

Committee: Scrutiny

Date: 11 November
2025

Title: Briefing paper on the North Essex Parking Partnership

Report Author: Sarah Lewin, Economic Development Manager

Lead Member: Cllr Neil Hargreaves, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance and the Economy

Summary

1. This paper outlines the role and responsibility of the North Essex Parking Partnership (NEPP).

Recommendations

2. None - this briefing paper is for information only

Background

3. Essex County Council (ECC) are the Highways Authority.
4. The North Essex Parking Partnership (NEPP) was set up in 2011 with powers delegated by ECC.

NEPP is a council run service with Colchester City Council the lead authority. There are 7 partner authorities that make up the NEPP: Braintree District Council, Epping Forest District Council, Tendring District Council, Colchester City Council, Harlow Council, Uttlesford District Council and Essex County Council.

5. The partnership covers two separate areas of work:
 - On-street parking (roadside) operations governed by a joint committee
 - Off-street parking covered by individual agreements with clients, districts and parishes, based on a contribution
6. UDC has an SLA with NEPP to manage its car parks which costs £171,400 for the current financial year. This cost is included within the car park budget.

Situation

Off-street parking

7. UDC has an SLA with NEPP to manage its car parks which costs £171,400 for the current year. The majority of this cost relates to staffing costs. NEPP went through a large restructure in the financial year 2024/25 to ensure the service was as cost effective as possible.

			New Budget/New Agreement started Jul 2022			
			LYR		CYR	NYR
Uttlesford			Yr 1	Yr 2	Yr 3	Yr 4
Staff Costs			2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Senior Management	variable		2,190	2,240	2,510	2,580
Mgt people	variable		5,460	5,590	6,270	6,430
CEO Management	variable		4,370	4,470	5,010	5,140
CEO	variable		52,410	53,570	60,000	61,500
Back Office	variable		14,200	14,520	16,270	16,680
Back Office Mgt	variable		3,290	3,370	3,780	3,880
Cash/Card/MiPermit	fixed		43,850	47,360	13,580	13,820
Tech Super	variable		4,370	4,470	5,010	5,140
Tech Mgt	variable		4,370	4,470	5,010	5,140
Non Direct Recharges	share		34,620	37,390	40,720	41,420
Tech: Vehicle recharge	fixed		3,470	3,750	4,090	4,160
Enf: CEO Veh Recharg	fixed		4,620	4,990	5,440	5,540
Total			£ 177,200	£ 186,200	£ 167,700	£171,400

8. UDC manages 11 car parks in total. The majority are owned by UDC but 2, Crafton Green and Catons Lane, are owned by the respective town and parish councils and operate under a profit share management agreement. Fairycroft Road (often referred to as the Waitrose car park) also operates under a profit share agreement with a 3-way split between UDC, Waitrose and the Pig Market Charity.
9. All car parks are cash free. Tickets can be purchased by card, via the MiPermit App and website, or by phone. The decision to move away from cash payments was made in 2021 after repeated incidents of vandalism and theft from the old machines, which made them unreliable and costly to maintain.
10. The SLA with the parking partnership means that they oversee the day to day running of the car parks – checking ticket machines work, enforcement, managing payments etc. UDC remains responsible for repairs and maintenance.
11. As part of the Uttlesford Parking Review a comprehensive review of our car park tariffs was carried out in 2024.

As a result of this there has been a substantial increase in income.

The rise in income isn't solely the effect of higher fees, there has been a rise in the number of transactions with several car parks finally returning to pre-pandemic levels of use. Refer to Appendix A for details.

12. Monthly reports are received from NEPP regarding the number of enforcement patrols in the car parks and how many penalty charge notices (PCNs) are issued, appealed, and cancelled.

NEPP have struggled to recruit enforcement officers in recent years, and this has had an effect on the number of patrols being carried out in both the car parks and on street parking areas.

NEPP have worked hard on recruitment and staff retention and this is reflected in the increased income received for issued PCN's:

- In 2023-24 we budgeted PCN income at £80,000 but only received £27,500
- In 2024-25 we budgeted for £40,000 and received £53,000.

13. There are limitations on how council run car parks operate. It is not possible to increase the level of penalties as this is set by legislation, unlike private operators who can charge higher amounts. This means that NEPP finances are increasingly under pressure as costs keep rising but there is no remit to increase penalty charges which have remained the same since 2015. Local Authorities are also heavily restricted in use of Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) technology which means that this cannot be used in our car parks.

On-street parking

14. ECC are the Highways Authority. NEPP was set up in 2011 with powers delegated by ECC.

Prior to this all parking issues were dealt with by ECC; this generated complaints that there wasn't enough local input. Districts came together to create a partnership to deal with local parking issues.

15. ECC has an Agreement with the partnership which gives NEPP the power to carry out:
- on-street parking enforcement and charging
 - maintaining relevant signs and lines
 - make relevant traffic regulation orders (TRO) in accordance with the Traffic Management Act 2004 and the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984.
16. Operational decisions made at NEPP are verified by a Joint Parking Committee (JPC). The JPC is made up of a Chairman, NEPP representative officers as well as a representative officer and Member from each of the partner authorities. This ensures accountability to all authorities and allows each authority to look after the interests of their own district.

Decisions made range from how NEPP operates as a Partnership to whether a TRO scheme is introduced or not.

The JPC meet on a quarterly basis and these meetings are open for the public to attend if they wish to do so. There is a 'Have Your Say' section at the start of the meeting for members of the public to raise their concerns. Meetings are scheduled a year ahead. Details of all forthcoming meetings and minutes of all JPC meetings are available on the NEPP website. This will include the

annual workplan, finances and all details relating to traffic regulation orders etc
<https://north.parkingpartnership.org/joint-committee/>

17. There is no direct cost for this service to UDC but there are indirect costs associated with Member and officer time.

The costs of running the off-street service come from the income generated, therefore, one of the aims of the partnership is to make all parking restrictions self-funding.

Traffic Regulation Orders

18. Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) are legal documents developed by the traffic authority, or its agents, such as the Parking Partnership, allowing the police and / or local authorities (e.g. Civil Enforcement Officers) to enforce various matters to do with the speed, movement, parking and other restrictions of pedestrians and vehicles, by law.
19. TRO's can be brought in on 4 grounds. The first 3 remain within the jurisdiction of Essex with number 4, 'local concerns', being dealt with by NEPP.
- I. Safety - required in identified areas to reduce known personal injury collisions involving vehicles and pedestrians
 - II. Congestion – required in situations where the flow of traffic on key routes is impaired by parked vehicles
 - III. New development/improvement schemes – where restrictions are required to complement other measures such as traffic calming schemes or to assist with new developments such as new roads where NEPP will not consider TRO's on new developments for the first 5 years. Parking issues should be dealt with at the planning stage not picked up after being built. Limited funding.
 - IV. Local concerns where restrictions are required to manage commuter, shopper, or residents parking
20. Applications made via ECC's TRO process are funded via the Local Highways Panel which is made up of Essex Members. There is no input from UDC officers or Members to these decisions.

This split between which organisation deals with the TRO's does cause problems and it is not uncommon for applications to bounce between ECC and NEPP. Funding is very tight on both sides.

The overarching aim is to avoid introducing unnecessary parking restrictions and to concentrate the limited funds available to the NEPP on the schemes which have the biggest benefits or where uncontrolled parking is causing a significant problem (whether to local residents or traffic) and major parking issues exist.

21. Requests for restrictions that do not fall within the ECC remit are decided by the JPC via NEPP.

Requests are considered based on criteria set out in the Parking Partnership Traffic Regulation Orders general policy 2022, attached as Appendix B.

The NEPP is likely to receive requests for restrictions to deal with these issues:

- Commuter parking in a residential street (preferred parking)
- Short term invasion parking (outside schools, organisations, etc.)
- Provision of customer on street parking for local shops and businesses
- Obstruction of driveway (difficulty getting vehicle on and of driveway)
- Parking around industrial areas
- Parking on verges, pavements and green areas.

Historically many parking restrictions have been introduced with the aim of resolving particular local issues.

The highway is intended for the purposes of passing and re-passing and that no right of parking exists. Parking provision is therefore a concession and, however desirable, should not be at the expense of the purpose of the highway. Where it is safe and desirable parking can be allowed.

The NEPP will avoid introducing unnecessary parking restrictions to combat minor short stay invasion parking problems or to address a preferred parking situation. The allocated funds will be concentrated on essential schemes where major parking issues exist and have fully evidenced local support where necessary.

Existing traffic restrictions

22. All traffic restrictions can be found on the Essex Highways map – Traffweb

Enforcement of parking restrictions

23. UDC receives monthly reports about patrols in the car parks. PCN's issued in UDC car parks forms part of our income and reported as part of the budget.

The Council is not the Highways authority and therefore do not receive any information about on-street patrols. Income received from PCN's issued for on-street parking goes to ECC.

Traffic Regulation Order application process and timeframe

24. Applications can be made by a resident or parish/town council. Support from a local councillor, usually the Ward Member, must be evidenced.

An application can take up to 18 months.

25. The flowchart on the NEPP website explains the TRO process. This can be viewed here <https://north.parkingpartnership.org/policies-and-procedures/>

The TRO policy sets out an annual cycle of activity:

1. July = TRO applications deadline.
2. October/November = Approve/Defer/Reject TRO applications to statutory consultation at the Joint Committee meeting.
3. Winter = Administrative preparation for advertising and proposing TRO applications approved by the Joint Committee.
4. Spring = Formally advertise and propose said TRO applications.
5. Summer = Install TRO proposals successful at formal/statutory consultation (when the weather should be more reliable, in theory!).

The current cycle of activity is structured in this way to work with seasonal changes in weather, which can have a negative impact on cost and delivery. It also allows the NEPP to better manage stakeholder expectations and efficiently deliver a more predictable TRO works programme.

At various points in this cycle there are key decision milestones which can prevent progression temporarily or permanently. For example, where an application is received without a petition, a Joint Committee meeting is postponed, or significant objections at statutory consultation are received. The timeframe illustrated by the flowchart assumes an application is submitted just before the deadline in July. In reality an application could be submitted up to 12 months prior, if it wasn't possible to fit it into the previous year's cycle. Thus, a combination of many unknowns (until they are known) lead NEPP to manage customer expectations at a reasonable timeframe of 12-18 months.

26. The timeframe for equivalent action at Essex Highways is significantly longer than the NEPP process, hence why it is becoming increasingly more frequent that ECC and other stakeholders are fully-funding NEPP to implement some TRO works.

Consultation requirements

27. Any proposed parking scheme will require evidence of consultation with parties affected including residents of the street(s) affected. If there is no evidenced majority of 75% or above in support of the scheme it is highly unlikely that the scheme will progress.
28. For wider consultations – such as the one UDC recently ran in Takeley and Canfield – NEPP's policy asks for at least a 50% response rate from identified properties and at least 50% - or 75% for a permit scheme – of these should be in favour.
29. Engagement with residents promotes localism and ensures the voice of all affected parties is heard. Restrictions have a considerable impact on residents so most people have to agree – not just the vocal minority. Residents could be prevented from either parking outside their home for a period of time, which has significant implications for people working shifts/nights or going away on holiday, or, having to pay for permits for all vehicles. There has to be a large majority to be fair and equitable to all.

Unless a majority of affected residents agree to the proposals objections are raised once the restriction is advertised. A considerable amount of work and money is spent designing parking schemes which is wasted if residents object at the formal consultation stage. Providing proof of a high level of support reduces the chance of this occurring.

30. Who should be included in the consultation will vary between different proposals so it's difficult to be prescriptive. NEPP officers can assist with identifying who should be consulted. The aim is to stop the problem merely shifting to another street. If there is a high likelihood cars will be prevented from parking in one street only to park round the corner wider restrictions/consultation would be required.

Score card

31. NEPP uses scoring criteria for assessing applications. There isn't a minimum score it's merely used to strengthen the assessment of applications. The higher the score the higher priority it will be given.
32. Each district in the partnership gets a maximum of 6 schemes per year so if we have 10 applications all meeting the necessary basic criteria of support this score would be used to determine which of those 10 applications to implement.

Funding

33. If all the criteria are met NEPP will cost out the scheme. The aim is to be self-funding so all costs of setting up the scheme must be covered by the first year's fees. Applications for a parking scheme that only benefits 1 or 2 households won't be self-funding so is unlikely to be approved.

As an example, a 3-car permit bay is likely to cost in excess of £1,500 to install but only has an annual return of around £324 (based on 1 x first permit and 2 x second permit price).

34. Funding is limited so each district is restricted to no more than 6 TRO schemes a year.

The limit was agreed to reflect the finite budget and resources available year-on-year, ultimately built within the limits of the NEPP Joint Committee agreement. This agreement places an annual limit on all new TRO spend, including staff salaries and other direct costs above and beyond the actual delivery of the aforementioned cycle.

There are some exceptions to the limit of six schemes a year; primarily, when the scheme is fully-funded. This could either be via a third party, or from the revenue of a parking place, e.g. permits or pay and display. Potential PCN income is not included in any calculations towards funding because the purpose of civil enforcement is 100% compliance without any PCNs - this is clearly stated within statutory guidance.

35. ECC as the highway authority have retained the powers to implement TROs. For the most part, they concern themselves with issues of safety and congestion. The normal avenue into this is via the Local Highway Panels.

36. Overview of most common TRO requests

a. Commuter parking in residential streets

Probably the most common request NEPP receives

The majority of residential estates are not designed for the level of car ownership or traffic using them today. In Uttlesford this issue is particularly acute in our medieval market town, Saffron Walden, where car ownership is one of the highest in the country.

NEPP's preferred solution is a residents parking scheme but this has cost implications for residents. Controlled parking zones are also possible, and on the whole these seem to work in areas such as Takeley where airport parking is prevalent, but the restrictions apply to all and further zones, when proposed, have not found sufficient community support.

To be successful an application must concern a sufficiently severe enough issue to cause serious inconvenience to residents and the majority of residents have no off-street parking facilities available to them.

If the majority of properties have no off-street parking, then clearly any amount of parking by non-residents will have an impact on the available space for residents of the area. If the majority of properties have off street parking, any parking on the highway will not impact on the available off-street parking for residents.

Other factors that are considered:

- The introduction of a scheme would not cause unacceptable problems in adjacent roads.
- If displacement parking is considered likely, there should be evidenced support for consider implementing restrictions to mitigate the risk of displacement parking in affected roads
- The Partnership is satisfied that a reasonable level of enforcement can be maintained.

b. Short term invasion parking (outside schools, organisations etc)

Short term invasion parking is parking for the purpose of dropping of and picking up passengers or goods at a known organisation such as a school, convenience store etc. and will only be for short periods of time.

If this type of parking restriction request does not meet ECC's safety or congestion criteria it is highly unlikely that NEPP will propose the introduction of parking restrictions.

This is classed overall as very low priority. It's important to note that this doesn't mean that NEPP doesn't recognise the inconvenience of to residents it

is merely stating that the problem should fall under the ECC remit to deal with on safety or congestion grounds. Applicants can still apply for a TRO but via ECC not NEPP.

The enforcement of any restriction that is introduced to tackle a short-term parking issue requires a concentrated enforcement presence and is therefore not practical and cost effective.

c) Customer parking for local shops/businesses

Designated areas of on street parking can be created to serve the needs of local businesses and the retail sector.

Preferred method is pay and display.

Costs are an important factor here – there must be sufficient churn to generate income to manage maintenance and enforcement costs.

d) Obstruction of driveway (difficulty getting vehicle on and off driveway)

If a vehicle is parked across an approved dropped kerb and obstructing the driveway a Civil Enforcement Officer (CEO) can issue a Penalty Charge Notice (PCN) for obstruction of a dropped kerb, provided the vehicle is not parked in a designated parking place.

Enforcement of this type will only take place if the resident of the property reports the obstruction to NEPP.

A white H-bar marking can be placed on the highway indicating the access to the driveway. This type of marking is advisory only. NEPP will offer this option to residents – it is optional and is chargeable to the customer. However, it will not be maintained by NEPP or ECC if it wears away or is removed as part of any highway works.

In all cases Essex Police is the responsible authority to deal with obstructions of the highway and have the necessary powers to remove vehicles that are considered to cause an obstruction.

e) Parking around industrial areas

There are areas within industrial sites where the workforce relies on long stay parking on the highway.

As long as it doesn't cause concerns on safety or congestion grounds then NEPP will consider this type of parking as acceptable.

This will be a very low priority for any restrictions.

Cars parked in these types of area can act as a natural speed calming measure. Any introduction of parking restrictions in these types of areas will do no more than to potentially displace parking to an alternative location.

f) Parking on verges, pavements and green areas

Enforcement of verges, pavements and green areas can only be enforceable under the Traffic Management Act 2004 if the area is confirmed as public highway and is supported by a relevant TRO.

Not practicable to do this on every verge – signs, road markings, admin costs etc

Obstruction of highway/pavement – Essex Police can issue a fixed penalty notice and remove the vehicle

If land is maintained by a local authority and is ornamental/mown to a high standard can take action under the Essex Act and notices/enforcement put in place.

Ongoing maintenance of white lines

37. NEPP are responsible for the implementation and ongoing maintenance of the following type of parking restriction:

- No waiting
- No Loading and unloading
- School Keep Clear
- Limited waiting
- On-street pay and display
- Resident Parking Schemes
- Taxi ranks
- Loading and goods vehicle bays
- Red Route
- Red Lines

ECC continue to be responsible for the implementation and ongoing maintenance of the following type of parking restriction:

- On-street blue badge spaces
- Bus stops
- Pedestrian crossings

38. NEPP are aware that not enough money has been put into maintaining lines. The budget has been doubled this year to £50,000 but this still isn't enough to cover all required remedial work.