

# ICKLESHAM PARISH COUNCIL

## WORKING GROUP TO CONSIDER THE ISSUES ARISING FROM THE APPLICATION FROM SOME RESIDENTS OF WINCHELSEA TO BECOME A SEPARATE PARISH

**Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 11 April, 2006 in the Court Hall, Winchelsea**

**Present:**

Cllr Mrs C Merricks (Chairman Icklesham Parish Council) Mr J Austen ( Icklesham)  
Cllr Mrs S Chetwood & Mr M Saville (Winchelsea Beach)  
Cllr S Turner, Mr M Melvin, Mr R Neaves, & Mr P Turner (Winchelsea)  
Cllr M Alsford & Cllr C Bronsdon (Rye Harbour)

There were no apologies for absence.

Cllr Mrs Merricks welcomed all to the first meeting of the Icklesham Parish Council Working Group and thanked everyone for attending.

It was proposed by P Turner, seconded by M Melvin and supported by all present that Mrs Merricks be the chairman of the working group. It was agreed that a deputy chairman would only be appointed at a meeting if the chairman was not present.

The Chairman gave a brief summary of the background and the current position of the Winchelsea Action Group's proposal for Winchelsea to becoming a separate parish - viz

Towards the end of 2004 a letter was issued by the Action Group and circulated to residents of Winchelsea.

November 2004 (?) A public meeting was held in Winchelsea; this meeting supported a proposal that RDC be requested to hold a referendum in Winchelsea to:

- democratically determine the wishes of all residents (of Winchelsea) and
- called upon residents to write to the Chief Executive of Rother requesting a referendum
- 68 households wrote, 44 signified support for a Winchelsea Parish,\*\*\*  
20 requested a Referendum and 4 were against the proposal.

The power to parish Winchelsea vests in the District Council and in turn the Secretary of State.

Trevor Elliott (RDC) considers it appropriate for the District Council to conduct a review of the parish arrangements.

***\*\*\*The Working group asked that it be noted that some residents who had wished to attend were, for reasons unknown, barred from the meeting. Therefore these figures cannot be viewed as being representative of the true wishes and feelings of the whole of Winchelsea.***

The procedure is prescribed by statute.

The procedure entails the DC -

- a) to give notice to allow those affected to express their views ie. The residents of Winchelsea, the wider parish and the surrounding parish areas.
- b) to take account of representation received
- c) to formulate draft recommendations to the Secretary of State, again notifying all those who may be interested
- d) following a second consultation exercise, deciding whether or not to make a recommendation to the Secretary of State for the creation of a new Parish and to the Electoral Commission for electoral arrangements to apply to the new and residual parish.

There is a need to reflect the identities and interests of local communities and to secure effective and convenient local government.

All necessary steps have to be taken to ensure *all interested persons throughout the parish and elsewhere* are informed of the review and have full opportunity to make representations and thereby enable the DC to have the fullest understanding of local views.

**On 23<sup>rd</sup> March, 2006, the Licensing and General Purposes Committee of Rother District Council resolved that a Parish Review be conducted by way of a household survey.**

The chairman explained that at the Parish Council meeting held on 10 April, councillors agreed that a working group be formed to work up the Parish Council's response to the application from some residents of Winchelsea to Winchelsea becoming a separate parish. The Chairman stressed how important it was for the residents of the whole parish to be fully informed of this proposal and suggested that the Working Group draw up a letter setting out the implications of Winchelsea becoming a separate parish and urging them to come to the Annual Parish Meeting on 2 May. Trevor Elliott, RDC and Trevor Leggo, SALC had agreed to come to this meeting to inform residents of the process and the implications of Winchelsea becoming a separate parish. The Annual Parish Meeting would be an opportunity for residents of the whole parish to ask TE and TL questions about the proposal. This letter to be circulated to all Winchelsea residents and published on Parish Notice Boards and in the local press. Before being circulated and publicised, the contents of the letter are to be approved by Icklesham Parish Council at an Extraordinary Meeting to be held on 24 April.

The chairman clarified that the working group, whilst having an impartial and unbiased approach, should respond to the Winchelsea Action Group's Review of Parish Boundaries which had been put forward in their proposal. The WG should

pickout obvious omissions and perceived inaccuracies, and present the true facts to the residents of the parish.

The meeting then moved to Item 2 on the Agenda and briefly discussed a number of perceived inaccuracies in the Review of the Parish Boundaries. It was agreed that a more detailed response would be put forward at a later date.

**Item 2 of the agenda:- To respond to the Winchelsea Action Group's "Review of the Parish Boundaries".**

**1) The historical rationale for Icklesham Parish no longer holds true:**

The argument put forward is not correct. Historically New Winchelsea was built on the hill of Iham which was then Icklesham. As the sea receded Winchelsea Beach and Rye Harbour were understandably joined as they developed. History shows that the four wards have grown distinctly but compatibly with each other. They are certainly not unwieldy and there is no evidence to show otherwise.

**2) The current parish does not meet the criterion set out by Local Government Commission that "a Parish should reflect a small, distinctive and recognisable community of interest with its own sense of identity":** A short discussion followed and the general thoughts were that all four wards in the parish are different in their own way but this diversity helps to balance and to develop the parish as a whole.

**3) Winchelsea precisely matches the Local Government Commission criterion that "a Parish should reflect a small distinctive and recognisable community of interest with its own sense of identity":** The WG accepts that Winchelsea has an Historic heritage and many important features, but the statement that nobody would say they live in Icklesham or tried to disassociate themselves with the other ward members is untrue and the statement is disrespectful to all the residents of the Parish.

**4) The size of the Parish and diversity of its four wards means that Icklesham Parish Council finds it difficult to focus on issues of special importance to individual wards:** This statement is not true. All issues brought before Icklesham Parish Council are addressed appropriately and recorded in the minutes.

**5) Winchelsea has unique historic and archaeological importance which Icklesham Parish Council is not helping to maintain, enhance or promote:** Icklesham Parish Council has consistently supported the Corporation who has the responsibility for the maintenance for the Ancient Monuments. Icklesham Parish Council is proud to have the Ancient Town of Winchelsea within its parish.

The wards of Icklesham, Winchelsea Beach, Rye Harbour and Winchelsea have all had problems with crime, youths or other local issues and where appropriate the Parish Council has endeavoured to address the problems

**6) The difficulty which Icklesham Parish Council has on issues of special importance to individual wards is evident in the frequent formation of associations or action groups in the wards to fill the leadership gap left by the Council:** As Parish Councils have to work within the constraints of limited local powers IPC accepts the fact that it is local residents who invariably have to form action groups to fight for or against local issues, but when appropriate Icklesham Parish Council has supported these local campaigns. Over the last 40 years the Parish Council has dealt with the continuing blight of the roads. It was the Parish Council in the 1990's that spearheaded the A259 road conference and the Icklesham and Winchelsea Residents' Associations were formed to back up the Parish Council.

**7) The likely growth in the size of wards means that Winchelsea will diminish in relative importance within Icklesham Parish and its representation will become nugatory:** This is determined by population and can be reviewed by the District at any time.

**8) The size and diversity of Icklesham Parish undermines local democracy by preventing identification with the parish Council and making Parish Council meetings inconvenient:** Icklesham Parish Council has always endeavoured to act in the best interests of the whole of the community and ward councillors have accepted their role as being representative of the whole of the parish. Traditionally Icklesham Parish Council meetings have had a low public attendance; the distance to travel is not an issue. In addressing the statement about Parish Clerks, Icklesham Parish Council has appointed the applicant whom they have considered the most suitable candidate for the post.

**9) Winchelsea would be a vibrant and ambitious Parish:** Any new council would be a vibrant and ambitious Council, as indeed Icklesham Parish Council is. In future could the community of Winchelsea sustain the commitment and support the requirements of its own Parish Council.

**10) A Separate Parish Council for Winchelsea is viable:** The WG felt that any new Council would be viable, but the figures demonstrated in the proposal are misleading and would require more time to appraise the distribution of funds as presented. With the existing PC you have a situation of spreading the costs more over the 4 wards, which allows you more options. The breakdown in point 3 should be related to property data not population data.

The WG felt that Rother District Council should provide the true implication of costs for a separate Winchelsea Council.

**11) Would there be enough candidates for Winchelsea Parish Council:** The WG felt that this may be the case at present but would this be the case in the future?

**12) Wouldn't a separate Parish Council undermine the corporation of Winchelsea:** The role of the PC does not and should not seek to undermine the role and responsibilities of the unique Mayor and Corporation of Winchelsea.

**13) Wouldn't a Winchelsea Parish Council confuse residents about the structure of local government:** Not if residents are informed.

**14) Shouldn't the other wards have a say in the issue:** The procedure is prescribed by statute. All necessary steps have to be taken to ensure *all interested persons throughout the parish and elsewhere* are informed of the review and have full opportunity to make representations and thereby enable the District Council to have the fullest understanding of local views.

**15) Elections would be too expensive:** The costs of elections are borne by parish councils.

**Item 4 Referendum:** The WG agreed that before a referendum took place a meeting should be held in each ward to ensure that residents were informed of all the relevant information.

**Remaining Agenda Items:** It was agreed that the other items on the agenda would be dealt with at a later date, especially item 3 the residual implications of a parish dividing.

**Date of next meeting:**

The next meeting will be held at the Court Hall, Winchelsea at 7.00 pm on Wednesday, 19 April, 2006.