

### Assessment of Westerham Town Partnership Review Proposals

An assessment can only be made comparing the proposed tariff structures for the different areas with current levels of usage and income.

	<b>Actual Income 2012/13</b>	<b>Estimated income for 2013/14</b>	<b>Effect of the WTP proposals</b>	<b>Difference to income</b>
<b>Car Parks</b>				
Darent	£19,600	£27,900	Reduces income by 27.5%	Reduction £7,700
Quebec	£10,500	£11,800	Increases income by 8.7%	Increase £1,000
Vicarage Hill	£ 9,700	£14,300	Increases income by 42.3%	Increase £6,000
			<b>Total:</b>	<b>Reduction £700</b>
<b>On-Street</b>				
The Green	£14,100	£14,000	Increases total income by 32.1%	Increase £16,700
The Grange	£ 8,800	£10,800		
Market Square	£26,500	£27,500		
Croydon Road	£16,700	£16,300	Increases income by 48.4%	Increase £7,900
Fullers Hill	£ 8,800	£ 9,800	Increases income by 49.3%	Increase £4,800
			<b>Total:</b>	<b>Increase £29,400</b>

The following assumptions have been made in respect to the changes to the tariff structures:

- Re: Vicarage Hill car park, that 50% of current users of 30 minute tariff change to 15 minute free parking.
- Re: the Fullers Hill on-street, that 50% of current users of 30 minute tariff change to 15 minute free parking; that 25% of the current users of the 2 hour tariff change to 3 hours.
- Re: The Green, The Grange and Market Square on-street, that 50% of current users of 30 minute tariff change to 15 minute free parking.
- Re: Croydon Road on-street, that 50% of current users of 30 minute tariff change to 15 minute free parking; that 25% of the current users of the 2 hour tariff change to 3 hours.
- No allowance has been made for additional ticket sales as this is difficult to estimate for the changes proposed.

#### Important considerations

- The cost implications relate to the current financial year and the effect upon the Council's proposed options for 2014/15 will need to be considered in this regard.
- The provision of free parking periods will lead to enforcement problems. The only way this could possibly work would be for people to take a free ticket from the machine. We would not be able to record the periods that people may have been parked and so enforce the restrictions.

- Free parking will lead to people abusing the restrictions by taking second or third free parking tickets, which will be impossible to effectively enforce. This is likely to lead to a significant reduction in the use, availability and turnover of spaces.
- The proposal for 3 hours parking on-street in Croydon Road and Fullers Hill is not recommended as this could also lead to a reduction in the use, availability turnover of spaces.
- The times of operation for the restrictions in The Green, The Grange and Market Square are shown as different (8am -6pm) to others in the town(currently 8.30am – 6.30pm). In order to reduce confusion to the public, it is recommended that one time structure be adopted throughout.

### **Response from the Westerham Town Partnership**

Thank you for your very swift, thorough and well considered assessment. We appreciate you have had very little time to consider the WTP proposals, and I am glad that in so doing, you have recognised the value of the time, depth of analysis and reasoning behind each suggestion we have made, and particular circumstances of Westerham, with its massive tourist influx, clustered retail economy, and restricted geography and space availability.

The main reason for the structure change is to drive traffic into the Darent car-park - this is in response to specific pressure factors in the centre. This pressure is evidenced by the proportion of fines revenue Westerham contributes. We comment on Richard and Gary's concerns as follows:

**1. Precedent.** There is nothing wrong in changing the precedent, provided harmonisation of process has been achieved. The WTP believes that each centre/district cannot be 'standardised' because each faces different economic and social pressures. Each district, if it wishes, should be able to put forward proposals which match the required income. If consultation is of excellent quality, then the process should achieve the right answer for each district, both for the community and for the revenue stream required. Each of Sevenoaks and Swanley should be free to suggest substantially higher centre charges if they wish to follow in Westerham's stead: this formula may or may not be right for them: they have existing pockets of free parking: this is not available in Westerham.

**2. Fairness and consistency** - the WTP agrees emphatically with the principle of a fair and consistent process. But to compare Swanley with Westerham, and their respective social and economic pressures, is like comparing chalk and cheese. Provided revenue stream required is fair, then tariffs are a matter of detail, to be adjusted according to local demand and the need to direct parking flow. In any event hugely different tariffs already exist across the district, achieving different outcomes.

**3. Surplus income from on-street parking:** it is not clear from Richard's comment who gets what income. Do we deduce that KCC benefits from on street parking and this can only be spent on tightly controlled things? Whereas SDC benefits from car-park revenue and it can be spent on whatever it likes? Charges should not be manipulated, against the interests of the community, in order to bias revenue stream towards car-park revenue, for the ends of SDC. Surplus cash (over and above SDC's anticipated revenue) should be

reinvested into relieving Westerham's problems, specifically additional space needs and the capital costs of extending the proposed overflow car-park.

**4. Free 15 minute parking.** Evidence from Shropshire DC (which introduced a much publicised 15 minute free at the instigation of its Leader in Spring 2013) is that this is not abused: for the reason that those wishing to stop for 15 minutes specifically do not wish to stay longer: their policy is called 'Pop and Shop'. Shropshire does not even issue 15 minute free tickets, as we are proposing. There is no evidence to support Gary's assertion that there will be a 'significant reduction in use, availability or turnover': on the contrary WTP (backed by Shropshire DC's findings) believes it will significantly increase these things. Going back for a free ticket every 15 minutes is highly unlikely to attract significant numbers of abusers, since it is a tedious exercise, and in any event the tickets would state 'no return within x time'. Enforcement would be the same as it is now.

**5. Cost considerations:** WTP recommends that some expense is undertaken on signage on parking meters, to inform about alternatives and provide some customer service. Since these need to change anyway, as do the meter functions themselves, presumably the added burden of WTP's proposals is insignificant: however these would indeed need to be evaluated.

**6. 3 hours central parking.** The reason for this proposed bias in Croydon Road and Fullers Hill is that a significant (statistically, not anecdotally) sample in our Retailers' survey asked for sufficient time to both shop and eat in the centre: it is widely felt that 2 hours max deters visitors, thus adversely affecting the economy. Croydon Road, according to the usage survey, is very rarely full, certainly in the weekdays, and it is felt that 3 hours max would not act as a block to turnover, but would support a greater 'spend' in the economy. The point is well taken for Fullers Hill, which incidentally has room to increase the spaces by up to 5. If the Darent (at the opposite end of town to Croydon Road) has 3 hours free we could argue that the 3 hour request has been catered for.

**7. Time restriction harmonisation.** In principle the WTP agrees to this, but wonder why they were introduced in this way? Later in the WTP Report, we propose a two tier Residents' permit, and there may be implications on traffic flow which originally lead to the different time restrictions. Does SDC know why these exist?

The WTP recommends an observation or trial period to see the effects of the WTP proposals. In this way working practices for Civil Enforcement Officers can be amended, without changing any Traffic Regulation Orders or taking this through formal council. If successful in stimulating the economy, there may well be a flagship policy to develop for SDC.

WTP trusts our proposals will be favourably considered at the forthcoming Cabinet meeting. We are happy to volunteer our management expertise to support implementation, during the consultation period, and to continue to monitor.

We look forward to hearing the results of the Cabinet meeting shortly, so that we may consider the way forward for the WTP. We would also like to consult on other parking issues explored in our Report, so we welcome another meeting shortly.