

WINCHELSEA LITTLE SHOP ASSOCIATION LTD

Minutes of an EGM held at Winchelsea New Hall on 12th February 2011

This EGM was called in response to a letter from four shareholders calling for the dissolution of the Association.

The Chairman opened the meeting by explaining that the EGM would be voting on whether or not to conduct a full postal ballot of all shareholders on the issue of dissolution. The Chairman explained that this decision would be taken by a simple majority of those present at the EGM, but that any postal ballot about dissolution would be governed by Rule 56 of the WLSA's Constitution, which states that dissolution may occur only if at least 75% of shareholders agree in writing.

The Chairman said that WLSA currently had 335 shareholders, so the 75% threshold would mean at least 251 shareholders would have to vote in favour. Conversely, if more than 25% or 84 shareholders voted against or abstained, then dissolution could not proceed.

The Chairman told the meeting that the Committee had received a petition, signed by 112 shareholders, expressing their opposition to the proposed dissolution, and that the Secretary had been through the petition to verify that all the names were valid shareholders. She noted that the number of signatures on the petition was well in excess of the level needed to defeat any resolution for dissolution. Simon Bevan asked, on a "point of order", if the petition was present and whether shareholders could see it. The Chairman replied that the petition was indeed open for inspection at the meeting.

The Chairman then called on Anne Rumsey to open the debate by speaking in favour of the proposal.

Mrs Rumsey argued the Association should be wound up and shareholders' money should be dispersed, as the original objective of saving the Little Shop had been achieved. The funds were no longer needed and would be better spent elsewhere.

David Morris spoke against the proposal and argued for the need to keep the funds as insurance against future uncertainties.

Peta Cameron-Clark suggested that half the money be kept and the other half given to the New Hall, of which she was a Trustee, to help with much needed improvements to the insulation and heating.

Richard Comotto argued that the New Hall Committee could access many other sources of grant money for such work, including two National Lottery Funds, and also Icklesham Parish Council, which had given a grant of £40,000 to another village hall in the parish.

Corinne Merricks noted that the £40,000 grant involved matched funding.

Simon Bevan argued that the existence of the funds was causing division in the town and it would be better to get rid of the money.

Stephen Rumsey argued that he was asked to buy the shop because it was bankrupt, worthless and on the verge of closing. He stated that the shareholders' funds were "his money", as the funds raised at the outset to rescue the shop had been spent.

The Chairman replied that the funds raised at the outset had been used to set up the shop and that the shop had been neither bankrupt nor worthless when it was bought by Mr Rumsey. Indeed, it had been valued by an independent professional valuation agent, who specialised in village shops and conveniences stores, at £38,500, which was the price that Mr Rumsey paid.

Tony Jasper stated that, as owner of the shop premises, he would never have allowed the shop to close and he made it clear that he did not approach Mr and Mrs Rumsey, rather it was the other way round.

Christopher Strangeways confirmed the view that the shop was not worthless, pointing out that other village shops, in Iden and Rye Harbour, had recently sold for over £55,000.

Mike de Smith suggested that the New Hall borrow from the WLSA and use it as seed money to attract grant funding.

Melvin Pett argued for keeping half and spending half.

Frank Noah argued for dissolution on the basis that, because of Mr& Mrs Rumsey's support, there were now no uncertainties regarding the future of any of the shops in Winchelsea.

Following the debate, the resolution to conduct a postal ballot was put to a paper vote. The result was 24 in favour and 49 against. Thus, the motion for a postal ballot on dissolution was defeated.

The meeting end at 11.45.