

MINUTES
of the
SOUTH ESSEX PARKING PARTNERSHIP JOINT COMMITTEE
held on 2 July 2020 at 2pm

Members present:

Councillor J Cloke – Brentwood Borough Council
Councillor M Durham – Maldon District Council
Councillor D Harrison – Basildon Borough Council
Councillor S Hart – Castle Point Borough Council
Councillor M Mackrory – Chelmsford City Council
Councillor R Mitchell – Essex County Council
Councillor M Steptoe – Rochford District Council
Councillor L Wagland – Essex County Council

Officers present:

Nick Binder – Chelmsford City Council
Trudie Bragg – Castle Point Borough Council
William Butcher – Chelmsford City Council
Liz Burr - Essex County Council
Sue Green – Maldon District Council
James Hendry – Basildon Borough Council
Brian Mayfield – Chelmsford City Council
Michael Packham – Chelmsford City Council

1. Welcome and Introductions

Nick Binder welcomed those present to the meeting of the Joint Committee.

2. Attendance and Apologies for Absence

The attendance of those present was confirmed. Apologies for absence had been received from Matt Harwood-White, Rochford District Council.

3. Election of Chair

AGREED that Councillor J Cloke (Brentwood Borough Council) be elected as Chair of the Joint Committee for 2020/21.

The Joint Committee asked that its thanks and appreciation be recorded for the work of Councillor Mike Steptoe as its Chairman over the past few years.

4. Appointment of Vice Chair

AGREED that Councillor M Mackrory (Chelmsford City Council) be appointed Vice Chair of the Joint Committee for 2020/21.

5. Appointment of Sub-Committee (Signs and Lines and Traffic Regulation Orders)

The Joint Committee was requested to appoint members to serve on the Sub-Committee responsible for considering and allocating funding for essential maintenance works relating to existing parking restrictions and new proposals requiring a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO).

AGREED that a Sub-Committee with responsibility for Signs and Lines comprising the Vice Chair, Councillor M Durham (Maldon Borough Council) and Councillor S Hart (Castle Point Borough Council) be appointed for 2020/21.

6. Appointment of Sub-Committee (Objections against an advertised TRO)

The Joint Committee was requested to appoint members to serve on the Sub-Committee responsible for considering representations made in respect of advertised TRO proposals.

AGREED that a Sub-Committee to hear representations in respect of Traffic Regulation Orders comprising the Chair or Vice Chair and two other members of the Joint Committee chosen on the basis of the local authority areas affected by the Orders be appointed for 2020/21.

7. Minutes of the Joint Committee Meeting on 5 March 2020

The minutes of the meeting on 5 March 2020 were confirmed as a correct record.

8. Public Question Time

No questions were asked or statements made.

9. Essex County Council (Chelmsford City) (Prohibition of Waiting, Loading and Stopping) and (On-Street Parking Places) (Civil Enforcement Area) (Amendment Number 4) Order 202*

The Joint Committee considered representations on the above Order which proposed the introduction of a resident permit parking scheme in Hilary Close, Chelmsford, operating from Monday to Saturday between the hours of 8am to 6pm.

Nine expressions of support and two objections had been received from the public following advertising of the proposed Order. One member of the public attended the meeting to speak against the proposed Order. He argued that there was already insufficient kerbside space for residents to park their vehicles, something that would be exacerbated by parking restrictions; that only 11 responses to the formal consultation had been received from the 52 residential properties; and that the seven properties referred to in the report were in fact seven garages.

Two residents had asked that their representations in support of the proposal be brought to the Committee's attention and these were read out at the meeting.

The Committee was told that the informal consultation carried out before the Order was advertised showed that there was a majority in favour of a residents parking scheme, after taking into account the seven garages and the empty properties in Hilary Close. It was appreciated that Hilary Close was a residential area in which parking space was at a premium, but the planned scheme would give residents priority for those spaces.

Whilst appreciating the concerns of those who had objected, the Committee felt that, on balance, a residents parking scheme in Hilary Close would benefit those who lived in the road by maximising the parking space available and giving the residents priority for its use.

AGREED that

1. The Essex County Council (Chelmsford City) (Prohibition of Waiting, Loading and Stopping) and (On-Street Parking Places) (Civil Enforcement Area) (Amendment Number 4) Order 202* insofar as it relates to Hilary Close, Chelmsford be made as advertised; and
2. Those who made representations be advised accordingly.

(2.12pm to 2.27pm)

10. Operational Report

A report was submitted on the performance and operation of the South Essex Parking Partnership.

The Joint Committee was informed that in response to the coronavirus pandemic the enforcement operation was significantly relaxed after 23 March 2020, in line with the Government guidance, in the areas of resident parking schemes, single yellow line parking restrictions and limited waiting and on-street pay and display bays. Enforcement patrols were reintroduced again on 1 June 2020 with the teams instructed to only issue PCNs to higher level parking contraventions and to continue taking a lenient approach to the residential areas and marked on-street parking bays. The patrol of resident parking zones would resume on 6 July 2020.

Members were also informed that;

- during the lockdown period the Traffic Regulation Order Team had continued to accept requests for a parking restriction and continued with maintenance works as contractors had returned to the workplace. However, site assessments of existing and new requests were currently in abeyance until normal parking and traffic activity resumed;
- emergency parking restrictions using Section 14 notices and Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders had been used to address local parking problems experienced as a result of the easing of restrictions on movement; and
- there were currently 10 vacancies for enforcement officers to which it had not been possible to make appointments due to the coronavirus lockdown. Until there was a better understanding of the needs of the future operation, the vacancies would be reviewed and monitored against the Business Plan.

Reference was made during the discussion of this item to parking problems being experienced in Billericay and Wickford High Streets. It was confirmed that no social distancing-related measures had been introduced or were planned for those roads and the Partnership Manager said that he would ask the enforcement teams in those areas to address the problems.

Members of the Committee expressed their thanks for the work of the Partnership team during the difficult period caused by the coronavirus pandemic and their appreciation for the approach that had been taken.

AGREED that the report on the Partnership's operation be noted.

(2.27pm to 2.41pm)

11. Financial Report for 2020/21

The report to the meeting set out a summary of the financial position for the South Essex Parking Partnership for the period 1 April 2020 to 22 June 2020. The report showed a current deficit of £272,748 for SEPP and a deficit of £105,801 for the TRO account, on a cash basis for the financial year to 22 June 2020 before taking into account items funded from the Reserve. This resulted in an overall deficit position for the Partnership, including the TRO account, of £378,549.

The deficit could be attributed to the effect of the coronavirus pandemic which had had a significant impact on the operation of the South Essex Parking Partnership, with substantially reduced income compared to a standard financial year.

A little over £50,000 had been received from the government's furlough scheme but overall it was likely that the Partnership would return a deficit in 2020/21. However, the significant reserve balances held by the Partnership would be able to cover the deficit.

The ongoing impact of coronavirus in terms of parking trends would be monitored to assess whether the Partnership would need to change its approach to meet new levels of demand.

AGREED that the financial position of the Partnership at 22 June 2020 be noted.

(2.41pm to 2.43pm)

12. Financial Outturn for 2019/20

The Joint Committee considered a report on the financial position of South Essex Parking Partnership for the year ending 31 March 2020, which showed a cash-based surplus of £777,585 for SEPP and a deficit of £404,832 for the TRO account before taking into account items funded from the Reserve. This resulted in an overall surplus position for the Partnership including the TRO account of £372,754.

The surplus had been added to the cumulative cashable position for on-street operations, resulting in higher reserve balances. The Partnership now had a cumulative cashable position of £2,681,450. This amount did not include £335,411 of outstanding fines yet to be collected after allowing for bad debt provision. The reserves would help to offset against any potential deficit experienced in 2020/21 due to the coronavirus pandemic.

AGREED that the financial outturn of the Partnership for 2019/2020 be noted and approved.

(2.43pm to 2.48pm)

13. Annual Report of the South Essex Parking Partnership 2019/20

The Joint Committee received a draft of the Annual Report of the Partnership for 2019/2020. The report:

- provided statistical information on the operation of the Partnership and progress with initiatives carried out in 2019/2020;
- showed that the Partnership continued to operate an effective Business Plan and was in a sound financial position; and
- concluded that the objectives of the Partnership had been achieved and that it remained an effective and successful operation.

The Committee was informed that all the partner authorities, apart from Chelmsford and Rochford, had allocated the funding surplus available to them under Section 55 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1985.

Asked for an update on the use of the CCTV vehicle in Basildon, the Partnership Manager reported that it was being used to detect parking contraventions at bus stops, near pedestrian crossings and around schools. It was also planned to adapt it to enable the monitoring of residents' parking areas and locations where there were concerns about unsafe parking.

The comment was made that the low number of appeals against PCNs indicated that they were only being issued where necessary and when there had been clear contraventions.

AGREED that the Annual Report of the Partnership for 2019/20 submitted to the meeting be approved.

(2.48pm to 2.59pm)

14. Rochford District Council Proposal for Allocation of Funding

The Committee received a report detailing a proposal from Rochford District Council on how it intended to use the remaining £100,571 of its £116,571 allocation in accordance with Section 55 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1985. The Committee was informed that the funding would be used for schemes in Rochford Garden Way, Rochford, Twyford Avenue, Great Wakering and Eastwood Road, Rayleigh.

AGREED that the proposed use of the allocation of £100,571 by Rochford District Council be approved.

(2.59pm to 3.02pm)

15. Consideration of Funding for Schemes Requiring a TRO

Members were requested to consider a list of schemes which required a TRO, were considered essential at a local level and had been measured against the SEPP Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) criteria. The schemes had been agreed locally with the Lead Officer and Joint Committee Member.

The total amount of funding required, if all the TRO schemes were approved, was estimated to be in the region of £93,500. Currently there was £200,000 funding available for 2020/21. If the Joint Committee agreed to allocate this funding, the total amount of funding available for the remainder of the financial year would be £106,500.

AGREED that funding for the schemes requiring a TRO detailed in Appendix A to the report to the meeting be approved.

(3.02pm to 3.04pm)

16. Date and Time of Next Meeting

AGREED that the next meeting of the Joint Committee be on 10 September 2020 at 2pm.

Other Business

Implementation of Traffic Regulation Orders

The Committee was told that there were a number of TROs on which preparatory and procedural work had largely been completed, but where it had not been possible to carry public meetings before a final decision was made on their implementation.

It was proposed that in cases where there would be clear benefits to the introduction of the Orders, use should be made of Section 14 notices to introduce them as temporary TROs, which would be subject to the full order-making process if it was decided to make them permanent.

AGREED that:

1. The use of Section 14 notices to introduce on a temporary basis traffic orders where there would be clear benefits be approved.
2. A report be presented to the next meeting on the timelines associated with the making of permanent TROs and the procedure for doing so be reviewed at that meeting.

3. Officers liaise with the North Essex Parking Partnership on the processes for the initiatives they are taking on the introduction of temporary traffic orders.

The meeting closed at 3.15pm

Chair