REPORT of
DIRECTOR OF CUSTOMERS AND COMMUNITY
to
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
6 JANUARY 2016

SOUTH ESSEX PARKING PARTNERSHIP

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 An item of scrutiny has been included within the 2015 / 16 work plan of this committee to consider whether the South Essex Parking Partnership (SEPP) is delivering value for money to Maldon District Council in respect of its parking enforcement service.

2. AREA FOR DECISION / ACTION

2.1 Members are reminded that this item was brought forward at the request of Councillor M S Heard and agreed by the Committee on 10 June 2015.

2.2 Background

2.2.1 The South Essex Parking Partnership carries out the on-street parking enforcement in Chelmsford, Basildon, Rochford, Castle Point, Maldon and Brentwood on behalf of Essex County Council (ECC), the highways authority through delegated responsibilities under a Joint Agreement signed by all partner authorities in 2011.

2.2.2 The Operational Guidance of Part 6 to the Traffic Management Act 2004 (TMA 2004) clearly advises that it is a sensible aim that enforcement operations must be self-financing and if not, the Secretary of State will not expect either national or local taxpayers to meet any deficit. As such, both the South and North Parking Partnerships were formed with a key objective to reduce inherent deficits and to provide more cost effective solutions to the parking enforcement delivery across the County.

2.2.3 Since formation the Partnership has generated an overall operating financial surplus. Each Council within the Partnership has an individual account. In the past 4 years three Councils have operated in a surplus position and three in deficit. Maldon has been close to break even or in slight deficit since joining. The reason for this position is the larger authorities (such as Brentwood and Chelmsford) are able to generate additional income through on street parking charges and large residents parking schemes. In addition enforcement activity is naturally higher within a city centre environment. In contrast Maldon is a largely rural location and any income is generated mainly through enforcement action and is not supplemented by on street
parking income for example. Each Council within the Partnerships could theoretically under the terms of the Joint Agreement signed in 2011 be asked to refund any deficit. However the Joint Agreement also has a clause which states where a partner has made attempts to reduce any deficit and providing the overall operation is in a surplus position costs will not be recovered. To date no individual Council has been asked for a contribution regardless of a deficit position. Maldon has fully engaged with parking operations and supplements the SEPP enforcement activity in the district.

2.2.4 Should this Council exit the Partnership for any reason parking arrangements will continue to be managed by SEPP but without representation by Maldon Members. The County Council intends to maintain the existing North and South Partnerships and would not consider returning to individual district arrangements.

2.2.5 SEPP is governed by a Joint Committee, and performs an essential role ensuring that all Partnership members have an influence on how the Partnership is operated and on local parking enforcement issues.

2.2.6 The Joint Committee consists of one nominated Councillor from Basildon, Brentwood, Castle Point, Chelmsford, Maldon and Rochford. The Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation at ECC also sits upon the Committee. The Joint Committee is responsible for approving Partnership policies, the Annual Business Case, the Resident Parking Schemes, Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) for new parking schemes, maintenance of signs and lines, and managing the Parking Partnership financial account.

2.2.7 The Chairman of the Joint Committee in 2015 / 16 is Councillor R Pratt, who is also the Community Services nominated Member to sit upon the Joint Committee representing this Council.

2.2.8 In summary the primary function of SEPP is to:
- Provide suitable enforcement of parking restrictions on the public highway which are supported by a relevant TRO.
- Issue Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) to vehicles in contravention of a parking restriction process, the recovery of PCNs, consider challenges and representations and administer Resident Permit Schemes.
- Maintain on-street parking related signs and lines, and implement new parking related traffic management schemes.

2.3 Operational Overview

2.3.1 Normal enforcement operations are between 08:00 to 20:00 hrs on a daily basis. The operational guidance recognises that most issues surrounding safety, congestion and free flow of traffic will ease outside these hours. There will be areas within the Partnership where parking issues will need addressing outside these core hours; these will tend to be in areas where night time economy is buoyant. The Parking Partnership utilises ad-hoc 'out of hours' patrols, either on foot or mobile, dependant on the location and area.

2.3.2 The enforcement operation in Maldon also has the benefit of working in partnership with the Maldon Park Rangers. The Park Rangers have provided additional
enforcement coverage during out of hours periods and during the peak summer season. This enforcement coverage has been particularly beneficial to residents living in the Resident Parking Zones, thus ensuring suitable space provision is available for residents with a permit.

2.3.3 **APPENDIX 1** to this report provides specific financial performance details relating to Maldon and is shown at page 10 (Table 1) of the SEPP Annual Report 2014 / 15. Details relating to enforcement are also shown within the report starting at page 57.

2.3.4 The latest performance updates presented to the SEPP Joint Committee in December 2015 are attached at **APPENDICES 2, 3 and 4**.

3. **PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE SCRUTINY EXERCISE**

3.1 The focus of this report relates to on street parking only and aims to consider whether the South Essex Parking Partnership (SEPP) is delivering value for money to Maldon District Council in respect of its parking enforcement service.

3.2 The scrutiny exercise does not include off street parking activities and related enforcement which is a service operated directly by this Council.

4. **IMPACT ON CORPORATE GOALS**

4.1 Effective traffic management contributes to the Corporate Goals of ‘delivering good quality cost effective services’ and ‘creating opportunities for economic growth and prosperity’.

5. **IMPLICATIONS**

(i) **Impact on Customers** – This review gives Members the opportunity to ask if the current arrangements support the local community in ensuring parking is managed effectively within the Maldon District.

(ii) **Impact on Equalities** – Existing parking regulations identifies specific customer needs.

(iii) **Impact on Risk** – Risks identified relate to reputational damage to this authority.

(iv) **Impact on Resources (financial)** – The Joint Committee Agreement can call upon individual Members to underwrite a deficit within an individual account. However, where an authority has worked closely with SEPP to identify measures to reduce any deficit no call will be made. The overall financial position relating to SEPP remains strong remaining in surplus for the fourth consecutive year of operation. The Council also generates an income from
SEPP through the reimbursement of costs associated with enforcement activities. In 2014 / 15 a total of £17,840 was received from the Partnership.

(v) Impact on Resources (human) – Costs are reimbursed for enforcement staff.

(vi) Impact on the Environment – Effective traffic management reduces congestion and resultant pollution from cars held in traffic for prolonged periods.

6. CONCLUSIONS

6.1 This Council plays an active part with the South Essex Parking Partnership with a district Member being elected Chair of the Joint Committee during 2015 / 16. The Council contributes to enforcement within the district which also brings a revenue income to the Council. This income is used to fund the enforcement activity.

6.2 Members are asked to consider current activities to satisfy themselves the operation is delivering value for money to Maldon District Council in respect of its parking enforcement service. It is important to remember this Council (along with all other Councils within the Partnership) makes no financial contribution to the parking operation.

6.3 The existing arrangements for parking operations are currently subject to review. A provision has been made within the Joint Agreement to allow an extension of time in both North and South Essex. Essex County Council has commissioned Blue Marble to undertake the review at this early stage to ensure time is allowed for relevant discussion and decision by all parties involved.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

(i) that Members’ views, comments and questions on the information as set out in this report and APPENDIX 1 are sought.

(ii) that Members make recommendations to the Chief Executive, Directors, the appropriate Committee and / or the Council arising from the outcome of the scrutiny process.

Background Papers: None.

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