

Request from Dedham Parish Council (DPC) to Colchester Borough Council (CBC) for further information concerning CBC's 'Proposed Parking Strategy for Dedham'

DPC held an Extraordinary Meeting on Monday, 22nd July for the specific purpose of discussing the above strategy. After this meeting the DPC Parking Working Party established to handle consultation on these proposals met to review all comments and to develop a range of actions in response to this strategy, one of which was to identify the further information that was required from CBC. As a consequence DPC would please like the following information:

1. Financial information and costings

More information about the 'business model' proposed to operate with DPC in respect of the proposed parking charges. For example, what would the account look like? A pro-forma copy of a similar account would be useful, identifying things like: costs and revenues for NEPP; income from ticketing, permits and enforcement; on-costs for other CBC Departments and whether these are directly allocated to a particular Parish or based upon a shared proportion across all CBC car parks; allowances for capital expenditure, reserves and depreciation; new business rates methodology and how this will impact on CBC and in turn its Parishes and Districts.

A copy of the agreement we have with other town/parish councils has previously been sent Dedham Parish Council and this will be the basis of the document that both Councils sign. The income retained by Colchester Borough Council is included as part of its Off-street parking budget. This budget collects the income from all its 'charging' car parks and also includes all the direct and indirect costs required for running a car parks service. This includes all accounting adjustments required by law and local government regulations and is audited on an annual basis.

The North Essex Parking Partnership (NEPP) would not receive direct income for permits and enforcement as it is an off-street car park and this money under the agreement will be split between Dedham Parish Council and Colchester Borough Council.

The Parking service receives no share of Business Rates and is fully self-funding through income earned in its car park operations.

2. Implementation and Start-up works and associated costs

The schedule of works CBC initially propose to undertake in the Mill Lane and Duck Pond carparks – to include number and sitings of payment metres; resurfacing works to relevant areas, treatment of existing green area/overflow carpark, cutting back of under/overgrowth and possible reclamation of shrubbery areas for additional carparking; whether and how bays will be marked out; treatment of coach park (DPC would not wish to lose the coach park but considers it to be under-utilised – potential to investigate whether combined use could be achieved by reducing coach parking to 2 or 3 bays and including additional car parking in this area at weekends and bankholidays). We would also like to know whether it might be possible to generate a parking ticket with a perforated tear off portion that could be used in a potential incentive scheme for businesses. Could we please then have a total cost for all the start up works.

Initial works will include two machines in Mill Road and one in the Duck Pond car park. Each machine and installation would cost approximately £3,500 and three new tariff/notice boards would be required which are approximately £450 per sign with installation. This will be funded up front by the Borough and recouped from the first year's income before the agreed split between the two Councils was made.

Any further grounds maintenance and repairs will be assessed before the implementation date of 1st April 2014.

The suggestion that the coach park is under-utilized can be looked into but it will be difficult to amend the layout for public and bank holidays without major investment. The Borough may consider better signage and will investigate the options.

The Council can provide pay and display tickets that have a perforated tear off strip and would be interested in investigating this type of scheme with local Dedham businesses.

3. Annual maintenance works and costs

We would request a list of annual maintenance headings for both car-parks with some indication as to the proposed timespans within which work will be undertaken, i.e. annually, quarterly, monthly, etc. Again we would like to see proposed annual costs for running maintenance.

The object of items 1-3 is to be able to clearly identify all expenditures on a regular basis in a simple and coherent manner and to be able to relate this to the income received on the account. A commitment to presenting a quarterly statement of our account would be appreciated. Arising from these costings and estimated income, a rough indication as to when it might be expected that DPC would see its first income from its parking partnership with CBC would be helpful.

The car parks will be inspected on a quarterly basis and by law need to be maintained in a safe condition. These inspections would specify what maintenance is required and indicate the urgency of the works. If the works required are not compromising safety, which are treated as a priority notwithstanding the car park involved, then what is undertaken depends on the budgetary constraints and in the case of this car park what income is raised. The whole premise is to use the income gathered from the income earned to build a fund to make improvements. An Asset Management Plan for the car park will be produced which will be made available to Dedham Parish Council and the works prioritised as funds become available. Up to now the works on these car parks has been subsidised by the income earned in Colchester's town centre car parks.

As for frequency of payment this can be negotiated between the Councils but half-yearly is the preference of the Council.

4. Arrangements between NEPP and CBC

More details about the precise arrangements between NEPP and CBC.

CBC makes the decisions about its car parks as they are its assets and the NEPP provides the technical services to operate the car parks for the Council.

The NEPP was set up in 2011/12 when Essex County Council's (ECC) highway agency agreement with the local authorities was ended. NEPP was formed by six Borough & District Councils and ECC primarily to run the on-street parking service which includes enforcement of all waiting restrictions in the NEPP area and the back office support systems required to collect payment of penalty charge notices and on-street permits.

In addition to this some of the local authorities (Braintree, Colchester, Epping Forest, Harlow and Uttlesford) also signed an agreement for NEPP to run and maintain their off-street parking which means staffing car parks and upkeep of pay and display machines. It also provides enforcement patrols using the on-street Civil Enforcement Officers (CEO).

Colchester is the lead authority for the NEPP which means it employs the staff, maintains the finances and services the Joint Committee which is the constituted governance arm of the NEPP. The Joint Agreement signed by all seven partner Councils to the NEPP can be made available.

5. Use of any profits generated on the account

A clear statement as to how precisely CBC proposes to spend its share of any profit generated on the account. This is considered important to demonstrate to villagers that the income is not to be utilised for other than transport-related purposes and if it is not, then what is the rationale for asking Dedham to contribute to transport related projects that it is unlikely to benefit from?

A statement as to any conditions or restrictions that CBC might seek to impose on DPC in respect of it spending its own allocated share of any profit and that any profits generated could not or would not be subject to withdrawal or change by CBC once agreed between the parties.

The intention will be to use the funding retained by the Borough Council to maintain the car parks at Dedham. However, the Council has to retain the right to use any money it earns through income to offset any budgetary pressures particularly when income from other sources like Government grants is reducing. As this money is gathered from an off-street car park there is no requirement for it to be spent on 'transport related' projects which only applies to money raised from on-street activities.

The Council will not be requiring Dedham Parish Council to declare how it spends its proportion of the funding.

6. Initiative to provide public toilet facilities in the Mill Lane Car Park

As an initial objective, DPC would particularly like to investigate the potential of reactivating a previous request to CBC to build public toilet facilities in the Mill Lane car park. Public toilet facilities on the sports field are too far away for visitors parking in Mill Lane. DPC has established that it can apply for grant funding from ECC to a maximum of £20,000 on condition that it can provide matched funding. DPC is unable to do this at present but would be committed to developing income to contribute to this, some of which might come from our income from this project. However, the timescales are challenging and we would like to formally request that CBC makes some contribution to this initiative. This would be tangible evidence to the village that this scheme is genuinely something that will benefit Dedham and would go some way towards alleviating opposition. Also some contribution from CBC might help to secure the funding from Essex.

The provision of further toilet facilities in Dedham is the responsibility of Community Services in the Council and at present we are not aware of any plans to develop further facilities anywhere in the Borough. The Parish Council request will be passed to the relevant Councillors and officers for consideration.

Collaboration with Suffolk Authorities

Information regarding potential collaboration with Suffolk Authorities regarding visitor parking at weekends and bank holidays on the Suffolk side of Dedham Bridge. What commitment has CBC to explore relevant issues with Suffolk about this?

The Council will consult with the relevant Suffolk authorities and the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Project. We will highlight any issues that charging in these car parks may cause, but on the Suffolk side of Dedham Bridge there is still enforcement by the Police under criminal law which relies on police resources being available.