



## Overview & Scrutiny Task & Finish Group

### Review of the North Essex Parking Partnership



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 At its meeting on 4 June 2014, the Overview & Scrutiny Committee approved a programme of work for 2014/15 which included a review of the North Essex Parking Partnership (NEPP). The Terms of Reference were agreed at that meeting and they specifically excluded the management and operation of the Council's car parks as that was reviewed in depth the previous year. The composition of the review group was approved at the Committee's meeting on 16 July 2014.
- 1.2 The review focused on the Council's partnership and its relationship with the NEPP specifically in relation to policy, strategy and finances, parking enforcement, and the process for creating Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) insofar as it affects the Braintree District.
- 1.3 The Task & Finish Group (NEPP), led by Cllr. Mrs. Bowers-Flint, met for the first time on 6 October 2014 and has met 5 times in total, supplemented by informal meetings with work stream leads and officers to update and monitor progress. A schedule of meetings is attached at Appendix 1.

## 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Following the decriminalisation of parking in Essex in 2002/4, **on-street** parking enforcement was carried out by the Essex Districts/Boroughs under an agency arrangement with Essex County Council (ECC), the cost of which was fully met by ECC on a deficit support basis. Districts/Boroughs continued to fund and manage their own off-street parking functions.
- 2.2 In April 2009, whilst still operating under the agency agreement with ECC, Braintree, Colchester and Uttlesford Councils formed a Parking Partnership, with Colchester as the lead authority, aimed at achieving efficiencies and ensuring that the parking services in the three authorities were effective and financially viable. This focused primarily on parking enforcement (on and off-street) and cash collection, with responsibility for TROs, lines and signs remaining with ECC.
- 2.3 In 2009/10, ECC took the decision to terminate the agency agreements on the basis that the deficit support was unsustainable. A review group was established to find a way of delivering a more efficient service and this resulted in the creation of two Parking Partnerships in April 2011– one in North Essex (NEPP) and one in South Essex (SEPP) – each overseen by a Joint Committee comprising a nominated Member and client officer from each partner authority and led by a single Authority (Colchester in the North and Chelmsford in the South).
- 2.4 The NEPP undertakes on-street parking enforcement, Traffic Order making responsibilities, sign and line maintenance and the business unit processes relating to permit applications, the enforcement of issued Penalty Charge Notices and other legal documentation. It also offers an optional off-street parking enforcement service (including car park ticket machine maintenance and cash collection) which it currently provides for all of its partners except Tendring.

The map below shows the composition of each Partnership, with ECC being the common link.



### 3. TERMS OF REFERENCE AND MEMBERSHIP OF THE REVIEW GROUP

#### 3.1 Terms of Reference:

- To review the relationship between the Council and the North Essex Parking Partnership.
- To consider and understand the services provided and the service standards set within the arrangement and the standard of delivery.
- To consider the overall budget, cost benefit to the Council and the efficiency of the service provided.
- To understand the process for Traffic Regulation Orders and the service standards for their implementation.
- To consider customer service standards and customer feedback.
- To make appropriate recommendations for improvements to the Parking Partnership.

#### 3.2 Membership of the Group

##### Members:

Cllr. Lynette Bowers-Flint (Chairman)  
 Cllr. Bill Rose (Vice-Chairman)  
 Cllr. Phil Barlow  
 Cllr. Hylton Johnson  
 Cllr. Celia Shute  
 Cllr. Patrick Horner  
 Cllr. Tom Cunningham

##### Officers:

Paul Partridge, Head of Operations  
 Samir Pandya, Customer & Business Support Mgr  
 Carol Clayman, PA to Head of Operations  
 Sarah Sherry, Administrative Officer

### 4. KEY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

It was agreed that Members would organise their own research, consultations and visits and produce the report and that officers would arrange the Group's meetings, distribute the agendas and minutes and offer guidance and support as and when required.

## **5. PROCESS OF THE REVIEW**

**5.1** The review was separated into three work streams, with two members appointed to each and the Chairman dividing her time between them, as follows:-

- (1) Policy, Strategy & Finances (Cllrs. P. Horner & T. Cunningham)
- (2) Enforcement (Cllrs. Ms C. Shute and H. Johnson)
- (3) Traffic Regulation Orders (Cllrs. W. Rose and P. Barlow)

**5.2** A programme of work was developed listing sources of information, consultees and issues for consideration (see Appendix 2).

**5.3** Each work stream undertook their own research and consultation and then reported back to the main group at scheduled meetings.

**5.4** Progress updates were reported to Overview & Scrutiny Committee on a regular basis.

## **6. RESEARCH AND CONSULTATION**

### **6.1 Policy, Strategy and Finances**

- Meetings were held with Vicky Duff, (Network Management Manager) Essex County Council, David Moss, BDC Accountant and Nick Binder, (Parking Manager) SEPP.
- SEPP Business Plan and NEPP Accounts were reviewed.

### **6.2 Enforcement**

- Meetings were held with Lisa Hinman, Enforcement Area Manager and Christine Belgrove, Parking Manager, NEPP; and Brenda Baker, Chairman of Chamber of Commerce and George Yard Centre Manager.
- Two Civil Enforcement Officers were accompanied on their patrols for a day to see how enforcement works on the ground.
- A range of documents were reviewed including the NEPP Annual Report 2013/14 and the Service Level Agreement between the NEPP and its constituent authorities.

### **6.3 Traffic Regulation Orders**

- Consultation took place with Shane Taylor from the NEPP, representatives of The Grove Residents' Association, Witham, and residents of Halstead and Cressing who had applied to the NEPP for parking restrictions to be implemented on local roads.
- Documents were reviewed including 4 case studies relating to TRO applications, the Policy for TROs, Department of Transport's New Procedures for TROs (2012) and NEPP's prioritisation methodology.

### **6.4 Guest Speakers**

A presentation was given to the Group by Matthew Young, Head of Operational Services, Colchester Borough Council and Richard Walker, Group Manager, NEPP, on the background/history to the NEPP and its management and operation.

The Group also invited Cllr. Robert Mitchell, Chairman of the NEPP Joint Committee, and Cllr. Susan Barker, District & County Councillor for Uttlesford District, to attend group meetings to give an overview of the NEPP from their perspectives.

## 7. KEY FINDINGS

### 7.1 Policy, Strategy & Finances

- The strategic aims and objectives of the NEPP are clearly defined and it operates on the core principles of fairness, transparency and consistency. Enforcement is focused on dangerous, careless and negligent parking.
- The policies/protocols and procedures are robust and well-structured and comply with current legislation.
- The NEPP has a tendency to be Colchester-centric e.g. the telephone message played whilst callers are on hold relates specifically to Colchester when it should be promoting NEPP's services on behalf of the whole Partnership.
- The **on-street** income is variable from year to year and dependent primarily on the number of Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) issued and Residents-Only parking schemes. This poses a significant risk as the more drivers are compliant, the less income will be received. This is recognised by the NEPP who maintain reserves in the event that a deficit occurs in any one year.
- The budgets for the **on-street** account are set by the NEPP, with the aim of reaching and maintaining a position where the service is self-financing. Any operating deficit by the NEPP has to be shared equally by the constituent partners and so it is in the interests of all partners to ensure that the NEPP achieves break-even point. At the end of 2013/14 there was a small operating surplus and this is also expected to be the case in the current financial year.
- The NEPP's budget setting process runs parallel with that of the local authorities and needs to be brought forward so that Districts/Boroughs can consider NEPP's budgetary issues alongside their own budget setting process. It should be more open and transparent which could be achieved by involving finance officers from partner authorities.
- When the two Partnerships were established, the SEPP received a higher subsidy than the NEPP from ECC to undertake TROs. This was inequitable and has enabled the SEPP to deliver more TRO schemes than the NEPP.
- The published year end accounts are extremely brief and it is difficult for customers to make any judgement about value for money.
- BDC's base contribution (£145k p.a.) for the off-street function has not changed since the *original* Parking Partnership was disbanded, despite several operational changes over the past 4 years. The existing budget contribution is based on the cost of the service that BDC previously undertook in-house. An increase of 3% has been applied each year and there is concern that this will continue to rise.
- The NEPP is open and transparent and has a wide range of specialist skills, knowledge and experience from which all partner authorities benefit. There is good partnership working and a clear understanding of local priorities and pressures faced by Districts/Boroughs in relation to both on and off-street parking.
- The relationship between officers and Members within the NEPP is very good and they work well together. However, concern was expressed about the lack of attendance by ECC Members at partnership meetings. Cllr. Mitchell has proved an excellent Chairman – a view endorsed by ECC.

- Economies of scale have been achieved throughout the Partnership and there is greater flexibility in terms of service provision and business continuity, common pricing and a consistent approach across North Essex. For Braintree's off-street function, it offers greater expertise, flexibility and service resilience. However, as the NEPP continues to deliver efficiencies, BDC would expect the savings to be reflected in its annual contribution.
- The NEPP provides a democratic forum which allows for engagement with residents. However, residents do not fully understand the NEPP's role and some see it as a means of preventing parking outside their homes. Clarifying their role would improve customer understanding.

## 7.2 Enforcement

- The NEPP has 3 enforcement hubs based in the East, Central and West of the County, with one administrative hub at Colchester. Having an area based approach ensures that Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs) have a good working knowledge of their areas and the service is more efficient operationally. In Braintree's case, it gives us direct access to staff at the central hub which is based at our George Yard Multi-storey car park.
- The demographic of the partner authorities i.e. mix of rural and urban, means that greater emphasis is placed on the urban areas where most of the restrictions are in place. There appears to be some disparity between the number of CEOs in each hub in relation to the size of the areas that they enforce. However, the number of CEOs in the Central hub comprise the original number of CEOs employed by BDC & UDC pre-NEPP and if this were increased, there would be a corresponding cost to both Authorities.
- The split between on-street and off-street patrols is 70:30 respectively. It was difficult to evidence that this was being achieved and there is a general view across the Partnership that off-street is not routinely receiving 30% of the CEOs' time.
- From April to October 2014, the number of PCNs issued in the Council's car parks was 1,261 – an average of 180 per month. This compares with 1,704 PCNs issued in the same period the previous year – an average of 243 per month.
- The PCN appeals process is explained on the reverse of the PCN. It was not possible to speak to any recipients of PCNs to gauge customer satisfaction, but the process appears to be clear and easy to understand. The NEPP does not undertake Customer Surveys for enforcement as they consider it too sensitive an area for meaningful feedback; nevertheless, they will reconsider their position.
- The CEOs adopt a sensible and pragmatic approach to parking enforcement and despite popular belief are not set targets based on the number of PCNs issued.
- Customers have the option of appealing to an independent body – the Traffic Penalty Tribunal (TPT) - if they feel that a PCN has been issued incorrectly. The TPT's decision is binding on both the appellant and the NEPP.
- Whilst on patrol with the CEOs in Braintree, Members noted that the signs in car parks are very good and the yellow lines quite clear in the town. However, in some cases where utility companies dig up the road, the lines are not always reinstated on completion of works.

- The mobile CCTV works well and has helped to control parking outside schools, on clearways and in other areas. However, the software is limited to operating within one district/borough at a time i.e. cross border working is not possible, and so the system is not as effective as it could be.
- MiPermit was introduced in the Braintree District in May 2014 and this is a more effective and efficient way of paying for parking and actively encourages people to stay longer in our car parks and town centres. Over the longer term, it will reduce back office costs in relation to residents' parking permits as this will become a paperless system ('virtual' permits).
- In terms of customer service generally, Members of the Group have had personal experience of trying to contact the NEPP by telephone and have met with lengthy delays in getting through on several occasions with the quality of the responses from NEPP staff not always to a consistent standard. There have also been unacceptable delays in receiving permits/ season tickets renewals. The latter will soon become available via MiPermit and Members would like an assurance from the NEPP that the system is sufficiently robust and will deliver the expected improvements.
- When first formed, accessing the NEPP systems and operations was mostly via postal application to the Colchester office, but the NEPP is modernising its operations and is now very much geared towards electronic transactions and payments. It has already moved more recently towards issuing 'virtual' tickets/ permits for parking, although at the time of gathering evidence, these virtual permits were not available in every locality. When complete this should simplify and speed up service delivery for the majority of customers, although there will be some who prefer a more traditional approach.
- Service standards are not easily identifiable [and therefore measurable] and should be more accessible to customers.

### **7.3 Traffic Regulation Orders**

- TROs are implemented for a variety of reasons including assisting with traffic flow, controlling or directing traffic, improving safety of road users, preserving or improving the character or amenity of an area, and preventing serious damage to roads and bridges. Prior to NEPP, these criteria may not have been adhered to on a consistent basis across local authorities.
- The TRO process (Appendix 3) is lengthy and time consuming and is cost regulated meaning that the number of TROs that can be approved is restricted and each local authority is competing for the available funding. Historically, it has been agreed that 4 schemes per Authority per TRO Committee Meeting can be considered.
- Considerable errors are found on application forms requiring additional work by NEPP to correct. Better guidance to applicants would avoid this.
- The NEPP receive a large number of requests relating to access to/from people's driveways, for which TROs are not an appropriate resolution. Better information about the type of requests that can be considered would significantly reduce workloads and manage customer expectation.
- There was evidence cited that one complex TRO needed to be revised due to the applicant not being involved in the details of the restrictions in the first Order. Better liaison between the applicant and NEPP officers would clearly have prevented this from happening.



- Parking enforcement across driveways does not require a TRO, but can be enforced at the specific request of the householder/occupier. This works well in urban areas where CEOs regularly patrol, but less so in rural areas where the vehicle may have moved by the time a CEO arrives. This is not well-communicated and would improve customer understanding if made clear.
- There is a requirement for applicants to seek consent/agreement to their proposal(s) from other residents in their road, but this is rather ambiguous in the application form. It would shorten the process and eliminate abortive work if it were made clear to applicants that local support needed to be obtained at the outset.
- There is no requirement for applicants to obtain support for their proposal from their County/District/Town/Parish Council. If that were done, by making clear to applicants that they involve their local councillors, it would help filter out any unreasonable/inappropriate requests prior to being seen by the NEPP, saving a considerable amount of time and effort (NEPP and applicant) with requests that do not meet the criteria.
- There is a common scoring matrix (Appendix 4) used by the NEPP, however, it is felt that this could be refined to more accurately reflect the true value of some of the criteria e.g. if a scheme is self-funded, it should score more highly than one that requires funding.
- The scoring matrix is not made known to applicants, but would help them understand how cases are determined. They are also not made aware of anticipated timescales for decisions, kept informed about progress of their request or dates of committee meetings. Better guidance would improve the customer experience.
- Schemes that are self-financing e.g. residents-only parking, are considered alongside those that require funding and are included in the max.4 schemes that can be put forward at each meeting. Some of these could be done *in addition* to non-funded schemes which would avoid unnecessary delays.
- It is not possible at present for authorities to access any common database and so some schemes that are generated through the Local Highway Panels (ECC-led) may also attract requests via the TRO process, resulting in duplication.
- ECC has a policy that prevents any new development being considered for TROs within 5 years of it becoming adopted highway. This results in valid requests being received that ordinarily may be supported, but are rejected on the basis of this rule. This may be something that could be improved through the planning application process whereby TROs could be considered as a condition of the planning approval.

## **8. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **8.1 Policy, Strategy & Finance**

Despite the obvious challenges of six different authorities working in partnership with different corporate and political priorities, the NEPP works well, with good strategic direction. It has robust policies and procedures in place and offers a wealth of experience and knowledge relating to parking issues. The partnership would perhaps be strengthened by regular attendance of the ECC portfolio holder at its meetings and greater involvement of partner authorities' accountants in budgetary issues generally.

The NEPP relies heavily on income from PCNs and residents-only parking and this can leave it financially vulnerable.

The off-street parking service generally offers good value for money for BDC and should continue to be provided by the NEPP. However, there are some concerns around the timing of the budget setting process, staff (CEO) vacancies, the annual fixed increase on the off-street account and the anomaly relating to TRO funding from ECC.

It is RECOMMENDED that the NEPP:

1. Reviews the SLA for off-street parking, undertaking a zero based budget as part of that exercise; brings forward its annual budget setting process for off-street parking; and involves partner authorities in this process and in the preparation of accounts
2. Considers other income-generating opportunities to reduce reliance on PCN income by expanding its customer base; and avoids unnecessary expenditure by ensuring that utility companies reinstate lines/signs following any road-works they carry out or pay for works in default.
3. Fills vacant CEO posts promptly to ensure that there is a full complement of staff (using agency staff if necessary).
4. Encourages ECC Members to attend partnership meetings to reinforce the concept of partnership working.
5. Has further discussions with ECC about the disparity in funding received for TROs between the NEPP and the SEPP.

## **8.2 Enforcement**

The process, practices and procedures for parking enforcement are clear and robust. CEOs are well trained and have good local knowledge of the areas that they patrol. Priority is given to enforcement in urban areas (town centres) and we believe that the NEPP has the balance between urban and rural enforcement about right.

However, there is a perception by some Parish Councils within the Braintree District that TROs in their areas are not being enforced adequately. There is also some question as to whether the 30% allocation of CEO time to off-street parking enforcement is being fully delivered.

It is RECOMMENDED that:

6. The NEPP reviews the CEO patrol schedules to ensure that it is delivering the required level of off-street enforcement in the Braintree District.
7. The mobile CCTV car becomes a permanent fixture (subject to changes in legislation) and the NEPP is asked to provide a schedule of planned visits within the Braintree District, as well as clarifying service standards for parking enforcement in rural parishes.
8. The NEPP ensures that the virtual permit system (MiPermit) is sufficiently robust to deliver expected improvements in customer service in terms of access and timeliness.

### 8.3 Traffic Regulation Orders

The TRO process is complicated, time-consuming and cost regulated, with NEPP partners being restricted to putting forward a max. of 8 schemes each per year to the Joint Committee for approval. Schemes that are funded or self-financing (residents-only parking) are more likely to receive approval and could be considered *in addition* to the current limit of 8 p.a., subject to back office resource implications.

The timescale for processing TRO applications is overly long and there is a need to develop a smarter working process to reduce the timescale from submission to outcome. The TRO application form is not user-friendly and should be simplified to ease completion.

From a customer perspective, the process may be seen as being overly bureaucratic and the rationale for introducing TROs is not well understood, which can result in disappointment and expectation not being met. Clarifying the eligibility criteria and requiring applicants to undertake some preliminary consultation would help reduce waiting times and filter out requests that would automatically be rejected based on the assessment criteria (scoring matrix).

The ability to enforce across driveways without a TRO is not widely known and should be better advertised. However, whilst it can be effective in urban areas where CEOs regularly patrol, it is less so in rural areas where a vehicle may have moved by the time a CEO arrives. This could be perceived by some as a two-tier system.

The lack of communication between LHPs and the NEPP can result in duplicity of effort which could be avoided if information were shared.

It is RECOMMENDED that:

9. The NEPP improves customer experience by:-
  - (a) Issuing a comprehensive TRO user guide in consultation with partner authorities to clarify the TRO process including eligibility criteria, expected timescales, the scoring matrix and the date of committee meetings;
  - (b) Publishing a quarterly or six-monthly newsletter on its website to update customers on new initiatives and issues that may be of interest;
  - (c) Simplifying the TRO application form to ease completion;
  - (d) Explaining enforcement relating to dropped kerbs;
  - (e) Ensuring good liaison with applicants, particularly with regard to extensive or complex TROs;
  - (f) Publishing its service standards; and
  - (g) Seeking customer feedback and using this to deliver service improvements.
10. The TRO process be amended to require applicants to clearly demonstrate majority support for their proposal from other local residents, as well as support from their local County/ District/Parish/Town Council *before* they submit an application. (This is the approach adopted by the Local Highways Panels for highway schemes.)
11. The NEPP considers reinstating white advisory H-bars across drives *in rural areas only* on request and at residents' expense, to discourage inconsiderate parking.
12. Consideration be given to creating a common/shared database for use by ECC and NEPP to avoid duplication of TROs. Customers could be given (restricted) access to enable them to track progress with their requests.

13. The NEPP reviews staffing levels to reduce Call Centre waiting times, lets the caller know where they are in the queue and includes information that is helpful and more generic to the whole partnership (rather than just Colchester) e.g. availability of MiPermit.
  14. The NEPP challenges ECC's 5-yr rule relating to the installation of TROs following the adoption of new roads and that consideration of TROs is included as part of the planning application process where appropriate.
  15. That the NEPP undertakes benchmarking with the SEPP and other local authorities who have formed a similar partnership for parking services (e.g. Bromley and Bexley) to demonstrate that it provides value for money.
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## **Acknowledgements**

The Chairman and Members of the Task and Finish Group would like to thank all those who assisted them with research, consultation, advice and guidance, enabling them to complete their review.

## APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Draft Programme for Task & Finish Group

Appendix 2 – Schedule of Meetings

Appendix 3 – TRO procedure flow chart

Appendix 4 – TRO Scoring Matrix

## DOCUMENTS RESEARCHED

### Policy, Strategy & Finance (Work stream 1)

- SEPP Partnership Business Plan
- NEPP Parking Partnership account document

### Enforcement (Work stream 2)

- Parking Partnership, Guidance for Members
- Notices of Non-Payment of Fines 1.4.2013/14 and 2014/15.
- E-mails from David Moss, BDC Accountant, giving income figures for car parks and related services.
- Parking Partnership Annual Report 2013/14
- Overview of NEPP
- Service Level Agreement dated December 2012
- Parking Partnership Organisation Diagram
- Colchester Borough Council - Core Goals for Employees (given to NEPP staff)

### Traffic Regulation Orders (Work stream 3)

- NEPP TRO Procedure Flow Chart
- NEPP Officer Responsibility Flow Chart.
- NEPP Prioritisation Methodology.
- Dept. of Transport - New Procedures for TROs (2012)
- 3 x TRO Applications
- NEPP – TRO General Policy

## GLOSSARY

**BDC** Braintree District Council

**CEO** Civil Enforcement Officer

**DOT** Department of Transport

**ECC** Essex County Council

**LHP** Local Highway Panel

**NEPP** North Essex Parking Partnership

**SEPP** South Essex Parking Partnership

**TPT** Traffic Penalty Tribunal

**TRO** Traffic Regulation Order

## SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

Type of Meeting	Attendees	Date	Time	Meeting Room	Key Milestones
<b>Main Group Meeting</b>	<b>All</b>	<b>13 November 2014</b>	<b>6pm</b>	<b>Cm Rm 3</b>	<b>26<sup>th</sup> November 2014:</b> High-level progress update to Governance Team. <b>(Report deadline 7/11/14)</b>
Interim Group Meeting	Work Stream Leads	27 November 2014	6pm	Main Training Rm	
<b>Main Group Meeting</b>	<b>All</b>	<b>9 December 2014</b>	<b>6pm</b>	<b>Cm Rm 3</b>	
Interim Group Meeting	Work Stream Leads	7 January 2015 <b>Cancelled</b>	6pm	Cm Rm 3	
<b>Main Group Meeting</b>	<b>All</b>	<b>14 January 2015</b>	<b>6pm</b>	<b>Cm Rm 3</b>	<b>28<sup>th</sup> January 2015:</b> High-level progress update to Governance Team. <b>(Report deadline 9/1/15)</b>
Interim Group Meeting	Work Stream Leads	29 January 2015	6pm	Cm Rm 3	
<b>Main Group Meeting</b>	<b>All</b>	<b>11 February 2015</b>	<b>6pm</b>	<b>Cm Rm 3</b>	<b>11<sup>th</sup> February 2015:</b> Review of draft report to Overview and Scrutiny.  <b>20<sup>th</sup> February 2015:</b> <b>Report deadline for final report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee.</b>  <b>11 March 2015:</b> Meeting of Overview & Scrutiny Committee.  <b>13 April 2015:</b> Meeting of Full Council.

**MAIN GROUP MEETINGS:** To bring together the work progressed by all work streams.

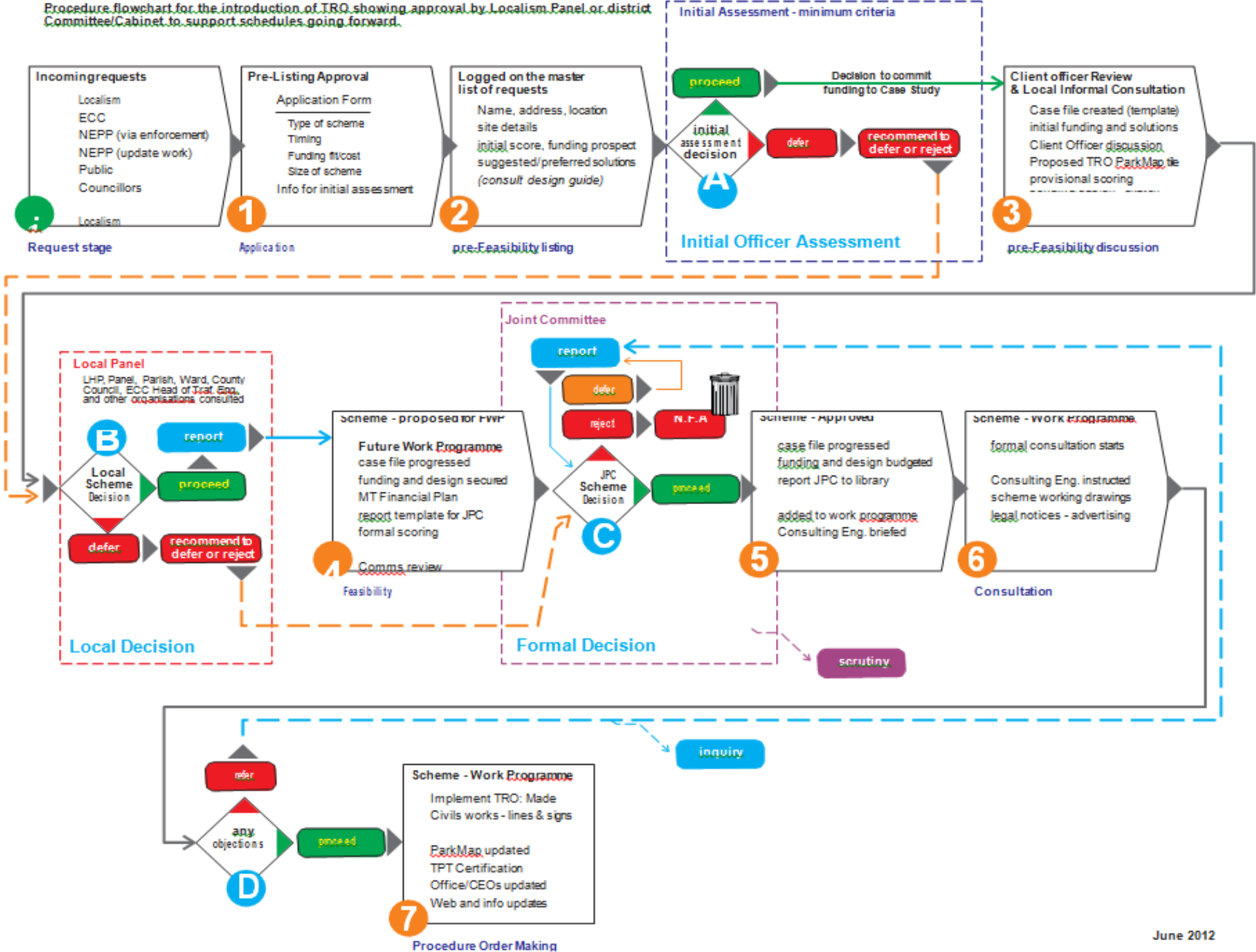
**INTERIM GROUP MEETINGS:** To check progress of each work stream.

<p><b>Policy, Strategy &amp; Finances</b>  <b>CLrs. Tom Cunningham and Patrick Horner</b></p>	<p><b>Enforcement</b>  <b>CLrs Ms Celia Shute and Hylton Johnson</b></p>	<p><b>Traffic Regulation Orders</b>  <b>CLrs Bill Rose and Phil Barlow</b></p>
<p><u>Documentation</u></p> <p>Joint Governance Agreement                      Parking Partnership Enforcement Policy                      Parking Partnership Operational Protocol                      Partnership Dispensation – Suspension Policy                      Partnership Enforcement &amp; Discretion Policy                      Agenda &amp; Minutes of NEPP Joint Cttee Mtg - 26 June 2014                      Annual Report                      Service Level Agreement between NEPP &amp; BDC for off-street parking enforcement (attached)                      Parking Partnership – Guidance for Members                      NEPP presentation to Task &amp; Finish Group 6 Oct 2014</p>	<p><u>Documentation</u></p> <p>Parking Partnership Enforcement Policy                      Parking Partnership Operational Protocol                      Partnership Dispensation – Suspension Policy                      Partnership Enforcement &amp; Discretion Policy                      Penalty Charge Notice                      Service Level Agreement between NEPP &amp; BDC for off-street parking enforcement (attached)                      Parking Partnership – Guidance for Members                      NEPP presentation to Task &amp; Finish Group 6 Oct 2014</p>	<p><u>Documentation</u></p> <p>Policy for Traffic Regulation Orders                      TRO process flow chart                      TRO Application Form                      Criteria/Scoring Sheet                      Agenda &amp; Minutes of NEPP Joint Cttee Meeting - 16 October 2014                      Parking Partnership – Guidance for Members                      Service Level Agreement between NEPP &amp; BDC for off-street parking enforcement (attached)</p> <p><u>Case Studies</u></p> <p>The Grove, Witham (residents-only) (to Cttee 8 Aug 2013) (tranche 4) <b>APPROVED</b>                      Century Drive, Braintree (tranche 4) <b>APPROVED</b>                      High Street, Kelvedon (Tranche 5) <b>REJECTED</b>                      Kings Road, Halstead (1007_04_57) <b>REJECTED</b></p>
<p><u>Consultation</u></p> <p>Richard Walker, NEPP Group Manager                      Christine (Lou) Belgrove, Partnership Business Manager &amp; Deputy Group Manager                      Vicky Duff, ECC (relationship between ECC, NEPP &amp; BDC)                      David Moss, BDC Accountant (parking income and other budgetary info)                      Cllr. Robert Mitchell, Chairman of the NEPP Joint Cttee                      TBC – Another Member who is part of the NEPP Joint Cttee.</p>	<p><u>Consultation</u></p> <p>Lisa Hinman, NEPP (Area Enforcement Manager) <i>(You are welcome to accompany one of the CEOs on patrol if wished)</i>                      Emma Day, Back Office Team Leader (Penalty Charge Notice appeals process – Challenge, Representation, Appeal)                      Customer consultation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Town Centre Strategy Groups/Chambers of Commerce (from business perspective)</li> <li>• BDC Focus Group (for non-business perspective); exit poll at say George Yard?</li> <li>• Results of any customer surveys undertaken by NEPP.</li> </ul>	<p><u>Consultation</u></p> <p>Alan Waight, Grove Residents Association                      Trevor Degville, Technical Services Mgr, NEPP                      Shane Taylor, Technical Team Leader, NEPP                      Cllr Robert Mitchell, Chairman of NEPP Joint Cttee                      Cllrs James Abbott &amp; Lady Newton (ECC ward members) and Cllrs Mike Banthorpe (local ward member) and John Clark (BALC) representing Braintree on the Local Highways Panel.                      District Members and Parish/Town Councils who have had involvement with TRO requests.                      Individuals /Groups who have applied for a TRO.</p>

<b>Policy, Strategy &amp; Finances</b> <b>CLlrs. Tom Cunningham and Patrick Horner</b>	<b>Enforcement</b> <b>CLlrs Ms Celia Shute and Hylton Johnson</b>	<b>Traffic Regulation Orders</b> <b>CLlrs Bill Rose and Phil Barlow</b>
<p><u>Issues for consideration</u></p> <p>Income generated from on-street parking enforcement.</p> <p>Income derived from off-street penalty charge notices -v- cost of enforcement – are we getting value for money?</p> <p>The process involved in setting money aside to offset the County’s deficit in relation to parking enforcement.</p> <p>The cost of reclaiming unpaid Penalty Charge Notices.</p> <p>The subsidy given to the NEPP in comparison to what the South Essex Parking Partnership received (was there an imbalance?)</p> <p>The content of the Joint Governance Agreement.</p> <p>The fine balance to be drawn between securing income from parking fees and enforcement and not adversely affecting the local economy or the public.</p> <p>The need to consider other options for generating income e.g. <i>should BDC consider allowing the installation of parking meters in some roads to generate more income?</i></p> <p>£150k budget for maintenance of lines and signs – is this adequate? How does it compare to what ECC spend in SEPP’s area?</p>	<p><u>Issues for consideration</u></p> <p>Use of mobile CCTV for outside schools - is it working?</p> <p>Number of CEOs patrolling the Braintree District and how they do this.</p> <p>What is the level of cover in towns and rural areas?</p> <p>Average number of PCNs issued.</p> <p>Is enforcement proportionate and measured? (Spend time out with CEOs observing the process.)</p> <p>How does on-street enforcement compare with off-street in terms of level of enforcement carried out? Is there a good balance?</p> <p>Review the customer experience for paying or challenging an off-street PCN. (In-depth look at PCN appeals process – is it clear/ easy to understand? Speak to recipients of PCNs.)</p> <p>What percentage of PCNs issued are appealed and subsequently rescinded?</p> <p>What % of appeals to the Traffic Penalty Tribunal are upheld? Does this suggest any failing on NEPPs part to ensure that PCNs are issued correctly?</p> <p>What is the overall condition of lines and signs throughout the Braintree District? Is there a programme for renewal or is it dealt with on an ad-hoc basis? Does this ensure satisfactory maintenance of lines and signs?</p>	<p><u>Issues for consideration</u></p> <p>Review the process for creating/introducing Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the governance process sufficiently robust?</li> <li>• Do the scoring criteria adequately reflect the main considerations for Braintree?</li> <li>• Improve understanding about how TROs are used and in what circumstances (to avoid unrealistic expectations). How do we get this message across to customers?</li> </ul> <p>Review the overall customer experience in terms of applying for a TRO and the decision making process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the TRO application form clear and easy to understand/user friendly?</li> <li>• Is the decision making process clearly communicated and understood?</li> <li>• Consult with applicants to seek their views.</li> <li>• Should there be advisory literature explaining in what circumstances a TRO would be considered – to help manage expectations?</li> </ul> <p>Residents-only parking schemes – how does the scheme work, who can participate, what is the cost, is it valued? (Consult with Shane Taylor, NEPP, and residents who have been through the process of obtaining a residents-only parking scheme. )</p>



Procedure flowchart for the introduction of TRO showing approval by Localism Panel or district Committee/Cabinet to support schedules going forward.



## TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDERS – PRIORITISATION METHODOLOGY (July 2012)

Scheme:	Available Points	Initial Score	Final Score
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**Viability**

Contribution to economic development	6		
Sustainability – does <b>NOT</b> contribute to displacement	6		
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>12</b>		

**Finance**

Support from NEPP budget	4		
Support from LOCAL budget	3		
Supports the hierarchy of routes (TRO Policy)	3		
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>10</b>		

**Impact**

Parking regularly occurs within 10-15 metres of site	4		
Personal injury / collision recorded	7		
Parking has been contributory factor in personal injury	12		
Conservation Area or parking is significantly visually intrusive; <b>OR</b> Scheme significantly contributes to noise quality improvement or air quality improvement.	5		
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>28</b>		

**Accessibility**

Parking inhibiting emergency services etc.	7		
Parking close to school, hospital, etc.	5		
Parking conflict residents / non-residents etc.	3		
Long-term parking restricts short-term parking etc.	3		
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>18</b>		

**Localised congestion**

Parking causes localised congestion	5		
Parking causes congestion in peak periods etc.	7		
Parking in a traffic sensitive street	3		
Parking occurs on a bus route etc.	5		
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>20</b>		

**Enforcement**

Parking occurs during day	3		
Parking of a long duration	4		
Parking close to existing restrictions	5		
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>12</b>		

<b>TOTAL SCORE</b>	<b>100</b>		
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**Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 11 March 2015**

**Recommendations arising from the Task & Finish Group’s Review of the North Essex Parking Partnership**



Recommendation	Comments	Actions
<p>1. That the NEPP reviews the SLA for off-street parking, undertaking a zero based budget as part of that exercise; and brings forward its annual budget setting process for off-street parking so that it informs its partners’ own budgetary processes.</p>	<p>a) Zero based budget exercise completed.</p>	<p>This will be raised with CBC’s finance service and will suggest a meeting of finance officers from Districts/ Boroughs in advance of budget setting processes. CBC lead Finance Officer will contact other authorities’ finance officers requesting a meeting to discuss off-street parking budgets.</p>
	<p>b) Issue re budget setting agreed.</p>	<p>As above</p>
	<p>c) PP queried how the outturn for off-street 2014/15 compares with 2013/14. Has it improved? If so, would be good to let Cabinet know.  There may be a need for a budget top-up to take account of District growth.</p>	<p>See report to 18<sup>th</sup> June Off-Street committee and note that £48k savings following cash collection procurement exercise.</p>
<p>2. That the NEPP considers other income-generating opportunities to reduce reliance on PCN income by expanding its customer base; and avoids unnecessary expenditure by ensuring that utility companies reinstate lines/signs following any road-works they carry out or pay for works in default.</p>	<p>a) May be opportunity for a more generic role for the CEOs which some partner authorities may wish to buy into e.g. pay for an enhanced service. However, this presupposes that savings could be achieved in other service areas.</p>	<p>This will be borne in mind should PCN income drop off as a result of increased compliance. There also may be a better income opportunity from selling the technical expertise provided by the NEPP Back Office team</p>
	<p>b) Reinstating road lines is part of the Highway Inspector’s role (not NEPP).</p>	<p>This will be pursued with ECC Highways.</p>
<p>3. That the NEPP fills vacant CEO posts promptly to ensure that there is a full complement of staff (using agency staff if necessary).</p>	<p>3 of the 4 vacant posts in the Central Hub have been filled.</p>	<p>NEPP is continuing its recruitment process</p>

Recommendation	Comments	Actions
4. That the NEPP encourages County Council Members to attend partnership meetings to reinforce the concept of partnership working.	Agreed. NEPP Chairman has spoken to Cllr David Finch and we can expect improved attendance as a result.	N/A
5. That the NEPP has further discussions with ECC about the disparity in funding received by the NEPP and SEPP for TROs.	There is no scope for NEPP to claim additional funding from ECC in lieu of what SEPP received. However, the annual funding for TROs has been withdrawn from SEPP with effect from 2015/16.	NFA
6. That the NEPP reviews the CEO patrol schedules to ensure that it is delivering the required level of off-street enforcement in the Braintree District i.e. 70:30 ratio of CEO time on-street to off-street respectively.	NEPP believes that this is being delivered.	Ratios have been reviewed as part of the Off-street review
		BDC to explore the value of off-street enforcement to see if it covers its costs
7. That the mobile CCTV car becomes a permanent fixture (subject to changes in legislation) and the NEPP is asked to provide a schedule of planned visits within the Braintree District, as well as clarifying service standards for parking enforcement in rural parishes.	Recent changes in legislation have limited where mobile CCTV can be used. Need to look at other uses as it would be more cost effective if could use vehicle to enforce rather than use pedestrian patrols in some areas. It would help CEOs to target enforcement.	NEPP will provide a schedule showing when the vehicle is likely to be in the Braintree District
	Need to make clear to Parish Councils that parking enforcement in parishes will be by exception, as it is not cost effective or viable to routinely patrol all areas. This is the approach endorsed by the Joint Committee	NEPP to explore other options for using mobile CCTV vehicle.
8. That the NEPP ensures that the virtual permit system (MiPermit) is sufficiently robust to deliver expected improvements in customer service in terms of access and timeliness.	NEPP believes it is a robust system. There will be a link to a video on the website showing how to use MiPermit.	NEPP to advertise/promote the use of MiPermit. Consider utilising the reverse of parking tickets.

Recommendation	Comments	Actions
<p>9. That the NEPP improves the customer experience by:-</p> <p>(a) Issuing a comprehensive TRO user guide in consultation with partner authorities to clarify the TRO process including eligibility criteria, expected timescales, the scoring matrix and the date of committee meetings;</p>	Agreed	<p>NEPP to review the whole TRO process to see how the customer experience can be improved.</p> <p>Constitution to be reviewed and amended to strengthen the governance process. In addition, an Appeals process is to be introduced. The Appeals Panel to comprise the Chairman + local ward member, or if in the Chairman's District, the Deputy Chairman + local ward member.</p> <p>Call-in process to be clarified.</p>
<p>(b) Simplifying the TRO application form to ease completion;</p>	New TRO Policy addresses this point	NEPP to include on website.
<p>(c) Ensuring good liaison with applicants, particularly with regard to extensive or complex TROs;</p>	New TRO Policy addresses this point	<p>NEPP to include on website.</p> <p>NEPP to consider an on-line survey?</p>
<p>(d) Publishing a quarterly or six-monthly newsletter on its website to update customers on new initiatives and issues that may be of interest;</p>	The NEPP Blog is tackling these issues	NFA
<p>(e) Explaining enforcement relating to dropped kerbs;</p>	New TRO Policy addresses this point	NEPP to include on website.
<p>(f) Publishing its service standards; and</p>	New TRO Policy addresses this point	NEPP to include on website.
<p>(g) Seeking customer feedback and using this to deliver service improvements.</p>	The NEPP Blog is tackling these issues	
<p>10. That the TRO process be amended to require applicants to clearly demonstrate majority support for their proposal from other local residents, as well as support from their local County/ District/Parish/Town Council before they submit an application. (This is the approach adopted by the Local Highways Panels for highway schemes.)</p>	<p>Agreed. Should require evidence of support from local residents as well as from either the Town Council + District or County Ward Member; or the Parish Council + District or County Ward Member.</p> <p>New TRO Policy addresses this point</p>	NEPP to include in TRO user guide.

Recommendation	Comments	Actions
11. That the NEPP considers reinstating white advisory H-bars across drives in rural areas only on request and at residents' expense, to discourage inconsiderate parking.	Whilst enforcement across dropped kerbs can be effective in towns where CEOs routinely patrol, it is less so in rural areas, where visits can prove abortive owing to travelling time needed.	NEPP to lobby County Highways to permit the use of advisory H-bars (as a deterrent) in rural areas on request and at residents' expense.
12. That consideration be given to creating a common/shared database for use by ECC and NEPP to avoid duplication of TROs. Customers could be given (restricted) access to enable them to track progress with their requests.	Database is being progressed with partner authority, Harlow DC.	Database to be included on web site when completed.
13. That the NEPP reviews staffing levels to reduce Call Centre waiting times, lets the caller know where they are in the queue and includes information that is helpful and more generic to the whole partnership (rather than just Colchester) e.g. availability of MiPermit.	<p>A different message can be played on the phone when the offices are closed, but not sure about during the day.</p> <p>NEPP is trying to encourage on-line transactions, but acknowledges that there is still a need for human contact. 4 staff take calls; the average wait time is 4-5 minutes.</p>	NEPP to investigate options for messages and also check that the message tells callers where they are in the queue. Need to make full use of facilities on offer with the lead authority's telephone system.
14. That the NEPP challenges ECC's 5-yr policy relating to the introduction of TROs following the adoption of new roads and that consideration of TROs is included as part of the planning application process where appropriate.	<p>At present NEPP cannot get involved with new developments.</p> <p>Agree it should be considered as part of the planning process – not just off-road parking, but impact of additional cars likely to be parked on-street.</p>	This to be suggested Parking Partnerships' Officers' meeting with Vicky Duff.
15. That the NEPP undertakes benchmarking with the SEPP and other local authorities who have formed a similar partnership for parking services (e.g. Bromley and Bexley) to demonstrate that it provides value for money.		RW will explore opportunities for benchmarking with the East Anglian Parking Forum.