

Local representation

I STRONGLY endorse Mike Terry's comments last week (Clouding the issues, Mailbag, June 24). It is important we discuss the very real issues of representation and democracy and are not distracted by abuse and anonymous scare-mongering.

What particularly concerns and frustrates me, and many other Winchelsea residents with whom I have discussed the matter, is the loss of effective local representation resulting from the present structure of the large parish of Icklesham.

Each ward has only a minority vote on the current council (four for Icklesham, two for Rye Harbour, three for Winchelsea and four for Winchelsea Beach).

Therefore, a proposal affecting only one ward, even if it is supported by all the councillors from that ward, can be blocked by councillors from the other wards.

And, contrary to the basic democratic principle that representatives can be held to account at the next election, the electors in the frustrated ward cannot vote out the obstructive councillors from other wards.

A recent example of this problem was the wish of many Winchelsea residents to join the Sussex Community Speed Watch scheme. All the council had to do was write a letter of support.

The request was backed by all three Councillors representing Winchelsea but was blocked by councillors from the other wards (despite the fact it would have had no impact on those other wards).

This was not an edifying example of democracy in action and is just one illustration of the reasons for the current level of frustration in Winchelsea.

DAVID MORRIS
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Winchelsea

Who's after the crown?

IN HIS letter of last week, Mr Mears reveals nothing new in his disclosure that Mrs Rachlin and I share the same address. Indeed, this has been common knowledge since 1977 when our dwelling was acquired.

Over the past 29 years we have developed very warm friendly relationships with many residents in Winchelsea, Winchelsea Beach and Icklesham - many of whom have been present at the parish council meetings.

Jointly and severally, their descriptions of the experience are identical.

It is not necessary for members of a Jury to be present at a scene. The case is decided on the statements from eye witnesses.

We care about our friends and are naturally upset to see their deep distress after attending the meetings.

What is even more distressing to us all, is the derogatory manner in which three of the wards in the Parish of Icklesham are denigrated by those who now claim to be the 'Parish of Winchelsea' (which does not exist) 'Action Group'.

In support of their initial application to Rother District Council, they have only negative statements to make about Icklesham, Winchelsea Beach and Rye Harbour, whereas they describe Winchelsea as a wealthy, thriving area active with flourishing groups and organisations.

To them, the only ward of worth is Winchelsea - the obvious 'Jewel in the Crown'. The big question is, who is after the Crown?

IAIN KERR
Windmill Lane
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Shop transformation

THE first flyer from the 'silent majority of Winchelsea' asking for a 'no' vote damned Richard Comoto with faint praise and a portent of disaster is Winchelsea was a separate parish.

The second has the same warning of dire consequence and generates emotion but no enlightenment, particularly as to how well we are served by being a ward of Icklesham Parish and established that none of them has served on a council or attended the meetings.

The £4,000 quoted, was the cost stated by Rother District Council to hold democratic referendum, the cost of the 11+ multiple choice and dissertation survey form issued by Rother was not disclosed.

The transfer of assets cost of £25,000 to £30,000 must be based on guesswork, as when I was a councillor the ward did not have the faintest idea of what it owned, and no asset registered has been published.

There are known costs which will have to be met by rate payers, a VAT liability of £2,500 caused by malpractice and a £40,000 loan to refurbish Icklesham Memorial Hall.

I appreciate that many who have washed up here in this 'port of stranded pride' would prefer the status quo but, as far as I am aware, that has not provided any material benefit for the town.

The Little Shop was offered to the Corporation as a going concern to manage as a community project and was refused.

I bought the shop to prevent its closure and, for the four years that I ran it, with able assistants, I doubt that I enjoyed the patronage of the Corporation or the 'silent majority', with some exceptions.

When the shop was leased to the Little Shop Association, managed by a committee, chaired by Richard Comoto, financed by grants, shares, debenture, stock loans and promoted by publicity this resulted in a viable shop, a community office and a post office.

If such a transformation, of what had been an ailing business, can be achieved by good organisation and management, then a separate parish must be the preferred choice for any person who wants what's best for Winchelsea, and I am positive there will be no lack of individuals wanting to take part and do something for the town.

A J JASPER
Winchelsea

Personal agendas

NOTICES were posted recently in Winchelsea advertising a meeting at which the present parish council would explain the pros and cons of Winchelsea separating from Rye Harbour, Winchelsea Beach and Icklesham.

Control of the meeting was lost as the first question and almost all succeeding ones raised points of order in respect of the mechanism for having a referendum, etc. to come together to debate and decide issues without fear or favour when the atmosphere of this little town is soured by so many personal agendas.

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