

WEST MERSEA TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING

HELD ON TUESDAY 17 AUGUST 2021

PRESENT: Councillors: Carl Powling (Mayor)
John Akker
Julie Baker
David Bragg
Robert Jenkins
Sophie Weaver
Sylvia Wargent

IN ATTENDANCE: Town Clerk: Vanessa Allen
Borough Councillors: Patricia Moore
John Jowers

North Essex Parking Partnership: Trevor Degville

8 members of the public

Councillors Akker and Wood requested the Extraordinary meeting of the Council to discuss red lines.

21/156 TO ACCEPT APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence received from Councillor Chris Wood, Borough Councillor Robert Davidson. Apologies were recorded.

21/157 TO RECORD DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

21/158 PUBLIC SESSION

The Mayor read four written representations were received from those unable to attend.

The writer expressed their objection of red lines on Victoria Esplanade, feeling they are disproportionate as they were not aware of any problems with parking along the road. The lines make Mersea an unwelcoming place and parking is now occurring in the Avenues. Request to revert to yellow lines.

Another written response raised concerns of attractiveness and accessibility to visitors, awareness of the red lines, with the lines creating problems for local businesses.

A written response was received confirming a response from NEPP that the Red Routes were not introduced under any of the emergency regulations relating to Covid 19 as stated in Appendix 2 of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Councillor Wood forwarded his comments for inclusion at the meeting stating that he supports the principle of the red lines, but believes the initial consultation was inadequate. The signage is confusing and any extension to the red lines should be restricted to Yorick Road

A member of the public stated that footfall to their retail store has reduced since the introduction of the red lines, although Covid shutdowns had also had an impact and that the incidents of their customers being charged for parking on the forecourt had been resolved.

A member of the public spoke of the difficulties for those without driveways and garages, the elderly and less mobile for unloading shopping in the Coast Road area, and for carers and District Nurses. There is no parking for Dabchicks sailing events, with issues for dropping off children and boats. There are 30 businesses in the area. The loading bays are few and far between and red lines are more suitable where there is a continuous throughfare of traffic. Visitors feel unwelcome and there is no reason why in the winter months there is no parking.

A member of the public acknowledged that the Council needed to do something and did the correct thing in bringing in red lines. There is a huge Health and Safety problem, dangerous for visitors to walk along Coast Road due to amount of traffic trying to find parking spaces. There has to be some parking restrictions of some sort or there is anarchy. Parking enforcement on yellow lines is difficult due to manpower. This Cadet Week competitors were able to pull their boats up the road and not be in danger. In an ideal world there would be a car park and a shuttle bus, but understand that this is not possible.

A member of the public stated that they could not see where the Council has agreed to adopt the lines, and that there was not any consultation with visitors. Notices have become very complicated with yellow lines without notices.

Borough Councillor John Jowers

The Council has been offered land over the years for car parking, but the Councillors at the time decided against. If we provide more parking we will encourage more cars. The Waterfront is chaotic presenting health and Safety issue, with problems for Emergency vehicles, but there could and should have been more consultation. The Council requested that Colchester Borough Council and Essex County Council look into the issue, they responded with a red route trial. On the Esplanade it has worked well, but Coast Road is more complex. Prior to the red lines you could stop and deliver, with the weight of the feeling is that the red lines are slightly excessive. There is an argument to pedestrianise the bottom of Coast Road, with options of park and shuttle bus or park and walk on field to north of Colchester Road utilising the footpath that runs to the hard. The Council acted with good intentions as something had to be done, the red lines sort of work, but need refining and there should now be more considered debate.

Councillor Patricia Moore

Mersea is suffering from a lack of policing on existing parking restrictions. Also felt that Esplanade had worked quite well, there is logic in lines to top half of Coast Road, but when you stop people parking the traffic speeds up. Problems with the west end of Coast Road, plethora of notices and too complicated a system, but please get on with Yorick Road red lines. Proper consultation is required as soon as possible as feelings are running high, resulting in an emotional and practical mess.

Trevor Degville, Parking Technical Manager, NEPP

NEPP been attending meetings with the Council on parking and enforcement issues. This is a temporary order, a trial to see how it works. The purpose of roads is to pass and re pass, and there were problems with traffic flow with incidents of first responders unable to get through. The lines were put in October 2020 and the most the trial can run for is 18 months. If the Council want the lines can be removed, but they can't be replaced with something that is enforced the same way. The camera car cannot be used on yellow lines, and there is more chance of people taking a risk if there is no camera car. The red lines are a trial and NEPP are receiving criticism for trying to assist the Council with parking problems. Local authorities were given authority for red lines in 2012, they can be removed as they are a temporary order. If nothing is done they will have to come out and revert. In the last 2 months there have been fewer PCN and more people using the car parks, with 3000 extra cars since April.

Councillor Bragg. There has been consultation over the years, and the red lines were requested in Yorick Road, but we got them everywhere but there. However don't know the consequences of the red lines until they were tried.

Councillor Akker.

Question of enforceability, red lines are easier to enforce through use of the camera car. People of West Mersea feel the red lines are more appropriate to urban and other areas where there are problems with through routes, high accident rates, and to ensure buses achieve their route, they are not appropriate for rural visitors. However, NEPP does not have the resources to enforce yellow lines. The red lines are a step too far for a community like Mersea. If the Council and Community do not want red lines, can we go back?

A member of the public stated that red lines are the only way to communicate with day visitors. It is the visitor parking that is the issue, with enforcement required at weekends.

Councillor Powling stated that the discussions extend back to 2016. He thanked NEPP and Trevor Degville for their work and support. Red lines are one of the solutions. Visitors are important but we need to look after residents to ensure that fire and ambulance crews have access. Agreed that additional parking is required. The Maps with possible alterations are on the Town Council website, NEPP has listened to feedback, it is a trial to see how it works. First responders have not had issues on Coast Road or Esplanade, problems were in evenings and weekends and school holidays. Seaview Avenue is still a problem, same as before the red lines were introduced. Height barriers have been put onto the car parks, this excludes campervans, but car parks are for cars.

21/159 TO RECEIVE A REPORT ON;

1. The Council's adoption of red lines

The red lines are a trial. Consultation ends in 18 months from install date. The working group will look at the maps and adoption of plans.

2. Consultation undertaken with residents at their introduction in early 2020

The red lines were advertised in the Colchester Gazette and there were many complaints on Facebook as the maps were inaccurate. Traffic orders are issued by Essex County Council and their advertising policy states the use of the Borough local paper, which is the Colchester Gazette, Mersea papers are considered Parish magazines.

Formal consultation is a legal process which will go into the local press, Colchester Gazette, giving three weeks for people to make view comments and give their views. NEPP will forward consultation information for the Council and Clerk to raise awareness in local press.

Trevor Degville stated that by the end of this summer, November at the latest NEPP need to know what the Councils view is to get something in place before next summer.

There was discussion on yellow lines in Churchfields. Residents can make an application to NEPP for yellow lines in their road, it needs to be well supported by residents, (75%) and have the support of a Councillor. The forms and process are on their website; www1.parkingpartnership.org/north/technical

The Churchfields application was submitted with support of residents and West Mersea Town Councillor Akker, (Councillor Akker was unaware that his name had been used on the application), this was considered by Colchester Borough Council, prioritised by NEPP, advertised in Spring to which there were two objections. NEPP went ahead and put in lines residents had requested.

3. Consideration given by NEPP and others

4. Changes in the application of red lines since the report made to the Transport Committee on 2 July 2021
Amended routes were shared with the Transport Committee on 2 July 2021.

21/160 TO CONSIDER;

1. The present position and what changes can be made in the future including the longer term with a possibility of 'park and ride'

Park and ride would not work as not practical and seasonal.

Park and walk is more practical, using a footpath.

This item was deferred.

2. Seeking views of residents including matters to be considered by the working group previously established by the Council

Views received today are important, need the working group to discuss and find solutions that will support businesses, residents and encourage tourists.

3. Current proposals for parking restrictions

The maps are on the Council website for viewing; www.westmersea.org/Your-Council-News

A date for the working group to meet will be arranged for early September.

There are approximately 50 enforcement officers covering on street and off street parking in Essex.

There being no other business, the Mayor thanked NEPP for working with the Council on a solution and Trevor Degville for attending.

The public meeting closed at 12.35pm.