

Review of Parish Arrangements in Icklesham Parish

Key Questions



1. Why is Rother District Council undertaking a review?

The proposal for a new Parish Council of Winchelsea to be created out of the existing Icklesham Parish Council has come from a number of residents of Winchelsea who believe that the Icklesham Parish Council has become too large and too diverse for it to be able to adequately represent the particular interests of any of the four existing Parish Wards (Icklesham, Rye Harbour, Winchelsea & Winchelsea Beach) and that Winchelsea in particular is losing out. Rother District Council believes it to be appropriate for a review to be conducted in order to test support or otherwise throughout the parish for the proposal.

2. How is Icklesham Parish Council presently structured?

In common with four other Parish & Town Councils in Rother District (Ashburnham & Penhurst, Battle, Ticehurst & Westfield) Icklesham Parish Council is divided into Parish Wards, each of which elects a prescribed number of Councillors to the Council. The attached plan (Appendix A) shows the extent of Icklesham Parish Council, its division into four separate Parish Wards, and adjoining Parish/Town Councils. Set out below are electorate and Councillor details for each of the four Parish Wards:

	Electorate	Councillors
Icklesham Ward	763	4
Rye Harbour Ward	288	2
Winchelsea Ward	401	3
Winchelsea Beach Ward	658	4
	2,110	13

3. How does Icklesham Parish compare with other Parish & Town Councils in Rother District?

The attached schedule (Appendix B) lists each of the 31 Parish & Town Councils in Rother District, their population, area, electorate, number of Councillors and the Councillor/Elector ratio. For the five Parish & Town Councils which are divided into Wards (Ashburnham & Penhurst, Battle, Icklesham, Ticehurst, Westfield), ward data is also given.

4. How will the review be conducted?

Rother District Council is required by statute to secure that all those who may be interested in the review are informed of the decision to conduct it, of its subject matter and of the period within which representations about the review may be made. The procedure to be followed by Rother in undertaking the parish review is also prescribed by statute as follows:

Stage 1 Publication of review and invitation of representations

Stage 2 RDC's consideration of representations

- Stage 3 Unless RDC decides not to make any recommendations to the Secretary of State and to the Electoral Commission, RDC's publication of draft recommendations for change and consultation on them
- Stage 4 RDC's consideration of representations and submission to the Secretary of State and to the Electoral Commission of any recommendations for change

Whilst the review stages as above are prescribed by statute, the actual process of notification is left to Rother's discretion to decide what is sufficient to achieve the duty. Those to be consulted directly are all households in Icklesham Parish, the local Member of Parliament, East Sussex County Council, Councillors for East Sussex Electoral Divisions and Rother District Electoral Wards in the area, Icklesham Parish Council and surrounding Parish/Town Councils, and organisations and bodies in Icklesham Parish Council. Additionally, publicity to the review is to be given by notice in the Rye Observer and on notice boards in the Parish, and on Rother's website, www.rother.gov.uk.

5. To what must Rother have regard in considering the representations received and in deciding whether to publish draft recommendations for change?

In making its assessment of the need for new or changed parish arrangements, Rother must observe statutory requirements to have regard to the need to reflect the identities and interests of local communities and to secure effective and convenient local government. It must also have regard to advice which has been given by the Secretary of State on the establishment of new Parishes & Parish Councils, and on arrangements for making changes to established Parishes & Parish Councils (Environment Circular 11/97 issued by the former Department of the Environment, Transport & the Regions).

6. What will happen to the other three Wards of Icklesham Parish, if Rother does decide to recommend the Secretary of State to create a separate Parish Council for Winchelsea?

Before making any recommendations to the Secretary of State for the creation of a new Parish Council for Winchelsea, Rother will also need to be satisfied as to the arrangements to be recommended to the Secretary of State for the parishing of the residual Wards of Icklesham, Rye Harbour & Winchelsea Beach. In making its assessment of these, Rother must again have regard to whether the recommended residual arrangements could reflect a small, distinctive and recognisable community of interest with its own sense of identity and also whether effective and convenient local government could be secured. The residual parish arrangements could be:

- the remaining three Wards coming together as a single Parish; or
- one or more of the remaining Wards becoming Parishes in their own right with their own Parish Council; or
- one or more of the remaining Wards combining with adjoining Parish areas.

Whether Rother could feel sufficiently satisfied in order to make recommendations to the Secretary of State, both for the creation of a new Parish Council of Winchelsea and for the parish arrangements for the residual Wards of the existing Icklesham Parish Council, is likely very much to depend upon the quality of arguments put forward as well as the strength of support evidenced generally by the representations it receives, and specifically by the responses to the household survey. The survey is designed to test support for the various possibilities within each individual Ward and overall. On the basis of the figures contained in the Schedule (Appendix B), it would be theoretically possible for all or any of the four existing Parish Wards to be constituted as Parish Councils in their own right, since

the electorate of the smallest of the four (Rye Harbour) is in excess of seven of the 31 Parish & Town Councils in Rother District. This however would be dependent on sufficient support being evidenced. Any other possible residual arrangements would likewise be dependent on sufficient support being evidenced.

7. What do Parish Councils do?

Parish Councils are one of the elected tiers of local government. Other tiers, known as principal authorities have a legal duty to deliver services such as education, social services and highways (County Councils), and environmental health, housing, planning, recreation and town & country planning (District Councils). Parish Councils have the legal power to take action, but they have fewer duties and greater freedom to choose what action to take. They can play a vital part in representing the interests of the communities they serve, they can influence other decision makers and they can deliver services to meet local needs, all roles which the Government is encouraging. Parliament gives Parish Councils the power to raise money through taxation (the precept). This is the Parish Council's share of the Council Tax, a demand for which the Parish Council gives to the billing authority (the District Council) which collects the tax for the Parish Council. Attached at Appendix C is some more detailed information about the powers and functions of Parish Councils.

8. How do I find out more?

Because the Chief Executive of Rother District Council and his staff are organising the review of parish arrangements in Icklesham Parish, they must be seen to be impartial and neither he nor they will be able to express a view on what is best for the Parish. Useful information including a full summary of Parish Council powers can however be obtained from the National Association of Local Councils at www.nalc.gov.uk and The Good Councillor's Guide published by The Countryside Agency (an electronic copy of which is available from the NALC website).

9. Does Rother District Council have any preconceived views as to the outcome of the review?

Absolutely not. In deciding to conduct a review, Rother has not formed any judgment as to its likely outcome. At the conclusion of Stage 1 (the submission of representations), Rother will consider all submissions received and by reference to the statutory considerations to which it must have regard (see Question 5 above), Rother will then decide whether or not it is minded to make recommendations to the Secretary of State for Communities & Local Government for changed parish arrangements. If Rother is so minded, then it will publish its draft recommendations for change and consult on them, following consideration of which it will decide whether or not to make final recommendations for change to the Secretary of State.

Rother District Council
Town Hall
Bexhill on Sea
East Sussex
TN39 3JX

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Wards and Parishes

