

RESOURCES AND SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

05 MARCH 2024

REPORT OF CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR OPERATIONS AND DELIVERY

A.3 NORTH ESSEX PARKING PARTNERSHIP

(Report prepared by Andy Nepean Public Realm manager)

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To consider Tendring District Council's current relationship with the North Essex Parking Partnership.

INVITEES

- *Cllr Mick Barry – TDC – Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Public Realm*
- *Damian Williams – TDC - Corporate Director for Operations and delivery.*
- *Cllr Dan Land – NEPP – Chair*
- *Cllr Tom Cunningham – ECC – Portfolio Holder for Highways, Infrastructure and Sustainable Transport*

BACKGROUND

The Committee has requested information on matters related to the North Essex Parking Partnership:

1. The business model of the NEPP.
2. The agreement for the NEPP.
3. The use of TDC officers to undertake enforcement of on-street parking restrictions.
4. The current position in relation to the use of camera enforcement cars in the District.
5. Information on scrutiny undertaken or proposed in other partners of the NEPP – Including Epping Forest, Harlow, Uttlesford, Braintree and Colchester Councils.

With a view to considering

6. this partnership and the role of the Council within the partnership;
7. the overall financial risks to the Council;
8. the work of the partnership to support road safety eg outside schools, and;
9. short term parking in shopping areas and its contribution to the economic success of those shopping areas

DETAILED INFORMATION

The North Essex Parking Partnership (NEPP) was formed in April 2011 and reports to a Joint Committee (JC) of ECC, initially under a seven-year agreement known as the Joint Committee Agreement (JCA) with an option to extend for a further four years.

The six District and Borough Councils in North and West Essex, namely Colchester, Braintree, Uttlesford, Harlow, Epping Forest and Tendring are members of the JC, and Councilors are Executive Members. Essex County Council (ECC) is also represented at meetings.

A new JCA was agreed in 2022. The length of the new JCA is five years with an option for a further three-year extension. Prior to requests for Districts and Boroughs, to sign up to the new JCA in 2022 the lead authority Colchester Borough Council reported a favorable financial position.

Essex County Council is the Highway Authority for the area and has delegated the on-street parking provision to Colchester City Council as the lead authority of the NEPP.

The NEPP is responsible for all the functions entailed in providing a joint parking service including those for:

- Back-Office Operations
- Parking Enforcement
- Strategy and Policy Development
- Signage and Lines, Traffic Regulation Orders (function to be transferred, over time, as agreed with Essex County Council) On-street charging policy insofar as this falls within the remit of local authorities (excepting those certain fees and charges being set out in Regulations.
- Considering objections made in response to advertised Traffic Regulation Orders (as part of a sub-committee of participating councils)
- Car-Park Management (as part of a sub-committee of participating councils)

Tendring District Councils role in the partnership is, by way of voting and attendance at Joint Parking Committee meetings:

- Agreement of future business plans
- Agreement of service levels including the different levels of enforcement requirements in individual authorities.
- Agreement of any introduction or changes in fees and charges including permits.
- Agreement and scrutiny of the annual proposed budget.
- Scrutiny of financial reports
- Submission of Traffic Regulation Orders for the Tendring area.

The Joint Committee meets at least four times per year with an elected member and officer in attendance. Past meetings have been attended by Tendring's Section 151 Officer and Corporate Director alongside the officer responsible for parking.

On street parking enforcement is the responsibility of the highway authority and as such doesn't allow involvement from TDC enforcement officers without the consent from the lead authority. TDC have in the past offered our services to the NEPP and have periodically enforced outside schools but this has not continued due to reluctance of the NEPP to use our resources.

TDC have continued to refuse the use of a camera car in the area and have repeatedly requested financial reports showing the viability of this way of enforcing, these have not been submitted to this point.

While at time of renewing our membership with the NEPP in 2022 the financial status of the partnership was in surplus. Parking habits since the Covid pandemic have changed and as such income to the NEPP has substantially reduced resulting in a deficit currently of £160k (£337k of reserves used to bring the deficit to this amount).

Any deficit is to be equally shared between the seven authorities at the end of the following financial year.

The NEPP has produced a rescue plan to reduce the deficit and to bring the partnership financials back into surplus. The plan is shown in Appendix A. Rescue plan 2023.

TDC are continuing to scrutinize the financial proposals and considering options available to them regarding the continuation of the partnership. TDC are in conversation with all partner authorities and discussing items of concern but it's officers are unable to comment on behalf of those other authorities.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee determines whether it has any comments or recommendations it wishes to put forward the relevant Portfolio Holder or Cabinet.