

MINUTES
of the
SOUTH ESSEX PARKING PARTNERSHIP JOINT COMMITTEE
held on 10th October 2024 at 2pm

Members present:

Councillor Andrew Cross – Rochford District Council
Councillor Simon Morgan – Maldon District Council
Councillor Daryll Sankey – Brentwood Borough Council
Councillor Laureen Shaw – Essex County Council
Councillor Terry Sherlock – Chelmsford City Council

Officers present:

Nick Binder - Chelmsford City Council
William Butcher – Chelmsford City Council
Carole Carr – Brentwood Borough Council
Jan Decena - Chelmsford City Council
Stuart Jarvis – Castle Point Borough Council
Mike Packham – Chelmsford City Council
Russell Panter – Chelmsford City Council

1. Welcome and Introductions

The Chair welcomed those present to the meeting.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Alan Ball – Basildon Borough Council, Sharon Braney – Rochford District Council, Cllr Mike Fuller – Castle Point Borough Council, Jo Heynes – Essex County Council, Nicola Syder – Maldon District Council, and Alan Underdown – Basildon Borough Council.

3. Minutes of the Joint Committee Meeting 8 August 2024

The minutes of the meeting 8 August 2024 were confirmed as a correct record.

In matters arising from the minutes, Councillor Cross advised that the joint administration would still like to discuss on a local level regarding the use of the allocation of £26k to Rochford District Council. It was advised that it had been agreed for the funds to be used on cycle storages rather than on Approach Car Park. It was agreed for Councillor Cross to contact Nick Binder with regards to the amendment of the scheme.

4. Public Question Time

Councillor M Steptoe, District Councillor for Rochford and County Councillor for the Rochford Division, queried the lack of enforcement for the parking permit scheme in the Ashingdon Road in particular and the east of the Rochford District in general and what alternative methods could be put in place. It was advised the problem was particularly evident during school pick up times where the parent parking in the area had been causing parking problems for the residents nearby. Councillor Steptoe emphasised the need for more wardens in the area and for more tickets to be issued. Councillor Cross also commented on the shortage of enforcement officers and suggested for cameras to be installed the footage used to issue PCNs.

In response, SEPP officers advised that regular patrols had been happening at Ashingdon Road and data had been sent by the team leader. It was also advised that on the patrols, a number of vehicles had Blue Badges and thus were not required to move. It was also seen that parents were walking from a new layby to the school instead of parking in the area. Officers also advised that they were limited by the legislation and the type of parking restriction. It was noted that Ashingdon Road was a resident parking scheme which allowed a period of time for loading and unloading goods and time for a visitor to activate a visitor permit when visiting a property, therefore it was required an observation period of 5 minutes before a ticket could be issued as per the legislation.

Officers also advised that the use of CCTV cameras could only be used in accordance with the Traffic Management Act 2004 whereby a camera system needed to be an approved device, as defined by the Secretary of State, and could only be used for a limited number of contraventions – namely, school clear markings, bus stops and red routes. It was also advised that the Park & Stride scheme had been considered. In response to the request for more enforcement officers, the officers also provided an overview of the cost of operating the function within Rochford and the balance of managing the ever-increasing operating costs against the PCN income which remains static because the charges had not increased since 2008. It was noted that PCN charges can only be increased by central government, using the legislative process under the TMA 2004.

Officers agreed to send the received information and data regarding the patrols to Councillor Steptoe.

Councillor Sosin then made a statement to suggest that all members of SEPP press and encourage their MPs on the need to increase parking fines. This was taken into consideration by the members of the Joint Committee.

(2.04pm to 2.36pm)

5. Operational and Performance Update (Verbal Update)

The Joint Committee received a verbal update on enforcement operational matters.

Regarding recruitment of enforcement officers, members learned that there were currently four vacancies. It was advised that the applications had closed and that interviews were set within the next week and, if not successful, officers would look at agency staff.

Members were informed that Chipside had ordered the hardware and the roll out of the handheld devices was imminent. Officers also received the costs and information regarding the full hybrid vehicles and stated that members would be given a more detailed update in the next meeting.

Officers also advised the Joint Committee of police accreditation and that this would be rolled out in Brentwood. It was advised that there would be an annual assessment to review all police accredited offices and KPIs.

The Joint Committee also learned that officers had attended a seminar and presentation with regards to footway parking. Officers reported that Scotland had introduced a blanket ban on footway parking, but authorities would still have the autonomy to select areas where footway parking would be possible. However, in England, it was advised that a decision was still awaited from central government.

Members were also given a quick update on the 3PR School Parking Initiative. It was advised that new schools had been sent leaflets and were awaiting launch dates. Members also learned of the schools who agreed to the packages offered. They were also advised of the school visitations with the police and of the locations assessed for the Park & Stride initiative.

Officers also reported on their participation in the Blue Badge Day of Action, in partnership with NEPP. It was advised that around 184 disabled bays and 400 blue badges were inspected. Officers reported that around 25 vehicles had been found without the correct badges. Members also learned that in total for Essex, over 700 badges were checked, 26 PCNs were issued, and two fraudulent Blue Badges were confiscated.

In response to comments and statements from members, it was advised that;

- Regarding the Park and Stride initiative for Castle Road Car Park in Rayleigh, officers advised that free parking had been discussed as asking parents to pay for the privilege was seen as challenging. It was suggested that parents would be able to park for free from 8:30am to 9:00am, and then at 2:45pm to 3:15pm, and that parents would receive a visible parking permit to display.
- In relation to a suggestion for officers to advertise at a job fair in Brentwood, it was advised that they were not aware of the event. It was advised for officers to be informed of such events to advertise vacancies.

- Officers also advised that there had been no response from St Peters School at South Weald regarding the school parking issues. Members were also informed that officers had been approached by local highway panels regarding the parking issues.
- Members were advised that regardless of the package the school would select, it would still be possible to implement the Park & Stride initiative. It was also advised that whilst the gold package would provide all the promotional materials, it would also require a bigger commitment. It was also advised that officers would send out information regarding the packages to members.
- In relation to enforcement officers, officers advised that there was a service level agreement with Maldon District Council and Brentwood Borough Council in which their officers would provide additional enforcement outside of core hours on behalf of SEPP. It was also advised that should Rochford District Council have a shortfall of officers, resources would need to be pulled from Castle Point or Basildon. It was also advised that Rochford also had their own CEOs outside of SEPP with the scope to engage in a similar agreement to Maldon and Brentwood.
- Regarding the two fraudulent Blue Badges, it was advised that officers could only confiscate these and that the cases had been referred to the Essex County Council Counter-fraud team for possible further action e.g. prosecution.
- With regards to press on the Disabled Badge Day, it was advised for SEPP to publish this further to increase visibility. It was also advised for officers to contact Jo Heynes from ECC so this could be distributed Essex-wide.

RESOLVED that the operational and performance update be noted.

(2.36pm to 3.03pm)

6. Financial Report

The Joint Committee received a financial report regarding the financial position of South Essex Parking Partnership for the period covering 1st April 2024 to 2nd October 2024. The report also provided details of the actual costs and income received in this period.

Members heard that there was a surplus of £168,417 for SEPP and a deficit of £153,543 for the TRO account. The overall position for the Partnership was a surplus of £14,874 which was reported to be an improvement of £73,476 since August. It was also advised that the arrangements for the Chelmsford City Council pay award had been agreed and this would affect the surplus position as pay for SEPP staff (in common with all Chelmsford employees) would be backdated in October, but that this was not yet included in the figures shown.

It was reported that the Partnership had received a total of £734,160 in 2024/25 from PCN income. In the same period in 2023/24, members were advised that the Partnership had received £812,580. It was advised that there was a risk that the income levels from PCN's would not reach the levels achieved in 2023/24.

It was advised that there had been no reserve spend to date in 2024/25.

RESOLVED that the financial report be noted.

(3.03pm to 3.05pm)

7. Progress on Business Plan 2024/25

The Joint Committee received a report on the progress against the approved Business Plan for 2024/25.

Members heard that the enforcement account could expect a final surplus position of £357,900 to contribute to the operation costs of Traffic Regulation Order function. The £400,000 held in the reserve account would also be maintained. Members were advised that the projected outturns would be dependent on operating the function to the agreed expenditure costs and the amount of income received. It was noted that the PCN income equated to 65% of the overall projected income.

It was also reported that PCN's issued across the Partnership were down by 8% against the 2022/23 outturn and down by 13% against the estimated figures in the 2024/25 Business Plan. It was heard that the income received from PCNs was down by 9.7% compared to the same period last year.

The Joint Committee were informed that the overall recovery rate for PCNs paid was currently 74% of the PCNs issued, with the expected outturn being in the region of 75% to 77%. Officers advised that the current recovery level was reported to be very good. It was also reported that PCN cancellation was at 11% which was also the cancellation rates in 2023/24.

Officers also reported on the performance of the different boroughs. It was advised that performance for the boroughs was either similar or down from the last year. Reasons included regarding the activities in the boroughs, long-term sickness amongst staff, the vacancies, and staff turnovers. It was also suggested for the Business Plan to be reviewed in some boroughs as the bar might have been set too high.

In response to comments and statements from members, it was advised that;

- Regarding the proposition for a red route and cameras in Brentwood high street, officers advised that there had been a consultation with the Cabinet Member for Highways and that the issues identified were short term invasive parking. Officers advised that the red route had been designed and quoted, and currently sat with Brentwood Council. There was also another meeting with the Bus Transportation team regarding options for bus routes in the high street.
- Regarding the performance for Maldon Council, it was advised that the level against the Business Plan was from pre-COVID levels, and this might need to be adjusted to reflect the current level of performance
- Officers advised that the parking permit and on street pay and display costs had not been increased since 2015. The Committee Members were advised that the officers would be making recommendations in the next annual business plan to increase these charges to help ease the recent increases in operational costs.
- Members were informed that school parking was a national problem and were also informed that large local authorities had forgone school enforcement. They were also informed that in Scotland, there was a school rating system in which they were assessed including contraventions regarding school parking.

- Park & Stride initiative was in the pipeline for Rochford Primary School.

RESOLVED that the report to be noted.

(3.05pm to 3.37pm)

8. Review of SEPP Operational Policies

The Joint Committee received a report on the outcome of the review of the Parking Partnership Operational Protocols, Parking Policy Framework including the Partnership Enforcement Policy and the Civil Parking Enforcement Discretion Policy.

The Joint Committee was advised that changes in the Discretion Policy included an increase to a fee on court-warranted costs from £9.00 to £10.00. There was also a change in the wording to remove the reference of taking the licence details under Mitigating Circumstances. Change to the wording was also identified regarding sending appeals to the Independent Adjudicator Service where hearings would either be done online or via phone. Regarding the changes to the Parking Partnership Operational Protocols, officers advised that there would be some rewording regarding the description of the vehicle and removal of references to a tax disc serial number.

AGREED that the proposed changes to the Civil Parking Enforcement Discretion Policy and the Parking Partnership Operational Protocols be approved.

(3.37pm to 3.45pm)

9. Any Other Business

The Chair then invited members of the Joint Committee to put forward items of any other business.

Councillor Morgan queried the residential parking on North Street, Maldon and was concerned on the limited spaces for residents especially when only one permit could be issued per household. Officers advised that an audit of the permits had been completed and replies had been sent to the concerned residents. It was also advised that the second permits issued were normally in cases where personal and extenuating circumstances exist. It was advised that following a review of households that were receiving a second permit, it had been established those circumstances had since changed and improved, and the permits would therefore be removed. Those affected would have 8 weeks to finding an alternative parking arrangement before the permit was revoked. The officers also explained that the use of visitor permits to potentially park a second vehicle associated with a property was being monitored, but it was noted that determining if a vehicle belonged to a resident or a visitor could be difficult to establish.

Councillor Cross also raised concerns regarding parking permits on Fairview Car Park which was reportedly being misused by students and staff nearby. It was advised by officers that a policy was in place on how SEPP consider requests for a parking restriction

which also provides information on how to submit an application form for consideration. Councillors were advised that there was an opportunity to support any application submitted by a member of the public. The applicant could also submit a petition with the application showing support for the proposal(s). Councillor Sankey also commented on a recurring parking issue by Wadham Close in Ingatestone. It was highlighted that most of the residents that lived there were vulnerable and needed the parking.

(3.45pm to 3.59pm)

10. Date and time of next meeting:

RESOLVED that the next meeting of the Joint Committee be on 12th December 2024 at 2pm, in the Council Chamber.

The meeting closed at 3.59pm

Chairman