



Chelmsford City Council Cabinet

27th January 2026

One-year extension to the current South Essex Parking Partnership Joint Committee Agreement.

Report by:

Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Property

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Purpose

To seek approval to extend the current Operational Period of the South Essex Parking Partnership (SEPP) by one year up until 31st March 2028

Options

1. Approve the extension of the current Operational Period of the South Essex Parking Partnership by one year up until 31st March 2028.
2. Not approve the extension of the current Operational Period of the South Essex Parking Partnership by one year up until 31st March 2028.

Preferred option and reasons

Cabinet Approve the extension of the current Operational Period of the South Essex Parking Partnership by one year up until 31st March 2028, thereby enabling parking enforcement to be continued to be carried out by SEPP up until local government reorganisation.

Recommendations

Cabinet approves the extension of the current Operational Period of the South Essex Parking Partnership by one year up until 31st March 2028.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The South Essex Parking Partnership (SEPP) has been operational since 1st April 2011 when SEPP and the North Essex Parking Partnership (NEPP) were established to operate on-street parking enforcement across the county on behalf of Essex County Council (ECC).
- 1.2 The operations delivered by SEPP are governed by a Joint Committee Agreement signed up to by each of the partners – Basildon Borough Council, Brentwood Borough Council, Castle Point Borough Council, Chelmsford City Council, Essex County Council, Maldon District Council and Rochford District Council. Chelmsford is the Lead Authority for SEPP, employs all the Partnership's officers and provides legal, HR and financial support to the operation of SEPP.

2. Joint Committee Agreement

- 2.1 A new Joint Committee Agreement was signed by all partners in 2022 for a further five-year period from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2027. This agreement has the option to extend for an additional 12 months on three consecutive occasions to a maximum term of eight years (31 March 2030). The new agreement also provided the scope for SEPP to continue with the additional responsibility for the maintenance of parking related signs and lines and the implementation of new parking related Traffic Regulation Orders.
- 2.2 The Term is set out in Section 3 of the agreement as follows:

3. The Term

- 3.1 The Joint Committee shall be operational for a period of five years ("the Operational Period") commencing on 1 April 2022 ("the Commencement Date") unless, with the written consent of all the Partner Authorities, the Operational Period is extended for an additional 12 months on three consecutive occasions, to a maximum term of eight years.
- 3.2 The decision whether to extend the Operational Period shall be taken by the Council not less than fifteen months before the end of the Operational Period.
- 3.3 The Joint Committee's consent must be obtained in writing to the proposed extension and shall be delivered to the Council not less than twelve months before the end of the Operational Period.

2.3 The current 5-year term will take the agreement up to 31 March 2027. The proposal is to extend the agreement for a further one year to take the term of the agreement until 31 March 2028 to coincide with the timeline of the Local Government Reorganisation within Essex.

2.4 In line with Clause 3.2 of the agreement, the decision to extend the Joint Committee Agreement must initially be taken by the Council (ECC) within 15 months (by 31 December 2025) before the end of the operational period. The South Essex Parking Partnership Manager received written notification on 24 December 2025 from Essex County Council confirming that it is their intention to extend the current Joint Committee Agreement by one year until 31 March 2028. This decision remains subject to formal agreement via their relevant Governance procedures.

2.5 The Joint Committee's consent (as per 3.3 of the Agreement) must be obtained in writing to the proposed extension and shall be delivered to the Council (ECC) not less than twelve months (by 31 March 2026) before the end of the operational period. Therefore the decision to extend the Operational Period for a further one year, up to 31 March 2028 must be taken by the Joint Committee Members at its meeting on 12 March 2026. The SEPP Joint Committee is therefore seeking written confirmation from all partners in advance of this to inform their decision.

3. Maintaining Business Continuity and Local Government Reform

- 3.1 With the introduction of Local Government Reorganisation it is anticipated that on 1 April 2028 the existing SEPP & NEPP Partnership Councils and Essex County Council will be dissolved and replaced with new unitary Councils. The current on-street functions that SEPP deliver on behalf of ECC will therefore fully transfer to the new unitary authorities and will be the responsibility of those unitary authorities from 1 April 2028.
- 3.2 The decision to extend the current SEPP Joint Committee Agreement is to ensure that the service continuity and legal enforcement of the parking restrictions can be maintained throughout the Partnership areas for financial

year 2027/28 when thereafter the function will transfer and operate from 1 April 2028 under the new unitary authorities.

4. Financial Position

- 4.1 The financial forecast (Business Plan 2026/27) demonstrates that the South Essex Parking Partnership can enter into a one-year extension to the Operational Period and remain financially self-sufficient throughout this period, fully funding the parking enforcement operation and TRO function while continuing to offer the same level of service provision with zero financial risk to any of the SEPP partner authorities.

5. Risk of a Partner Authority withdrawing from the Partnership

- 5.1 It should be noted that under clause 3.1 of the Joint Committee Agreement the Operational Period of SEPP can be extended for an additional one-year if (and only if) each and every Partner Authority provides their written consent to the extension. In the event that one or more of the Partner Authorities withdraws their consent then the current Agreement will terminate automatically on 31 March 2027. The legal and practical ramifications of such termination are highlighted in paragraphs 5.2 – 5.4 below.
- 5.2 If the Agreement were to terminate on 31 March 2027 (i.e. because of lack of unanimous consent for the proposed one-year extension) then the default position is that all of the functions currently delegated to and undertaken by SEPP would automatically return back to ECC. It follows that if unanimous consent for the extension is not forthcoming then ECC would be compelled to consider and decide on an alternative delivery model for the functions (see paragraph 5.3 below). In this scenario, it is considered likely that ECC would seek to enter into a new Joint Committee Agreement (in similar if not identical terms to the expired Agreement) for the one-year period up to 31 March 2028 with the remaining willing Partner Authorities. In short, the functions relating to on-street parking enforcement, the making of TROs and signs and lines maintenance would continue to be delivered by a (new) Joint Committee within the geographical area currently covered by SEPP. Crucially, however, any Partner Authority that had not signed up to the new Agreement would not have the benefit of an elected Member from that Authority sitting on the Joint Committee. They would therefore be excluded from directly overseeing, influencing, or participating in the work and decision-making of the new Joint Committee – notwithstanding the fact that some of the Committee's decisions and policy making would invariably relate to parking enforcement, TROs, and signs and lines maintenance within that Authority's own district.

- 5.3 Under the current terms of the Joint Committee Agreement, the Partnership can fully function as long as at least three Partner Authorities remain (current quorum for meetings is three) but in the event that either all of the Partner Authorities were to withhold their consent to an extension of the Agreement, or there are too few willing Partner Authorities for a new Joint Committee Agreement to be feasible then the Agreement would terminate automatically on 31 March 2027. ECC would become responsible for the functions currently carried out by SEPP for the short period until local government reorganisation takes effect. It follows that in this particular scenario ECC's only options would be to carry all or some of the functions in-house or find an alternative delivery model for the functions e.g. use of an external provider.
- 5.4 It is also important to note that the legal and practical ramifications for SEPP staff in the event that the Agreement terminates on 31 March 2027 and ECC becomes responsible for the functions currently carried out by SEPP. This would potentially be very disruptive to all staff involved when it's considered that a further transfer will become necessary when the new unitary authorities operate from 1st April 2028. Agreeing to a one-year extension will maintain business continuity and protect staff from unnecessary transfer disruption in an already uncertain environment prior to the introduction of the new authorities in April 2028.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 The current SEPP Joint Committee Agreement will take the term up to 31 March 2027. The proposal is to extend the agreement for a further one year to take the term of the agreement until 31 March 2028 to coincide with the timeline of local government reorganisation within Essex.
- 6.2 In line with Clause 3.2 of the agreement, the decision to activate the one -year extension clause, must initially be taken by the Council (ECC) within 15 months before the end of the operational period. It is expected that the Partnership will receive formal written notice of this decision by ECC.
- 6.3 The Joint Committee's consent (as per 3.3 of the Agreement) must be obtained in writing to the proposed extension and shall be delivered to the ECC by 31 March 2026. Therefore, the decision to extend the Operational Period for a further one year, up to 31 March 2028 must be taken by the Joint Committee Members at its meeting on 12 March 2026. The SEPP Joint Committee is therefore seeking written confirmation from all partners in advance of this to inform their decision.

List of appendices:

None

Background papers:

None

Corporate Implications

Legal/Constitutional: This decision is an executive matter that falls to Cabinet to decide. The legal implications are set out in the report.

Financial: None

Potential impact on climate change and the environment: None

Contribution toward achieving a net zero carbon position by 2030: None

Personnel: None

Risk Management: None

Equality and Diversity: None

(For new or revised policies or procedures has an equalities impact assessment been carried out? If not, explain why)

Health and Safety: None

Digital: None

Other: None

Consultees:

None

Relevant Policies and Strategies:

None
