

**Robert Styles - Final draft**

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**From:** <Trudy.Dean@kent.gov.uk>  
**To:** <Robert.Styles@tmbc.gov.uk>, <julie.beilby@tmbc.gov.uk>  
**Date:** 19/03/16 00:38  
**Subject:** Final draft  
**CC:** <carole.wmpc@btconnect.com>, <hazelmarlor@sky.com>, <Richard.Selkirk@sel...

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Dear Julie,

In view of our inability to address the Cabinet we are providing this written description, which you requested on Wednesday, of the alternative options which the Parish Council are considering, for inclusion in the Supplementary Report for Cabinet on 22 March.

We do appreciate the financial position of the Borough and the need for car parking in West Malling to be funded. However, we are very concerned that this form of charging may detract from the viability of our town as In responding to our petitions, on line and in person, many customers have told us they will go elsewhere, or visit less often.

We are also aware of the evidence provided to Mrs Beilby by former Chief Executive John Sweetman and former Leader of the Council David Thornewell that the provision of free shoppers' parking in West Malling, Snodland, Martin Square and Aylesford was continued in 1974 as a part of the equalisation of rates, later Council Tax, paid at a much lower level by households in Tonbridge then, and ever since.

At the time of writing, Cabinet members will be interested to learn that 3,828 people have now signed our on-line petition, with over 900 shoppers having completed the paper version. A separate set of petitions has been completed by 92 of the 98 traders in the town. The parents of West Malling CoE Primary Schools have created their own petition on Streetlife which currently has 59 signatures. These petitions will be presented to the Cabinet on 22nd March by Richard Selkirk, WMPC Chair of Planning. The total of just under 5,000 people makes it by far the largest petition received by the Borough since the petition scheme began in 2010, dwarfing the previous figure maximum of 374. We hope that this demonstration of support will encourage Cabinet to agree to the moratorium we have requested so that we can jointly carry out the preparatory work described below:

We understand that the budgeted cost of the West Malling car parks is £80,000 per year. Our approach is to take a 'holistic' view recommended by Secretary of State Greg Clark two weeks ago in East Malling, since the car parking needs of our visitors, residents and businesses are interdependent.

The following initial suggestions came out of the first preliminary meeting with representatives of the Parish Council and the Chamber of Commerce.

We are unable to cost any of the proposals since there is much information we have not yet been given, including that listed at the foot of the proposals. We anticipate working with Borough Officers to work up these ideas for implementation.

#### Parking Proposals for Investigation.

a). A pilot period of improved enforcement throughout the town by traffic wardens, for which the Parish Council has offered £15,000, will immediately improve throughput throughout the town and test whether it can raise more money than it costs.

b) We suggest that, if permissible, TMBC adopt the higher level penalty charge of £70 which

would be consistent with the penalty charge being imposed in Manor Park, off St Leonards Street . We understand the Government is currently consulting on merging the two bands of penalty charge, setting both at the higher level of £70 in any event.

c) With the Borough's permission, we would like to survey, or pay for a survey, of the use of the short stay car park to estimate the expected revenue from the Borough's proposed charging regime and on variants to it. In particular, our representatives did suggest to the Steering Group that the free car park be limited to 2 hours for a pilot period in order to test throughput, as we understand that throughput was improved by the reduction from 4 hours to 3.

d) The charge of £ 150 for a permit in the Ryarsh Lane Business Car Park is not high enough to achieve a return of costs to TMBC, and does not deliver reserved spaces for traders. We would like to see

- 1) Permits limited to a single vehicle registration number. This will make enforcement possible and eliminate the reported use of fake permits.
- 2) Permits entitling the holder to a numbered reserved parking bay.
- 3) Permits sold at a higher cost reflecting the reserved space status.
- 4) Two part time workers could share the business permit for one space if appropriate, at a reduced cost.
- 5). The number of passes for any one company being limited.

These measures would displace some cars currently using the Business Park. So....

e). We suggest that consideration is given to the introduction of single-handed traffic wardens in view of the low crime rate in the area and the presence of traders own security officers in the town. Whilst the health and safety of the traffic wardens is paramount, we believe that the available back-up could enable a more efficient deployment without additional costs.

We suggest that

1. Parking capacity at an existing station car park should be increased and reserved to workers parking. We understand one owner wishes to add a deck to his car park, and believe this should be investigated.
2. KCC has recently created an overflow car park at Manor Park where an ANPR system is to be installed this year, the car park being managed and enforced by a private company. The overflow car park stands empty for the majority of the day and the majority of the year. It would contribute much more to the life of the town if it were to become business parking, again to single registration numbers. The Business Permit cost in this case would be lower, reflecting the grass surface and the distance into town, but still at markedly higher levels than the current Business Permit level. The business car park area would still be available to the public during the evenings and at weekend when such events as the Fun Run take place. We understand the Borough Council has already expressed an interest in managing the Country Park for the County Council so the treatment of parking in this way could form part of that contract. This, again, is a change which would take relatively short time to achieve.

f) Parking spaces in St Leonard's Street and Water Lane are currently used by workers free of charge. We suggest that these spaces should be redesignated as spaces reserved for Business use and again attracting income through the Business Permit. We believe there are approximately 35 spaces involved.

g) Circle Russett Homes currently own the square in front of Downs View West Street, and two areas of marked secure parking for 5 vehicles each at the junction of Sandown Road and Fartherwell Avenue. Both are within easy walking of the town and both stand empty all day. We are aware that

there are lease provisions affecting residents rights at Downs View, but observe that few, if any, residents there own a car. The spaces are provided for visitor parking and service vehicles which are observed to be very few. If income were to be shared with the residents, we believe a much more efficient use of the space barely 100 feet from the High Street could be achieved. The spaces in Sandown Road have been sitting empty since they were created some time ago and the intentions of Circle Russett with regard to their use should be pursued. Enquiries from traders and residents about renting the spaces have been turned away.

h). A number of smaller initiatives were thought worthy of examination:

- 1). Use the 2 taxi rank spaces for general use or they could perhaps be used as a dedicated bay for business deliveries. This would reduce the causes of illegal and dangerous parking.
- 2). Look at alternative ways of providing parking spaces to get best use of the very wide High Street (eg echelon parking, etc).
- 3). Recording registration numbers on residents parking permits would avoid abuse and maximise income.
- 4). Propose areas where residents car parking might be introduced. This would help reduce residents' concerns about displaced High Street parking taking over residential streets.
- 5). Re-allocating and re-issuing business permits, as some businesses have scores of permits. This should be based on the work of our researcher to establish which businesses should have adequate on site parking and therefore not be considered eligible for parking permits. This would allow more businesses on the waiting list to receive permits and ease parking problems elsewhere in the town.
- 6). Examine whether there is scope to increase the number of car parking spaces in the Ryarsh Lane car park whilst maintaining safety.

i) In addition, the Parish Council is interested in entering a bid to take over the responsibility of managing the Borough Council's car parking in the town as we believe that our local and daily involvement can provide a more effective management regime. However, we would need to see the Borough's Council's Business Plan to understand the full implications. Working through the above ideas jointly with Borough Council officers would provide an essential start.

j) The basic problem in West Malling is one of lack of parking given all the competing demands from our community services, shoppers and workers. The Parish Council is committed to working with the Borough Council to identify a suitable site/sites for new areas of parking through the Local Plan process. If the Borough Council does not wish to finance such a car park, we would expect it to be commercially provided and operated.

It is not possible to cost our various suggestions or their viability because we have incomplete information, including the following:

Information Awaited.

- 1) We have not had the opportunity of discussing our emerging ideas with Borough Council officers.
- 2). We are unclear what powers the Borough Council has to charge cars parked on land owned by Whitbread (the land behind 'The Farmhouse' and Tesco, which is the majority of the short stay car park) and the number of car parking spaces from which the Borough is able to obtain payment. After a lapse of nearly two weeks, we received the licences requested but these contain no reference to charges received or paid. We have not yet received the Planning consent which may be helpful in this regard.
- 3). We note from the Summary of responses that some traders have reserved spaces as a result of the lease that TMBC have for the car park. The leases we have seen do not mention this, and we do not know the extent to which Whitbread or Tesco have reserved spaces which may reduce the number of spaces for which TMBC can charge.

4) We believe that some householders in the vicinity of the short stay car park may have reserved spaces overnight reflecting their lack of onsite parking. Again, we do not know the numbers of spaces involved or details of the income this generates.

5). The Borough Council have been unable to provide any information about the amount of time that cars park in the short stay car park.

6). The FOI information we have received concerning the number of penalty charges invoked is inconsistent. It says that 734 penalty notices were issued in the last 12 months, 520 being paid in full or with the early discount, but that 314 appeals were received, of which 171 were refused. This means that 143 have been accepted out of the total of 734 - ie that 591 have not been accepted. This doesn't tally with the figure of 520.

7). The proportion of the number of penalty charges paid with the early discount has not been supplied to us, so we cannot calculate the revenue collected from penalty charges.

8) In order to cost our proposals we need to know the breakdown of the Borough Council's expenditure, including the physical upkeep of the surface, lighting, signage, the intended purchase of new ticket machines, enforcement of the traffic wardens, and costs of administering the penalty notice system. We were told the only Business Case the Borough Council has lies within the report to councillors, which does not give the figures we require.

Yours sincerely

Trudy Dean,  
Chairman West Malling Parish Council.

Sent from my iPad