



A PARISH COUNCIL FOR WINCHELSEA

A response to the 'Silent Majority'

Dear Resident

You will have received two letters from a group of residents calling themselves the 'Silent Majority of Winchelsea'. This group has declined to identify themselves or come forward to present their case in public debate despite the offer of a neutral chairman.

The 'Silent Majority's' excuse for anonymity is the claim that those who support a separate Parish of Winchelsea have behaved badly at all public meetings. This is simply not true. The 'Silent Majority' may wish to recall that, at the public meeting in Winchelsea in November 2003 which first discussed the proposal for a separate parish, opposing views were expressed but the meeting was conducted politely and without acrimony. Nor was there any problem when the issue was discussed again at the Town Meeting in May 2006. The only meeting which saw bad behaviour was the one convened by Icklesham Parish Council on 5th June and it was not the residents of Winchelsea who behaved badly there!

The first letter from the 'Silent Majority' claimed that the residents of Winchelsea were not capable of running their own affairs. The new letter claims that the cost of creating a separate parish would be too expensive (it is accepted that a separate parish would be perfectly financially viable). The letter repeats the fiction propagated in letters to the local paper that the review by the District Council will cost £4,000. However, in a document submitted to the District Council's Licensing & General Purposes Committee on 23 March 2006, the Director of Resources stated that the review would cost in the order of £1,000 (see p4, para.19). This is not insignificant, but is a modest investment for democracy. That the 'Silent Majority' continues to quote the wrong figure of £4,000 does not reflect well on their arithmetic or their integrity.

The 'Silent Majority' also claim that the "cost of transferring assets and associated legal costs...has been conservatively estimated at £25-30,000". Who has made this estimate? The Clerk to Icklesham Parish Council, who is its Responsible Financial Officer, was unable to produce any estimate of this cost in a report submitted to the Council on 12th June. We have checked with a solicitor who acts for a local parish council. He quoted the cost of transferring land at between £100 and £140 + VAT. Icklesham Parish Council owns just two pieces of land in Winchelsea (Pear Tree Marsh allotments and the Jubilee playground). The cost of transferring other assets like lampposts and bus shelters, and the lease on the Cricket Field allotment would be minimal. The so-called conservative estimate of £25-30,000 is clearly another piece of scaremongering nonsense.

Given that the 'Silent Majority' are not willing to come forward and offer their side of the argument in open debate, we have asked the Winchelsea website (www.winchelsea.net) to devote a page to all documents on the issue published by Rother District Council, Icklesham Parish Council, the 'Silent Majority', the Action Group and the Rye Observer. Hardcopies will be kept in the Community Office for those without access to the Internet. These resources will allow you to weigh up some of the arguments for and against, and should be available next week.

The Parish of Winchelsea Action Group