

MINUTES
of the
SOUTH ESSEX PARKING PARTNERSHIP JOINT COMMITTEE
held on 3 December 2020 at 2pm

Members present:

Councillor J Cloke – Brentwood Borough Council (Chairman)
Councillor D Efde – Rochford District Council
Councillor D Harrison – Basildon Borough Council
Councillor S Hart – Castle Point Borough Council
Councillor M Mackrory – Chelmsford City Council
Councillor C Mayes – Maldon District Council
Councillor R Mitchell – Essex County 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
Mike Dun – Brentwood Borough Council
James Hendry – Basildon Borough Council
Brian Mayfield – Chelmsford City Council
Michael Packham – Chelmsford City Council
Russell Panter – Chelmsford City Council

1. Welcome

The Chair welcomed those present to the meeting of the Joint Committee, and in particular Councillor Mayes to her first meeting of the Joint Committee as the replacement for Councillor Mark Durham whom he thanked for his services to the Partnership.

2. Attendance and Apologies for Absence

The attendance of those present was confirmed. There were no apologies for absence.

3. Minutes of the Joint Committee Meeting on 10 September 2020

The minutes of the Joint Committee meeting on 10 September 2020 were confirmed as a correct record.

4. Minutes of Traffic Regulation Orders Sub-Committee Meeting on 24 September 2020

The minutes of the meeting of the Sub-Committee on 24 September 2020 were confirmed as a correct record, subject to the date of the previous meeting in minute number 3 being amended to 5 December 2019.

5. Public Question Time

A member of Great Baddow Parish Council asked about the timescales for the implementation of a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) for parking restrictions in Foxholes Road, Chelmsford.

Members were informed that consultations were currently being carried out on a proposed scheme and, if it was decided to proceed with it, the making of the TRO would take about six months. In response to a question, the Joint Committee was told that the consultations on schemes that had been deferred as a result of the latest lockdown would resume in January when traffic and parking patterns were likely to have reverted to normal.

6. Operational and Performance Report

The Joint Committee was given an update on the following matters:

- Operations during Covid-19 lockdown

The recovery of the service had been affected by the second lockdown in November but it had enabled resources to be concentrated on priority areas. Measures to ensure the welfare and safety of staff continued to be taken. The replacement of body cameras was being explored.

- Equipment

Dash cameras would soon be installed in vehicles operated by the service and initial test of the upgraded software for the CCTV vehicle had been successful.

- Staffing

The position post-lockdown and going into 2021 would be monitored and assessed before long-term decisions were taken on filling the 10 vacancies for Civil Enforcements Officers (CEOs). Meanwhile, agency staff were being used where necessary.

- Performance

The number of Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) issued in comparison to April to October 2019 was currently down by 40%. When comparing the figures after the first lockdown period (July to October 2020) the PCN issue rate was down by 18% and more reflective of the ongoing impact for the remainder of this financial year.

In response to a question, the Joint Committee was informed that the CEOs needed to carry out a specific amount of work to cover their salaries and operational costs. Asked whether the use of agency staff to cover CEO vacancies was cost-effective and met operational requirements, and whether more efforts should be made to fill them with permanent staff, officers said that agency staff were normally trained and experienced in the work of CEOs and therefore adapted quickly to their duties. This helped to offset the cost and time needed to train people new to the work. In the past, agency staff had gone on to fill vacancies on a permanent basis. Responding to reports that parking enforcement was not being carried out in Maldon, the South Essex Parking Partnership (SEPP) Manager said that two full-time CEOs were actively engaged in enforcement activities in the district and were being supplemented by Maldon's Community Safety Officers out of hours and at other times.

AGREED that the Operational and Performance report be noted.

(2.10pm to 2.31pm)

7. Financial Report

The Joint Committee received a report on the financial position of the Partnership. It showed a surplus of £80,840 for SEPP and a deficit of £264,016 for the TRO account, on a cash basis for the financial year to 23 November 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 £183,176. This was an improvement on the last reported deficit for the Partnership and TRO account of £135,910. This improvement was largely due to income picking up again throughout the Autumn, with expenditure remaining relatively similar in trend as the earlier part of the financial year, and vacant posts continuing to remain vacant to offset with the overall reduction in income.

AGREED that the financial position of the Partnership for 2020/2021 to 23 November 2020 be noted.

(2.31pm to 2.33pm)

8. Annual Business Plan for 2021/22

A report was presented on the Business Plan for 2021/2022. The Plan presented the proposed annual budget for that year and set out the business aims and objectives to be achieved in that period. The budget was based on the annual performance of the South Essex Parking Partnership since its introduction in April 2011.

The proposed budget for the 2021/22 parking enforcement operation showed that the total direct and indirect expenditure was estimated to be £1,624,980 and the total income £2,224,500. The operation staffing resource costs were estimated to be £172,000. Taking into consideration the expected outturn from the parking enforcement operation, the operational staffing cost for the TRO function, the allocated £200,000 funding for signs and lines maintenance and new TROs and a proposal that the reserve be increased to £300,000 to take account of the effect of Covid-19 on the service, the Partnership overall outturn for 2021/22 was expected to provide an operational fund in the region of £227,000.

AGREED that the Business Plan for 2021/22 submitted with the report to the meeting be approved together with the following:

1. The budgets for 2021/22 and the actions and objectives for them set out in the Business Plan.
2. The write-off of all specific Parking Authority deficits, including those over £10,000, should they arise.
3. The maintenance of a reserve of £300,000 for 2021/22.
4. The risks and the action plan to address the top three risks identified in Appendix B of the Business Plan.

(2.33pm to 2.43pm)

9. Review of the Traffic Regulation Orders Process and Timescales

The Joint Committee considered the conclusions of a review of the timescales necessary to implement a new permanent Traffic Regulation Order and the options for improving the current process.

It was considered that the only point at which the process could be speeded up was Stage 4, the funding stage. This could be achieved either by delegating funding decisions on TROs to the SEPP Manager in consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Joint Committee (in which case the Signs and Line Sub-Committee would no longer be required), or by holding additional remote meetings of that Sub-Committee.

The Joint Committee favoured the delegation route but asked that the lead officer and member for the district concerned be included in the consultation before a TRO proceeded to the funding decision stage.

AGREED that:

1. In accordance with clause 10.4 of the Joint Committee Agreement, the function to approve funding for new TROs be delegated to the South Essex Parking Partnership Manager in consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Joint Committee, and after having obtained the views of the lead officer and member for the district concerned.
2. The new terms of reference at Appendix D to the report to the meeting, which require that decisions taken under that delegated authority by the South Essex Parking Partnership Manager will not exceed the level of funding agreed in the Annual Business Plan for the maintenance of signs and lines and new TROs and will be reported to the next available Joint Committee meeting, be approved.
3. The version changes to Appendix C to the document setting out how the SEPP will deal with requests for parking restrictions requiring TROs be approved.
4. The flow chart at Appendix B (Actions and estimated time to process a permanent TRO) be incorporated into the policy on how SEPP will consider requests for a new TRO.

(2.43pm to 3.09pm)

10. Forward Plan of Meetings

The Joint Committee considered a proposed work programme and dates of meetings for 2021/22.

AGREED that the Joint Committee's Forward Plan for 2021/22 be approved.

(3.09pm to 3.11pm)

11. Chelmsford Proposal for Allocation of Funding

The Joint Committee received a report detailing two proposals from Chelmsford City Council for the use of the remaining £86,000 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 for road safety and improved parking control measures in Broomfield

Parade and to implement a Traffic Regulation Order to ban verge parking in Main Road, Rettendon.

AGREED that the proposed use of the allocation of £86,000 by Chelmsford City Council be approved.

(3.11pm to 3.18pm)

12. Date and Time of Next Meeting

AGREED that the next meeting of the Joint Committee be on 4 March 2021 at 2pm.

The meeting closed at 3.19pm

Chair