



THE CORPORATION OF WINCHELSEA

Registered Charity Number 1192506

**ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023**

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Introduction

1. The Corporation of Winchelsea was saved under s.14 of the 1883 Municipal Corporations Act and subsequent amendment to that Act under various Charity Acts. It was entered on the Charity Commission's Register of Charities on 24 November 2020.
2. Its objects are:
 - a. To preserve the historic traditions associated with the role of Winchelsea as an Ancient Town of the Cinque Ports Confederation.
 - b. To promote the preservation and maintenance of the historic Court Hall and town gates of Winchelsea and any other land and properties therein, in its charge.
 - c. To hold the Court Hall and the three town gates (New, Ferry and Strand) as designated land for the purposes of the Charity.
 - d. To oversee the state of the Court Hall and three town gates ensuring they are preserved for the public benefit, working with other agencies to maintain their appearance.
 - e. To maintain and manage a museum for the public benefit providing a record of the Town of Winchelsea and its people.

Governance

3. Its governance document is a Scheme approved by the Charity Commission. Led by a Mayor who fulfils its ceremonial functions, its governing council comprises of up to 12 additional Trustees. It meets 6 times per year and is supported by sub-committees dealing with the Museum, fabric and strategic matters. It has 3 officers, namely a Town Clerk, a Chamberlain and a Sergeant-at-Mace. Periods of office for all those covered by this paragraph span one year and are renewable.
4. The following formed the Executive Board of the Corporation in 2023, acting also as Trustees of the Charity and having the ancient title of Jurat:

David Merrifield (Mayor)

Peter Costick

Michael Melvin

John Rodley

David Page

Berenice Scott

Stephen King (Treasurer)

Rosemarie Roberts

John Clarke

Ian Kingham (from 10th April 2023)

Anthony Moore (until 10th April 2023)

Robert Holland (until 10th April 2023)

Carol Scoines (until 11th July 2023)

Principal address:

The Court Hall
High Street
Winchelsea
East Sussex
TN36 4EA

Website: www.winchelsea.com

Meeting the Public Benefit

5. During 2023 I am pleased to report that the Court Hall was again used on approximately 150 occasions, the same as in the previous year. The Post Office continued to be the largest user regularly opening twice each week until 21 September 2023 when the service was no longer supported by the Post Office and was discontinued. Attempts were made to reinstate this facility but were unsuccessful, due to the small number of regular users. The Museum recorded an increased number of visitors, reaching an annual record of 1,895, exceeding last year's record by 430 visitors. This increase was achieved through the Museum opening an extra day each week.

6. With regard to the care of properties in the charge of the Corporation, our long-term agreement (to 2026) with Zurich Insurance was continued and was renewed for the current year on favourable terms. The premium increased by less than the rate of inflation, whilst still providing index-linked cover for the Corporation assets. The continuing clearance of vegetation around the Corporation buildings was carried out by Members of the Corporation.

7. Mayoral activities both inside the Town and throughout the wider Cinque Ports community continue at a steady pace. The Mayor and Mayoress attended 52 events in the Cinque Port towns and the Mayor attended some 60 meetings of Corporation Committees and Societies in Winchelsea. For the second time, the Mayoring Ceremony was conducted in two locations, with the Mayor being sworn in in the Court Hall, in accordance with ancient tradition. The Ceremony continued in the Church, which provided capacity for an open invitation to be made to all residents of the Town.

On 6 May 2023 I, and the other Mayors of the Cinque Ports, as Barons of the Cinque Ports, were granted Honours at Court in the form of invitations to the Coronation. Honours at Court have been granted to the Barons of the Cinque Ports since the Coronation of King Stephen in 1135. On 13 July 2023 my wife and I represented Winchelsea at the Memorial Service of Admiral of the Fleet the Lord Boyce, the late Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, held in Westminster Abbey.

8. In addition to the expenditure on normal running costs and statutory inspections, the major projects undertaken or commenced this year on Corporation property were:

a. Restoration of the West End Gable Wall of the Court Hall Winchelsea. The Architect, John Bailey, has been commissioned to oversee this project and will obtain detailed estimates for the work which we expect to progress during the coming year.

b. During the start of 2023, the new radiators which had been installed, were found to provide insufficient instant heating and two radiators are to be re-sited in the Museum to provide background heat during the cold Winter months and a new fast acting radiator will be fitted in the Douglas Turner room (Lower Court Hall).

Finance

9. This year income streams have performed well in a difficult economic climate. This has resulted in a net surplus of £1,759 for the year compared to a surplus of £3,180 in 2022. I am pleased to record the success of our Italian evening in November which, in line with last year's event, raised a net profit of £3,000. This was divided equally between the Mayor and Mayoresses charities with £1,500 being given to the Corporation and a like sum to Demelza House Children's Hospice.

10. The Accounts attached to this report show the existing investments and reserves. The Corporation is grateful for the support of the Friends of the Ancient Monuments and Museum and the Millennium Artefacts Committee and to many members of the community for their support this year. Although the Corporation has no fixed income stream or revenue raising powers, the collection of the King's Dues in the form of donations has provided a useful sum of £350 this year compared to £563 in 2022, to include Gift Aid. Corporation reserves are vested in a Bond designed to cover one year of expenditure, plus that required to meet arising capital projects when necessary. A reserve fund also exists to cover unexpected commitments for the Museum.

Looking Ahead

11. The Corporation's priorities for 2024 will be:
- a. To continue the restoration of the West Wall of the Court Hall. To obtain grants, where possible and also help finance the Corporation with shared costs on projects by FOAM, a local fund raising organisation which supports Ancient Monuments and listed buildings within the Town.
 - b. To arrange the improvement to the heating efficiency in the Lower Court Hall and Museum.
 - c. To put in place the restoration of the Court Hall door and surround with the financial assistance of FOAM. Continue to promote Winchelsea, attract visitors, support business and attractions through further production and circulation of the free 'Discover Winchelsea' visitor guide, together with ongoing development of the Town's website.
 - d. Continue to enhance visitor experience through further widening of Museum opening times, acting as an educational/information source to increase knowledge of Winchelsea and its rich heritage.
 - e. Forge greater links with our local school and work closely with the community, to raise the profile and understanding of the Corporation in respect of its aims, values, history, and traditions.
 - f. Where possible and appropriate, continue to become involved in assisting the local community and partners to achieve key projects that benefit the Town, and its residents.

- g. Continue our close relationship with the Confederation of the Cinque Ports. Working with members to ensure ongoing promotion, education and visibility of the unique role played by the Confederation in respect of our Maritime and Naval history.
- h. Enhance the Court Hall and Museum to offer improved facilities to users.
- i. Increase revenue streams to raise further funds for the Corporation to ensure key objectives are met.

12. In conclusion, I would like to acknowledge and thank all those who have supported and assisted the Corporation during 2023. This includes the Freeman and Jurats and extends to those who have helped as volunteers in the Museum. My thanks also go to those who have helped clean the Court Hall and Museum and those who have maintained the garden, both voluntarily and for remuneration. I would also wish to acknowledge the help of the Local Authorities with which we deal, namely East Sussex County Council, Rother District Council and Icklesham Parish Council and our local Ward Councillors for their support. We are very grateful to all concerned.

David J. Merrifield JP
Mayor of Winchelsea

Statement of Independent Inspection of Accounts
For the Year Ended 31 December 2023

I was asked to undertake an independent review of the accounts for the Winchelsea Corporation for the year 1st January to 31st December 2023. I was given the excel spreadsheet, split down into five areas plus the year end accounts. It was agreed that all the supporting documentation, such as receipts and invoices, would be available if required. There were two areas discussed:

1. With relatively high interest rates at the moment, I asked whether at least some of the cash held could be placed in a high interest bearing account to capitalise on this opportunity.
2. It was agreed that there would be a new uniform way to account for income from King's Dues which are often listed as different "Descriptions".

Finally, you and I had a discussion late last year about the potential to utilise a cloud based software system to run these accounts and I would urge the Corporation to have a further discussion about this.

The benefits would include the easy grouping of similar payments and receipts (such as King's Dues) and the full accounts would then be automatically put together, at the end of the year, by the press of a button.

The downside is that there is a cost , however, as I explained there are ways this cost could be mitigated by working with other organisations in Winchelsea which are already using such systems.

In terms of the accounts presented I have undertaken a sweep of the numbers and checked all the formulae and can confirm that I am happy and can now confirm the accounts for the calendar year 2023.

Jeremy R Naylor

CORPORATION OF WINCHELSEA
Registered charity number 1192506

Receipts and Payments Account for the year ended 31 December 2023

Receipts	General fund	Museum fund	Capital fund	Total funds		2022 Total Funds
	£	£	£	£		£
Grants	0	600		600		3,267
FOAM	4,200			4,200		
Hire LCH	420			420		520
Sale of Town Guides (TG)	600			600		400
King's Dues	350			350		563
Donations	327	1,526		1,853		4,176
Fundraising	3,950			3,950		4,820
Museum Apportionments	3,995	0		3,995		
Electric	126			126		30
Museum Sales		1,681		1,681		1,646
Museum Admissions		5,685		5,685		4,336
Discover Winchelsea (DW)	1,250			1,250		600
Support	101			101		
Interest		0		0		753
Total receipts	15,319	9,492	0	24,812		21,111

Payments	General fund	Museum fund	Capital fund	Total funds		2022 Total Funds
	£	£	£	£		£
Repairs and maintenance	649			649		5,537
Rates & Utilities	1,947			1,947		939
Discover Winchelsea	1,069			1,069		1,173
Insurance	2,814			2,814		2,541
Donations	1,550			1,550		1,593
Subscriptions	368	0		368		1,032
Staff costs	1,499			1,499		1,400
Professional fees	136			136		
Project costs	4,200			4,200		
Regalia Costs	1,521			1,521		525
Fixtures & Fittings		1,091		1,091		917
Museum Stock		1,067		1,067		1,229
Event costs	950			950		835
Museum Apportionments		3,992		3,992		
Support Costs						118
Alarm & Fire		200		200		92
Total payments	16,702	6,350	0	23,052		17,931
Net receipts/(payments)	(1,383)	3,142		1,759		3,180
Funds at 1 January 2023	15,644	10,650	62,346	88,640		85,460
Transfers		(10,000)	10,000			
Interest UTB			1,005	1,005		
Funds at 31 December 2023	14,261	3,792	73,351	91,404		88,640

Balance Sheet at 31 December 2023

Current assets			2023 £			2022 £
Bank balances						
	Current accounts		18,053			26,294
	Deposit accounts - United Trust Bank		73,351			62,346
			91,404			88,640
Unrestricted Funds (note 2)						
General Fund			14,261			15,644
Museum Fund			3, 792			10,650
Capital Fund			73,351			62,346
			91,404			88,640

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS

1. **Basis of Preparation:** The accounts are presented on a receipts and payments basis, as permitted by s.133 of the 2011 Charities Act. This is the third year in which the Corporation has operated as a charity registered with the Charity Commission. It has also been recognised as being eligible for Gift Aid by HMRC and has enrolled in that scheme. Gift Aid reclaimed for this year is £480.
2. **Funds:** All funds are unrestricted but have been designated by the Trustees for the purposes described. The Trustees may designate the funds for other purposes at their discretion. Interest is earned on the funds held at the United Trust Bank.
3. **Corporation Property:** No value is included in the balance sheet in respect of property and land owned by, or in, the Corporation's charge, exhibits in the Museum, stock, or regalia owned by the Corporation.
4. **Projects, R&M.** Includes works undertaken in the Museum and Court Hall in accordance with the objects of the charity.

The Financial Statements were approved by the Trustees:

Signed: _____

Date: _____