

## **WINCHELSEA TOWN PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING, 2 FEBRUARY 2010**

PRESENT: R Comotto (Chairman), B Chishick, D Morris, A Pope, I Sambrook, M Terry, S Turner.

1     **Apologies for absence.** None.

2     **Minutes of last meeting.** The draft minutes of 23 November 2009 were published on the Winchelsea website shortly after the last meeting and were adopted without comment.

3     **Matters arising.** None.

4     **Finance.** There have been three transactions this year: £552 on 7 December 2009 on to Hamilton-Baillie Associates for a public presentation on Shared Spaces, £26.40 on 12 December 2009 for the hire of the New Hall for that presentation and £816.00 on 8 January 2010 for the copying of the Traffic Chapter. The outstanding balance is £1,493.37. The balance in the bank is £98.97.

5     **Meeting on the Traffic Chapter on 23 January 2010.** Only two sets of amendments have been proposed. Mr David Page submitted several in writing prior to the meeting on 23 January and Mr Gould made one comment at the meeting.

6     In response to Mr Page's comments, it was agreed that (1) reference will be made on page 43 to new businesses opening in the High Street, (2) the split views of the businesses on the closure of Strand Hill will be entered as points both for and against, (3) it will be mentioned that a resident has argued that the closure of Strand Hill would make him feel excluded, and (4) the argument that passing trade did not sustain previous businesses will be entered as a contention, rather than a fact.

7     In response to Mr Gould, there was disagreement over the number of crashes into the railings at the bottom of Strand Hill, so the reference will be to "occasions", rather than "several occasions".

8     The Chairman reported on the meeting of 23 January. He received the impression that very few people had read the report. One person had even asked why traffic statistics had not been incorporated, when they in fact had been set out in pages 10-28. Alan Pope was disappointed that the discussion had been so disorderly and had focused on Strand Hill. The Chairman agreed the meeting was unpleasant and felt that those opposed to the closure of Strand Hill had simply tried to impugn the integrity of the Committee in a display of "mud-slinging". He highlighted the attempt by Michael Melvin to question whether discussions with the highway authorities had been accurately reflected in the document and expressed amazement that anyone could believe that, if the Committee had been inclined to dishonesty, it would set out falsehoods in detail, in writing, where they could be easily exposed.

9     The Chairman also noted claims by Don Clarke and Stephen Rumsey that they had been told by highways officers that closing Strand Hill was impossible. Neither had been able to name their sources or articulate the reasons given to them. The Chairman read a response from the Highways Authority which confirmed again that closure was possible. There was no recollection of a meeting with Mr Clarke. Mr Clarke had also accused the

Chairman of a breach of the Code of Conduct for parish councilors, in the mistaken belief that it applied to non-council business, and on the grounds that the proposal to close Strand Hill was an attempt by the Chairman to increase the value of his house.

10 The Chairman expressed his disappointment with a statement by Steven Turner at the meeting that the Steering Committee had not met since July 2009 and had not been allowed to discuss the document at the meeting in November 2009. Mr Turner argued that the November 2009 meeting had not been a proper meeting, as it had not had an agenda or been minuted; that he had not had a chance to view the document before the meeting; and that there had not been an opportunity to debate the contents. The Chairman reminded Mr Turner that they had been sent an agenda, which had also been published, and that the Committee had just approved the minutes of the meeting. He noted that Mr Turner had received the draft document later than other members of the Committee only because Mr Turner had delayed responding to a letter asking for his new e-mail address, and that Mr Turner had not sought to raise any points in the meeting. The other members of the Committee concurred with the Chairman that the November meeting had been properly convened and conducted, and that there had been ample opportunity for discussion.

11 Mr Turner criticized the document as not reflecting the views of the community. He did not accept that the rate of response to the original questionnaire (over half of households) was a valid representation of community opinion, and felt that the document reflected the private "agenda" of the Chairman. Mr Turner could not say what would be an appropriate threshold for a vote. The Chairman said that his personal views on Strand Hill were not a secret and that every resident was entitled to his own view, but that the issue would be decided by a majority vote, not by himself or any other individual.

12 The Chairman felt that Mr Turner's comments at the meeting on 23 January had been a malicious misrepresentation and had sought to question the integrity of the Committee. He believed that this was unacceptable and warned, if it occurred again, he would seek Mr Turner's removal from the Committee. This censure was supported by the Committee.

13 The Chairman reviewed ongoing discussions with the Highways Agency on new gateway signs to the village, a footpath down Ferry Hill and a cyclepath to Rye, the maintenance of Ferry Hill planting, VAS's on Rectory Lane and Tanyard Lane, the removal of Sustrans signs on Tanyard Lane, and a pedestrian crossing at the New Hall. There was no prospect of brown amenity panels at the gateways (these required some 40,000 visitors a year), improvements to lay-bys on the A259, or new railings opposite Strand Hill.

14 **Programme of future work.** The Chairman reported on the consultations on protecting grass verges (agreement in Back Lane west, St Thomas's Street and Station Road, near-agreement in North Street east, but no consensus in Friars Road and Monks Walk). Mill Road and School Hill remained to be consulted, but Rookery Lane would be deferred until the impact of the signs due to be placed by parish council could be assessed. The other major tasks were to write up the Transport Chapter and complete the drafting of a questionnaire on miscellaneous issues.

15 **Any other business.** None.

*Approved 12 February 2010*