practices on-street that support the Tendring local parking strategy.

Summary

Tendring is a peninsula consisting of small towns and villages and has an infrastructure deficit. The District is highly dependant on car use largely due to a combination of infrequent and costly public transport options and geography.

The relative size of the towns within the District highlights a need to support local shopping centres in the face of competition from out of town retail outlets and larger metropolitan areas a relatively short distance away.

In addition, its year round and seasonal tourist / visitor based economy is dependant upon visitors arriving by car and being able to park safely and easily, in the right location, at reasonable cost .

In support of these requirements for the local economy and the particular needs of this District, Tendring seeks to achieve a car friendly district by:

- **Enforcement and regulation of parking on and off street in a manner designed to encourage car use as opposed to deterring it.**
- **Minimum charges for parking on and off street.**
- **Improved quality of parking provision on and off street for all vehicles.**
- **Parking in the right locations, when and where required and better use of existing facilities.**
- **Meeting the specific needs of its local communities.**
- **Use of the Considerate Parking Initiative where regulation may not be appropriate or practical.**

Tendring is only able to meet the parking needs of the District by means of a combination of freely available on-street parking supplemented by off street parking provision in Council and other off street car parking areas.

However, during periods of peak demand, the availability of parking on and off street is currently not always in the best locations, for the duration / length of time wanted, at a cost providing the maximum benefit to the local economy, or available at times when it is most required.

To achieve the aims and key priorities for parking in Tendring the importance of the link and inter action between on and off street parking availability cannot be underestimated.

There are a number of proposed actions in this strategy over the short to medium term designed to meet the criteria of being a “car friendly” District as well as to improve parking provision on and off street.

Next Steps

Short Term (1 to 2 years)

- Complete Clacton Town Centre On-Street Parking Review and implement all proposed changes designed to support local businesses.
- Establish clear agreement with NEPP in respect of local on-street parking enforcement and provision.
- Annually report budget position of the NEPP and provide options for consideration in respect of continued membership of the NEPP.
- Provide data on car park conditions along with a car park improvement schedule and priorities, for approval by Portfolio Holder.
- Establish local policy and decision making in respect of new Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO's).
- Reorganise and prioritise outstanding and new Traffic Regulation Orders.
- Provide reports and proposals in respect of current off street parking concessions.
- Complete process to ensure all chargeable car park permits are available and administered online.
- Improve website links and information to promote local parking strategy aims and key priorities.

Medium Term (2 to 5 years)

- To identify new parking areas in the best possible locations to support tourism / businesses.
- Review on street parking Traffic Regulation Orders across the District including introducing new residents parking schemes to support the aims of this strategy and the needs of local residents and the local economy.
- To develop online business module for local hotels and guest houses to create parking accounts directly for customers / guests.
- To maximise town centre parking availability and to promote health and well being initiatives by reviewing TDC staff parking policy.
- To reorganise the Parking and Seafront team to more effectively support wider seafront and town centre initiatives on anti-social behaviour.
- To review all boundaries around car parks and introduce licence arrangements for access in order to protect Council assets.
- To improve appearance of car parks in line with agreed schedule to encourage greater use and to promote Tendring as an important visitor destination.
- To report on key structures such as the Milton Road car park Dovercourt and High Street and Wellesley Road car parks Clacton with a view to extending parking provision or maintaining existing parking provision – exploring new options.
- To extend number of Safer Parking Awards on TDC car parks.
- To extend CCTV coverage on rural car parks.
- Identify commercial and other opportunities to extend use of car parks and to offer improved facilities on them.
- To develop partnerships with other car park providers.
- To promote initiatives to support evening economy – on and off street.

Promoting tourism and regeneration by increasing visitor numbers, the establishment of new businesses in the District and encouraging local residents to travel more widely within the District as opposed to going outside are important outcomes sought from this strategy.

A more detailed Assessment of local parking issues and needs along with supporting documents can be found on the Councils Website www.tendringdc.gov.uk

