

24/11/06

Council defers parish decision

WINCHELSEA will have to wait to learn if it has been successful in a bid to form its own parish council.

Rother district councillors voted to defer a decision when they met at Bexhill Town Hall on Thursday evening.

They are waiting to see the content of a forthcoming government White Paper on parish councils.

Cllr Keith Standing said: "It would be premature of us to make a decision tonight.

"We are not in a fixed situation here and it would be best to see what this White Paper has to say.

"It will allow us to make a decision in an informed way with all the facts before us."

Winchelsea residents, attending the meeting, were pleased with the decision.

Winchelsea councillor Richard Comotto said: "It means the issue is still alive. Some councillors were pressing for it to be thrown out."

Criticism was levelled at Icklesham Parish Council. Cllr Robin Patten said: "There seems to be genuine upset at the quality of the decisions

by Andy Hemsley

Icklesham council is making."

He went on: "I agree deferment is the only sensible available option open to us at this time. What concerns me is how this upset and disturbance started after so many years without problems.

"It is hard to believe the interests of Winchelsea cannot be looked after by town representatives on the parish council. The fact Icklesham Parish Council turned down a request for a speed reduction sign in Winchelsea, even though Winchelsea wanted, it is unacceptable and quite extraordinary."

Cllr Keith Bridger said: "This was a democratic process and everyone had the opportunity to convey remarks. It is always sad when you get a split in a community."

Rother secretary Trevor Elliott is urging councillors to consider the views of the entire parish and not just the wishes of Winchelsea residents.

He said: "The decision rests on the quality of arguments as well as data collected from the questionnaire. The council has to look at this in a

holistic way. What is to be done with the residual parish still has to be addressed in our report to Government.

"You have to look at the wider picture, you cannot look at Winchelsea in isolation."

The council will meet again to make a decision early in the New Year.

Icklesham Parish Council vice-chairman Charles Bronsdon said: "Last Thursday the district council deferred the review of the parishing arrangements until after the implementation of a White Paper on Local Government. This was published in October 2006 and to date there is no legislative timetable.

"The chairman and I are personally delighted Icklesham Parish Council can now move forward and continue to serve the four wards of Icklesham, Winchelsea, Winchelsea Beach and Rye Harbour in the knowledge that the overwhelming majority of the residents of the whole parish have confidence in Icklesham Parish Council and are in favour of maintaining the status quo as demonstrated by results of the household survey (79%) and parish poll/referendum (82.87%)."