

WINCHELSEA RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

SATURDAY 26 OCTOBER 2024 @ 11AM

Minutes

1. Introduction

Glen Marks (Chairperson) welcomed members to the WRA's third AGM, and the first with him as chairman. He noted that the association was now in its fourth year and there had been changes in the committee membership over the past year.

Glen explained that, as is usual with committees of this nature, members step down. He thanked the previous committee members for their hard work in establishing the association and the improving the both the fabric of Winchelsea and its community.

There are currently over two hundred members and the number was increasing. He noted the objectives and goals set out in the constitution remain the same, which in summary, are to provide a voice, seek improvements for residents, help establish a better sense of community and to keep residents informed of local issues.

There are currently 10 members of the committee

Glen Marks (Chair)

David Dickson (Secretary)

Ian Menzies (Treasurer)

Julie Gurr,

John Clarke,

Jane Taylor

Brian Leonard

Richard Plumb

Dave Richards

Sarah Andrews

Existing and new members are encouraged to join the committee; especially as some committee members are stepping down and there is a need to ensure the committee has the skills set and interests so that we are ready for and challenges that lie ahead.

Glen welcomed our local MP, Helena Dollimore, to the meeting and asked if she would like to speak first or later in the meeting, she requested to speak at the end.

2. Minutes of the AGM on 14 October 2023 11.00 -12.30 at New Hall

The minutes were approved.

3. Finance

3.1 Dave Richards (on behalf of the Treasurer Ian Menzies) presented the accounts for FY 2023-24. He commented that income from membership fees was low due to the fact that it has been agreed by the committee to waive the subscription due to changes in the committee and the consequent reduced level of actions. Some members had paid, and their subscription will be held over for the next financial year.

Expenditure side the main items had been on the website, insurance, costs of hall hire and printing.

The current balance of bank and cash was £953.53

3.2 Against the background of experience of the association's finances over the first two years the Committee were proposing a further membership to be raised from April 2025 for the year to March 2026, again of £10 per member. This would provide for the continuing adminstrivia costs and allow for any unexpected needs. The proposed fee of £10 was put to members and was approved.

4. Chairpersons Report 2023/ 2024

4.1 Glen opened his report by reflecting on what the WRA has achieved so far and what we aim to do for the future.

At the start of 2024, we had reached an impasse on the preferred option of the closure of Strand Hill so we paused to consider how further progress could be made. Nevertheless, following a public vote of the residents a majority of 65% voted in favour of continuing to find solutions to traffic calming.

At the same time, founding committee members Paul and Cathy Veys, Linda Bass and Ali Casey decided to step down.

It was agreed that the monthly film nights that Cathy organises so well will now transfer from the WRA to the New Hall who are the beneficiaries of any revenues raised.

Thanks to Ali for, among other things, successfully arranging the implementation of the town's dropped kerbs which has now been completed.

Linda and Paul also felt it was the right time to step aside from their duties as Treasurer and Co-Chair.

On behalf of us all Glen thanked them for their efforts and diligent work for the Winchelsea community.

The remaining committee, and some new temporary members, have been considering how best to proceed in order to protect the future of the Association.

Jane Taylor handed over the stewardship of Chair to Glen allowing her to focus on her tireless quest for a resolution of traffic calming issues.

Ian Menzies agreed to join us as Treasurer, and Julie Gurr was a welcome addition to the team, assisting Jane and giving us much needed perspective from a Winchelsea resident living "down below" on Tanyards Lane. David Richards has also recently agreed to join us. He has a wealth of knowledge and experience as an accountant and we look forward to his contributions.

Finally, Glen gave huge thanks to Brian Leonard for his invaluable contributions on many aspects of town life, history, planning and Highways reports. Brian has also decided the time is right to step down.

Glen also gave huge thanks to John Clark who is also stepping down, Glen explained his huge knowledge of Winchelsea and pragmatic approach will be missed. He has made tremendous efforts in keeping the public toilets (or at least one of them) open, for the time being. John has decided the time is right for him to hand over the reins to someone else to continue this important work.

Glen explained that given the pause in activities we agreed to suspend subscriptions for this year as it was unlikely any major expense would be required.

The committee provided a strong presence through a stall at the Winchelsea summer fete and we were gratified that so many stopped by with new residents signing up as members. We were also pleased that our newly elected MP Helena Dollimore joined us at the stall and had an opportunity to get to us know better – and Glen gave huge thanks for her attendance here today.

Glen introduced a new website page, which can now be found on the town's main website **www.winchelsea.com**; And a new email address for all correspondence **ra@winchelsea.com**.

Glen concluded by saying that although this has primarily been a year of reflection the committee feel strongly that the town is best served by having an independent residents' association for any issues that may happen in the future. A strong communal voice helps us get our views across to Icklesham Parish Council to whom we are but one of four parishes all attempting to get ourselves heard.

Glen requested that new and existing members email us or talk to us with any suggestions and comments and the committee will do its best to get things done.

Glen asked to hear from anyone who might wish to join the committee in any capacity as we are losing two valuable members in John and Brian

Glen finished by thanking fellow committee members for all their hard work and support.

Glen handed over to the committee for updates on local issues

4.2 Updates on the local traffic issues (Jane Taylor and Julie Gurr)

Jane reminded us it is now a year since the residents voted on the Strand Hill closure which was rejected by ESCC and by default IPC because it did not achieve 80%. The vote was 2:1 in favour with 75% turnout. The issue remains a key concern of residents and therefore a priority for the WRA.

A 40mph sign has been placed above the sign warning driving of the school location a few yards away from the school drop off point.

Black cat data shows the volume of traffic is increasing and residents

observations show speeding on German Street and Monks Walk, Rectory Lane and the A259 in both directions.

|Jane and Julie on behalf of the WRA and the Committee are:

- currently engaging directly with both National Highways and ESCC at a senior level. The discussions have been positive and a possible proposal in the next few weeks is imminent.
- circulating a leaflet to the relevant agencies and politicians highlighting the issues on the A259. A copy will be placed on the WRA website website. The leaflet is an evidence based plea for action after decades of inaction to make the trunk road safer. There is no priority shown in current transport plans so we have to try and change that.
- **Tanyard Lane** - Julie spoke on dangers of crossing to and from Strand Hill and reported that WRA has held direct discussion with senior officers at ESCC on this location. Options are limited but the WRA will press for signs and safety measures as a matter of urgency.

The Committee and WRA strongly believe we should not have to wait until there is a fatality before action is taken by ESCC and Highways).

We are very grateful to both MP Helena Dollimore and Cllr. Simon McGurk, one of our two district councillors for their interest and willingness to listen and help where they can.

4.3 Updates on the public toilets (John Clarke)

John Clarke recalled the beginning of this issue when structural problems at the toilets block had led to a Rother Council response of closing and nailing up the toilets. WRA action had led to one toilet, the disabled facility being opened for general use. A subsequent survey had concluded that the block needed to be demolished, but action has been paused while negotiations for the transfer of ownership of the toilets from Rother DC to Icklesham Parish Council has been taking place. The core problem remains with the need for rebuilding, with the added complications of ongoing costs and the possibility of archaeological interest in the site. The current year has again seen record numbers of visitors to the museum and the need to provide adequately for visitors to

the Church and all the town's monuments. It is imperative that in order to avoid public health concerns this continues to be a priority issue.

4.4 Feedback on the local planning (Brian Leonard)

Brian Leonard spoke to the recent consultations documents and the responses which have been distributed to local residents.

The consultations are mostly positive for Winchelsea however it is important to note that we respond as a WRA to ensure our presence is known and our voice is heard in the future if needed.

The strategies and plans have been mostly without direct impact for Winchelsea. However, they have also proposed little to respond to some of the local issues of concerns to residents in the town, including the dangers from speeding through traffic and the need for improvements to local infrastructure. WRA responses reflected these points, with a notable addition in the case of the Rother Local Plan to support the decision there that no substantial new development could be considered at Winchelsea. WRA also noted the range of background data and information made available in association with the plans, or otherwise available, demonstrated that the demographic, social and economic character of the wider local area of the town was in some respects strikingly unbalanced and that the factors causing this were increasing. Alongside this there was little consideration of the potential local impacts of climate change. This all underlined the importance for WRA to continue to respond to ensure our presence is known and our voice is heard in the future if needed.

Cllr Simon McGurk raised the point about detrimental affect of Air B&B in the Rye area. He referred to the proposal at Rother DC to set up a group to consider issues arising from the increase in residential properties now being largely devoted to Airbnb lettings. He invited WRA to join the group which is otherwise mostly focused on Rye.

5. Election of the Committee for 2024-25

5.1 Glen Marks reported that nine of the current members of the Committee were prepared to serve again the coming year. This will provided continuity into the fourth year for the Committee; however, other changes were possible in the coming months and members were

encouraged to express interest in serving as Committee members. Additional appointments could be made through the co-option process before the next AGM.

Glen Marks (Chair)
David Dickson (Secretary)
Ian Menzies (Treasurer)
Julie Gurr
Jane Taylor
Richard Plumb
Dave Richards
Sarah Andrews

Vacancy John Clarke standing down
Vacancy Brian Leonard standing down

Members of the WRA voted in favour to elect the Committee members to serve until the next AGM

6 Any Current Business

Local Rail & Road works

Members raised concerns about the total lack of joined up thinking on the current rail and road improvements which are greatly inconveniencing residents in the local area.

Footpath at Strand Gate

The Conservation society reported that they are pursuing the National Trust about the lack of a footpath at Strand Gate.

Footpaths

Members requested clarification about responsibility for footpaths. The WRA committee will ensure notices are placed on the Parish Council notice board.

7 Date for next AGM

7.1 Glen thanked all the members who attended the meeting and said that the Committee would consider as soon as practicable the dates for

the 2025 AGM in approximately a years time, and for the next General Meeting to be in the Spring.

MP Helena Dollimore Presentation to WRA

Glen welcomed Helena and introduced her to the WRA and requested that discussion should focus on local issues.

Helena thanked residents for having an active association and inviting her to the meeting.

Helena showed a great knowledge and understanding of the issues facing Winchelsea (and the other rural areas of her constituency).

Helena empathised with the views of Winchelsea residents and provided assurances that she would always be willing to raise them in the appropriate way in the appropriate forums. WRA residents were particularly pleased to hear that she is willing to add her signature to letters in support of local issues that of concern to residents.