

Minutes of a Public Meeting To Establish a Steering Committee and Plan a Programme of Work to Produce a Town Plan for Winchelsea Saturday, 5 June 2004, New Hall

41 residents and representatives of organisations with local interests attended (list attached). The date of the meeting had been agreed at the Annual Town Meeting on 15th May 2004 and advertised to residents. Special invitations had been sent to 29 clubs, societies and other community organisations, 11 local businesses and seven external organisations. Apologies for absence were received from 29 residents and invitation declined by the Winchelsea Singers.

The meeting had been called in order to implement a decision made at the Annual Town Meeting on 1st May 2003, and confirmed by a subsequent questionnaire and the Annual Town Meeting on 15th May 2004, to prepare the equivalent of a Parish Plan for Winchelsea, to be called the Winchelsea Town Plan. The proposal received the assent of Icklesham Parish Council on 14th July 2003, was subsequently registered with the Countryside Agency and notified to Action in Rural Sussex (AIRS).

Mr Richard Comotto opened the meeting at 11:00am with an explanation of the objectives of a Parish Plan as laid out in the Rural White Paper of 2000 and subsequent guidance from the Countryside Agency. The aim is to improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of a community by setting out a vision of how the people who live and work in that community want it to be managed. A Plan will help shape and influence future developments and allow the whole community to have a greater say in local affairs.

A Plan should be comprehensive, covering everything that people who live and work in Winchelsea think is important. It should lay down principles and actions needed to preserve Winchelsea's distinctive character and features, and identify who should implement the actions. The plan would influence decision-making by national and local government. Indeed, the process of producing the Plan should establish working relationships with external decision-makers and achieve results ahead of the production of the final plan. However, the plan must be consistent with regional, county and district strategies. Groups and organisations outside Winchelsea who have an influence on the Town and neighbouring communities will be consulted. Links with the Parish Council will be provided by the Parish Councillors from Winchelsea. The Plan will have to be endorsed by the Parish Council but would be owned by the community and could be used by anyone or any group in the Town to support efforts to set up new projects. The Plan must be produced by exhaustive consultation with everyone in the community and must represent, as far as possible, the consensus on key issues and priorities. Consultation must go beyond the Parish Council and groups traditionally involved in lobbying. In order to be truly inclusive, it has to be managed by a broadly representative Steering Committee elected by the Town. Most of the detailed work would be carried out by working groups focusing on specific issues. In addition to consultation, the process of producing the Plan should be completely open and transparent. The plan is expected to take about 18 months to produce. Funding will be an issue but assistance would be sought from Rother District Council and elsewhere. It was suggested that the New Hall be made available without charge given that the Town Plan is a community project.

The meeting endorsed the decision to produce a Town Plan for Winchelsea and the principles of consultation, consensus and openness. The first members of the Steering Committee were elected and officers appointed: Richard Comotto (Chairman), Martin Hogg (Secretary), Annie Markey (Treasurer), Michael Melvin, Steve Turner, Tony Jasper, Cindy Cogswell, Melvin Pett, David Morris, Katharine Manning and Anne Simpson. There are seats for additional members.

Suggestions were sought on issues to be considered by the Plan. The response included planning and conservation, recreation, youth, tourism, traffic, infrastructure, crime and disorder. The Steering Committee will consider these suggestions and start forming working groups.

The next meeting to be held would be within the next month, when Mr Ieuan Sherwood, Development Officer of Action in Rural Sussex, will be invited to address the meeting.

Martin Hogg
Secretary
Winchelsea Town Plan Steering Committee
7 June 2004