

Winchelsea Town Plan – Community Working Group Meeting 1

DRAFT NOTES of Meeting of the Community Working Group

Venue: Lower Court Hall, Winchelsea on Thursday 19th August 2004 from 7.00 till 9.00pm

Present: Ben Chiswick, Cindy Cogswell, Richard Comotto, Robert Hargreaves, Robert Holland, Ginette Stevens, Judith Pevsner and Melvyn Pett.

Apologies Frank Noah

Objective: A preliminary review of “Community” issues relevant to Winchelsea as an input to the Town Plan steering group. The object is not to seek solutions but to gather initial inputs from a representative cross-section of Town

Summary of Discussion and Action Points

1. Societies & Events topics	Points of discussion
<p>a. Winchelsea has a wide range of societies. How to gain a better appreciation of their needs and issues in at their role in the “community” context and the <u>district around Winchelsea?</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There needs to be a greater promulgation of who, what, where and when for the societies in the town. This could be initiated by a consultation with them. • Better accessibility to the information is needed. <p>Possible Action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather information on societies by targeted personal contact (preferred), by questionnaire or and by a meeting. Standard questions – see appendix 1. • The resulting list of societies and key points of contact (name & phone) could be displayed on a Town notice board or Community Office.
<p>b. Are people aware of community events?– c. Do they feel fully involved? Are the <u>societies actively engaged in the Town?</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thought that the wide range of societies was not well known to all. • Also, it was not clear how the societies cater for all age ranges (For example, was there young players section of the cricket club, were the Bowls club keen on recruiting younger members etc?). • <u>Referred to the Youth & Recreation WG.</u>

Winchelsea Town Plan – Community Working Group Meeting 1

<p>d. Should there be a Town newsletter to communicate the events?</p> <p>e. Is the internet used as a communications tool?</p> <p>f. Are more notice boards needed?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are several communication media for the Town. For example the Parish Magazine, Cindy’s weekly column in the Observer and the Winchelsea Internet sites. Perhaps accessibility to these could be better publicised. • Although it was felt that a periodic Newsletter could be of value the question of “ownership” could be a problem. It would need dedicated time & effort to ensure a regular and balanced publication. A Newsletter is not considered a priority.
<p>g. Other</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was acknowledge that the town is blessed with many active societies. The one thing that would be of benefit is some central co-ordination and listing of the dates of events to ensure clashes are minimised. • Also, it would benefit the community to provide visibility of important local events outside Winchelsea (e.g. Rye Festival etc). Some could also be publicised and taken into account for event planning. <p>Possible Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider for the next Town Plan open meeting (or perhaps at the AGM Annual Town Meeting) inviting the societies to take a “stall” to promote their activity/ drum up new members etc. (similar to a “Freshers” fair). • Consider a “Welcome Pack” for newcomers (and any other residents) of the Town and its societies. • Societies should use the Town Diary on the Little Shop noticeboard and in the Community Office to advertise and co-ordinate events.

2. Our Neighbours	Points of discussion
--------------------------	-----------------------------

Winchelsea Town Plan – Community Working Group Meeting 1

<p>a. Do we know the profile of our Townsfolk? Who are the people that make up the community in terms of what they do, how long they have been here, their age group etc.</p>	<p>The object of this question was to establish (as had been done in the past) a profile of people in the Town (of a generic nature) which from a strategic point of view would be of interest to outside bodies, particularly in the final Town Plan document.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • However, it was felt that to specifically request personal information (should it be asked in a questionnaire) might discourage responses on other more important issues. Nevertheless, it is a question that could be raised? • Other sources of people profile exist. For example, from the Millennium book (albeit published in 2000), and from local knowledge. Also, the Primary Health Trust (was District health Authority) for Bexhill & Rother had information which, if treated sensitively, could provide the necessary profile of people in the Town.
<p>a. Are there particular community issues that affect neighbours</p>	
<p>i. Light pollution</p>	<p>This covered 3 topics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Street lighting (brightness and timing i.e. on after midnight) was of concern to some • To others, the church lighting was considered of the wrong colour and could be directed to better illuminate the church rather than the sky. • Neighbours lights, e.g. from brightly lit conservatories was also considered by some to be a nuisance (pollution?).
<p>ii. Parking</p>	<p>Some tension in streets with higher density of residents and narrow width. Streets mentioned where there were some tensions were North Street, Barrack Square and Hiham Green.</p>
<p>iii. Noise (dog’s barking etc.)</p>	<p>Not considered a specific problem.</p>
<p>iv. Bonfires</p>	<p>Bonfires at unsocial hours had caused irritations. Less acceptable during day – more socially acceptable in early evening after 6pm. Do Bye-laws have anything to say?</p>
<p>v. Flying freeholds</p>	<p>Not considered a specific problem.</p>
<p>vi. Other</p>	<p>Action: For several of the points above it was felt that many of the issues could be resolved by neighbourly courtesy & social responsibility. Perhaps a polite “Code of Conduct” to highlight specific areas and neighbourly solutions or a “Winchelsea values . . .” note (see later). Investigate a Bye-law.</p>

Winchelsea Town Plan – Community Working Group Meeting 1

<p>b. Depending on the balance of people in the community (2a above) how best to support neighbours in need</p>	
<p>i. Neighbourhood Watch (see 5c later)</p>	<p><u>This fell into disuse and has been revived. However, currently this is not well supported and only 50% of the streets were co-ordinated. Doubts were expressed about support from the police and whether a NW was actually needed in a low crime area like Winchelsea. On the other hand, it was felt that such “diligence” was of importance and benefit to the Town. A focal point in the Town was needed. Suggested that “incidents” should be reported and “logged” possibly through the auspices of the Community Office. NW network could be a useful contingency.</u></p> <p>Action: Address the Neighbourhood Watch issue via a question in any survey conducted.</p>
<p>ii. Health issues (GPs/ hospitals)</p>	<p>Health service was stated to be under resourced in this (as well as other) locality, <u>especially mental health cover</u>. In the Winchelsea area we will suffer as a result of the new GP contract introduced in April. This will mean that “out of hours” cover will be provided only from Hastings. <i>(This may not be well known).</i></p>
<p>iii. Social support services needs and availability</p>	<p>Similarly, social services provision in this locality is poor. A key issue for Winchelsea is that “respite care” is not provided. The government claim there is funding provision but this is not forthcoming from East Sussex CC.</p>
<p>iv. Special needs of elderly (50-59, 60-74, 75+) (Age range from ref 2)</p>	<p>Many of the more elderly were thought not to be aware of the provision of help or financial assistance. For example</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance allowance • Rye & District voluntary services • Rye Partnership.
<p>v. Other</p>	<p>Action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Again, communicating these issues locally to provide a greater awareness. Or, perhaps arrange a local talk to the community on social service provision • Representation of our social services needs and concerns, if truly inadequate, through the Town Plan. (Query for the Questionnaire)

Winchelsea Town Plan – Community Working Group Meeting 1

3. Church	Points of discussion
<p>a. The Church is a unique focal point within the Community in both its ecclesiastical and its pastoral roles; plays an important role for some people in the Town and district.</p>	<p>It was felt that the church needs to be more welcoming to the wider Community. Perhaps with the new (and hopefully more stable) rector soon to be appointed this will improve.</p> <p>Nevertheless St Thomas church provides a valuable role in the community and was observed to serve a wide catchment area. On average the congregation for the Sunday family service averaged 40. It also has particularly strong links with Winchelsea Beach and Icklesham for which the Rector of Winchelsea rector also serves as Vicar for both. It was observed that historically the Methodist Chapel has an important place in the community and must also be included.</p>
<p>b. Are there any special needs or issues that we should cater for in a community context? (also see 5b Crime prevention)</p>	<p>The maintenance of the churchyard is undertaken by the Church and is <u>referred to the “Built Environment” working group.</u></p> <p>The church has numerous artefacts of historical significance which have, on occasions, been vandalised. A record of these treasures is felt to be necessary to ensure their record for posterity and to facilitate replacement or repair if necessary.</p>
4. Weekenders (or part-timers)	Points of discussion
<p>a. Weekenders (or those part-timers who even less frequently visit their properties) are a significant part of the community in terms of numbers.</p> <p>How best to secure their contribution to community life and understand their needs?</p>	<p>Weekenders (& part-timers) were considered to provide, on the whole, a valuable influence in the community. It was noted that Winchelsea, unlike many more rural communities, does not have such a strong local housing demand. In other words the weekender is not displacing a younger local family from a home near his family or place of work. Numbers were thought to be between 10 and about 20% of the dwellings.</p> <p>However, it was also felt that weekenders, like other members of our community, had a social responsibility in the Town. For example, ensuring their property, if left unoccupied, was at least kept in a good state of repair. There were today one or two cases where properties looked badly run down.</p>
<p>b. Recluse or active participant</p>	<p>As above.</p>
<p>c. Their awareness of the community activities</p>	<p>Possibly, the awareness of local services (tradesmen, shops, community) would help the weekender to utilise local facilities more effectively.</p>

Winchelsea Town Plan – Community Working Group Meeting 1

d. Catering for a different need – opportunity?	It was considered that the Town lacked a social focus, often provided in small communities during the evenings by a well supported local Pub (the New Inn was not considered to fill this role). The Little Shop and Community Office are a valuable focus during the day and of course the Church to a smaller cross-section at the weekend.
e. Other	<p>Possible Action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted invite to new residents to a Social Event – “Welcome to Winchelsea”. • Issue a Welcome Pack to new or potentially new (via Estate Agents) residents.

5. Crime Prevention	Points of discussion
a. Is crime seen as a key issue in Winchelsea over and above other rural communities?	Crime was not considered a major issue in Winchelsea. Statistics included in the Countryside Agency guidance publication from Government sources indicate the rural crime rate in SE England is 50% less than in urban locations.
b. Crime hot spots in Winchelsea	
i. Church grounds, buildings and content?	<p>The church periodically suffers from spates of vandalism. Most recently a section of the Lady Chapel stained glass window and theft of the external lights illuminating the Church.</p> <p>Possible actions: Consider need for CCTV inside and/or outside. Fence of the external flat roof at the East end of the Church.</p>

Winchelsea Town Plan – Community Working Group Meeting 1

<p>ii. Public toilets in Monk’s Walk?</p>	<p>The Public Toilets were not well maintained. Potentially they present an opportunity for criminal activity. They have been noted to attract some dubious looking individuals at odd times of day i.e. not the passing tourist or walker as was their intent.</p> <p>Possible Action: Consider their utility. If to remain consider the restricted use of toilets (i.e. close at night) &/or minicam for monitoring.</p> <p>Near the Public Toilets is a council “Recycling Area”. This is severely abused with the following reported examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commercial rubbish dropped off regularly during Summer – possibly from a commercial enterprise at the beach. • Gardening refuse dropped by a local gardening contractor. • Local pub using the facility to get rid of its bottles. <p>Possible Action: Consider re-siting the recycling facilities to a more discrete location. In view of their use, the pub’s car park was suggested.</p>
<p>iii. Isolated or unattended properties?</p>	<p>No specific comments.</p>
<p>c. Means of crime prevention</p>	
<p>iv. Neighbourhood Watch – are all roads adequately catered for and coordinated? Could we improve by use of local internet Neighbourhood Watch facilities?</p>	<p>From 2b above Currently this is not well supported and only 50% of the streets were co-ordinated. It was felt that such “diligence” was of importance and benefit to the Town. A focal point in the Town was needed. Suggested that “incidents should be reported and “logged” possibly through the auspices of the Community Office.</p> <p>Action: Address the Neighbourhood Watch issue via a question in any survey conducted.</p>
<p>v. Community policing – is it happening and is it seen to be effective?</p>	<p>It was acknowledged that the local police provide a positive and visible presence. However, it was considered that the policy which led to selling off the police house in Winchelsea was unfortunate which undermines the importance of community policing.</p>

Winchelsea Town Plan – Community Working Group Meeting 1

Melvyn Pett
Chair of Community WG

23 August 2004

Appendix 1

Typical questions to local organisations could include

Chairman or Leader:
Secretary or Point of Contact:
Principal objectives/ activities:

Date of Foundation/ Inauguration:
Status:
Number of Members:
Membership fee:
Catering for all:	Local youth/ Disabled etc.
Special Needs:

Appendix 2

I have drawn some of the social and nuisance points in our discussion into a draft social statement entitled “Winchelsea values . . . “. This will need a lot of polishing.

Winchelsea Town Plan – Community Working Group Meeting 1

Winchelsea values

Helping our neighbours by keeping an eye on their well being and safety.

Minimising disturbance to our neighbours and the community by

- Controlling the use of bright outside lighting,
- Lighting bonfires only after 6pm and when the wind is favourable, and
- Careful and unselfish parking in the streets to minimise obstruction both to traffic flow and to access to property.

Interaction of the wider community with our social and sports groups.

Visitors who are encouraged to park politely and take care not to damage the maintained grass verges. [Ask visitors and builders to do the same.](#)

Providing amenity to the Town and its visitors through its local museum, its shops, its church, its toilets and its open spaces.

Preserving the cleanliness of these amenities and open grounds.

Safety on the roads by encouraging traffic to respect the speed limit.