

Firebrand  
High Street  
Winchelsea  
East Sussex TN36 4EA

30 April 2006

The Editor  
Rye and Battle Observer  
Woods House  
Telford Road  
St Leonards-on-Sea TN38 9LZ

Sir,

### **Proposal for a separate Parish of Winchelsea**

Your article last week is quite correct to say that there are problems in Icklesham Parish Council. However, the call for a separate Parish of Winchelsea arises because of the size and diversity of Icklesham Parish, not because of the personalities currently on the Parish Council.

The nature of the problem can be seen from the fact that calls for a separate Parish of Winchelsea have been made ever since the Corporation of Winchelsea lost its civil powers in 1886. At that time, Winchelsea expected to have its own parish but was instead combined with the village of Icklesham despite vigorous protests.

The issue now is that the villages of Icklesham, Winchelsea Beach and Rye Harbour have grown into sizeable communities, each with different problems and priorities. As a result, Icklesham Parish has become too large and too diverse to provide effective local government for its individual wards. The problem will only get worse.

The Local Government Commission says that a parish should be "a small, distinctive and recognisable community of interest with its own sense of identity." That definition fits each individual ward of Icklesham Parish but not the Parish as a whole. Residents identify with their ward, not with the Parish.

The proposal is not just about Winchelsea. It is that each ward of Icklesham Parish should democratically decide its own future. Each ward is large enough to become a parish and each could stand on its own feet. An independent Winchelsea, for example, would rank 23 out of 33 in Rother (between Etchingam and Iden) and separation would be financially neutral.

Moreover, independence will not sever the day-to-day links between the four wards. After all, none of the communities in Icklesham Parish is isolated from Rye, Pett, Guestling or Udimore because they fall into different parishes. Independence will however help to revive local democracy and provide more effective local government.

Yours faithfully

Richard Comotto  
Parish Councillor for Winchelsea