

MINUTES
of the
SOUTH ESSEX PARKING PARTNERSHIP JOINT COMMITTEE
held on 10 September 2020 at 2pm

Members present:

Councillor J Cloke – Brentwood Borough Council
Councillor D Edfe – Rochford 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 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
Russell Panter – Chelmsford City Council

1. Welcome and Introductions

The Chair welcomed those present to the meeting of the Joint Committee.

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 2 July 2020

The minutes of the meeting on 2 July 2020 were confirmed as a correct record.

With regard to Minute Number 10 of that meeting, Russell Panter informed the Joint Committee that Billericay and Wickford high streets were patrolled by enforcement officers two or three times a day and that these and other high streets remained a high priority for enforcement. A number Blue Badge holders were parked in those roads but few contravened the restrictions.

Nick Binder informed members that he was not yet in a position to submit proposals for the review of the timeline for making permanent TROs and the procedure for doing so, as mentioned in Minute Number 16, but would report to the December meeting of the Joint Committee.

4. Public Question Time

No questions were asked or statements made by members of the public.

5. Operational and Performance Report

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

- Covid-19 precautions

All staff employed by the Partnership had been issued with Personal Protective Equipment. A work protocol had been adopted that involved staggered start times, a reduction of the numbers working in offices and the assignment of personnel to specific vans. The public response to the resumption of enforcement had generally been good.

- New structure

Two new Enforcement Team Leaders (ETLs) had been appointed and existing ETLs had helped to integrate them. Both had had an immediate impact in helping to review staffing arrangements for shift working, changes to rotas, team meetings and shadowing to improve efficiency and productivity.

- Orbis devices

The Partnership had moved from a Phone App to an Orbis 1000 personal safety device which incorporated a physical alarm fob, two-way communications, GPS and red and amber alerts. They had been well received by the Civil Enforcement Officers.

- Brentwood Service Level Agreement

This had now signed and was operational. All the necessary new equipment associated with it had been provided and the Brentwood and SEPP teams were working closely together. SEPP was utilising the Brentwood team where needed and the Brentwood team was doing their own late shifts. The joint initiative was still being carried out and a good relationship has been created, with staff working in a very professional, productive and efficient manner.

- Lease vehicles

About three quarters of the Partnership's vehicles were now being leased from a company called Riverside for leasing using Basildon Council's lease framework. The arrangement was working well and saved time and resource.

- CCTV Car, Basildon

The Roadflow software would shortly be upgraded and this would start the phasing in of the car patrolling permit zones. Work needed to be done with Chipside and MiPermit and a protocol developed for the operation of the system.

AGREED that the Operational and Performance report be noted.

(2.08pm to 2.16pm)

6. Financial Report

Michael Packham reported on the financial position of the South Essex Parking Partnership up to 26 August 2020. It showed a deficit of £129,468 for SEPP and a deficit of £189,617 for the TRO account, on a cash basis for the financial year to the 26th August 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 £319,086. This was an improvement on the last reported deficit for the Partnership and TRO account of £59,463 and was largely due to income increasing again in July and August, with expenditure remaining relatively similar in trend as the earlier part of the financial year.

AGREED that the financial position of the Partnership for 2020/2021 to 26 August 2020 be noted.

(2.16pm to 2.18pm)

7. Update on Business Plan for 2020/21

The Joint Committee received an update on its Business Plan for the current year and progress with the achievement of financial projections. It showed that:

- The effect of the Covid-19 pandemic on income from PCNs had been significant, with little or no enforcement taking place during the period April to July 2020. The amount of PCNs issued across the Partnership was currently 69% down against the previous year and 70% down against the estimated figure in the Business Plan. Since the return to full enforcement patrols in July the level of PCNs had recovered and was currently 18% down compared to July last year, an indicator of a gradual recovery. Expenditure was as expected but income was currently 56% down compared to the period of April to July 2019. At the end of the financial year it was estimated that the total income would be 24% down compared to the previous year. However, the reserves held by the Partnership would sufficiently cover any financial shortfalls in 2020/21.
- It had been and would continue to be necessary to change the way in which the operation worked. The focus was on providing an enforcement service in line with central government guidance and advice and implementing new operational policy guidelines and changes to ensure the welfare and safety of the staff.

AGREED that progress against the Business Plan for 2020/2021 be noted.

(2.18pm to 2.26pm)

8. Review of Policies

The Joint Committee received an update on the results of the review of the Parking Partnership's Operational Protocols, the Parking Policy Framework, including the Partnership Enforcement Policy, and the Civil Parking Enforcement Discretion Policy. It had been concluded that all the policies continued to meet the requirements of the Partnership and legislation and did not need to be amended.

AGREED that the results of the review of the Partnership's policies be noted.

(2.26pm to 2.28pm)

9. Footway Parking Consultation

Nick Binder informed the meeting that the government was consulting on the parking of vehicles on footways in areas outside of London. It had put forward three options:

1. Improve the process for introducing Traffic Regulation Orders to ban parking on footways.
2. Decriminalise the obstruction of footways to allow both the police and enforcement authorities to enforce it.
3. Impose a complete ban on all footway parking.

It was noted that the consultation did not address the question of junction obstruction.

The Joint Committee shared Nick Binder's view that Option 2 was the best way to resolve the problem of parking on footways. The key issue was preventing obstruction and whilst a complete ban may appear attractive, there were occasions when it was necessary to mark out bays on footways to allow vehicles to park on them. To be effective, any decriminalisation measures would need to be accompanied by a clear policy and guidance on what constituted an obstruction and when enforcement was considered to be necessary. Councillor Mitchell said that the North Essex Parking Partnership (NEPP) operated a policy that required an available space for passage between the inside of a vehicle parked on the footway and the edge of the footway of 123cm or four feet.

AGREED that in response to the consultation the government be informed that it is the view of the Joint Committee that decriminalisation of the obstruction of footways to allow both the police and enforcement authorities to enforce it is the preferred option and that this must be supported by clear policy and guidance to ensure effective enforcement.

(2.28pm to 2.45pm)

Other Business

Joint Committees Agreement

Members were informed that the agreements between the County Council and the two Joint Committees was due to expire in March 2022. The County Council was looking at the options for the operation of parking functions beyond that date, particularly in the light of possible local government reorganisation, and the decision-making process involved. A letter from NEPP on the subject would be circulated to the Joint Committee and an informal meeting arranged of its members to discuss the matter.

Traffic Regulations Orders Sub-Committee

Councillor Hart confirmed his availability to attend a planned meeting of the Sub-committee on 24 September 2020.

10. Date and Time of Next Meeting

AGREED that the next meeting of the Joint Committee be on 3 December 2020 at 2pm.

The meeting closed at 2.51pm
Chair