

The Wincheap Society

Minutes of The Wincheap Society Committee Meeting at 7.30p.m. on Thursday, 11th July, 2013, at 53 Wincheap

Present: John Osborne, Eddie Peake, Joe Passey, Sarah Walter, Debra Johnson, Pat Marsh

1. Apologies for absence: Morag Kemp, Anne Foster, Gaurav Kathuria
2. Minutes of the last Meeting on Friday, 7th June, 2013 were signed as an accurate account of proceedings.
3. Matters Arising.

- i. Roger Britton Site

The letter John wrote on our behalf concerning the planned development on the site has gone astray, but has now been resent. John expressed our reservations about the iron gates in the plan but stated that the overall overdue improvements to the site should be encouraged with due consideration given to neighbouring properties.

- ii. Quiz Night

John has sent letters of thanks to those who donated the raffle prizes.

- iii. Annual General Meeting – 14th June, 2013

The AGM was deemed a success and made a profit. The Minutes are available and will be sent round.

- iv. Local Plan (See later)

- v. Printing House Update

D2 certification for the development has been granted on appeal but with a number of restrictions, the all-important one being that the opening hours extend only to 8pm. This excludes the option of having a night club on the premises. Debra had been shown round the site during her search for a possible new venue for her dance classes. She was told the building will have a play area and café, with possibly a laser centre and gym, which could be used for dance classes etc.

WinSoc members will monitor the use of the site and its conformity to the regulations imposed. Cllr Nick Eden-Green is also aware of this case.

4. Lord Mayor's Award 2013

We have been informed about this year's Lord Mayor's Award and invited to make nominations. The Award is given to recognise an individual's contribution to the community. We are nominating Paula Spencer for the Award in view of her work for the Thanington Neighbourhood Resource Centre, for which she single-handedly raises a great deal of money.

5. Electoral Review consultation

We need to submit our views on the Electoral Review to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) Consultation by 6th August. The Review proposes a reduction in the number of City Councillors from 50 to 38. The main reason for this is that in 2002 the Council switched from a Committee System of local government to what is called a 'Strong Leader and Executive' System. Under the Committee System, important decisions were made by the appropriate committees, on which all parties were represented, and the decisions then went to full Council for approval. Under the 'Strong Leader and Executive' system committees play a much less important role, and most Councillors are consequently on fewer committees. The Council's submission says that, whereas previously the average number of committees on which a Councillor served was 5.2, it is now 1.5. Therefore, the submission says, with the Executive system we need fewer Councillors and should reduce the number by a quarter, from 50 to 38.

WinSoc Committee agreed with Richard Norman's comments on this (Canterbury Society document). He notes that the Localism Act of 2011 gave Councils the option of changing back to the Committee System, or of introducing some other system for making its decisions – perhaps one which combines the advantages of the Executive System and the Committee System. So shouldn't we first be considering whether the 'Strong Leader and Executive' System is working well, or whether some other system might work better, before deciding whether fewer Councillors are needed?

The current system means that all the important decisions are made by a small group of 10 Councillors, and the submission to the LGBCE proposes reducing this to 8. All the members of the Executive are currently from the same party. There is little debate. And the 'Strong Leader' model means that, in practice, the Leader exercises a great deal of power.

WinSoc Committee feels that the city of Canterbury's voters are particularly unrepresented in the Executive's decisions, as there are only two councillors from Canterbury city wards on the Executive (until recently only one) – both Conservatives – whereas the city has a majority of 7 Lib Dems to 5 Conservatives and one Labour councillor. At the moment there is the Canterbury Area Members Panel (CAMP), but it is a purely consultative body. Whitstable has neither of its two Labour councillors on the Executive. The

majority of members of the Executive are from the villages in the District. We believe it would be better to return to a form of unitary system where each city/town and its immediate surroundings have their own councillors making decisions which affect that particular area. They could use the existing administration for the whole District in order to keep costs down.

Reducing the number of Councillors would also reduce their ability to perform the role of properly representing their communities. Councillors would represent a substantially larger number of electors, and this would make it more difficult for them to get to know their communities, to talk to local people and listen to their concerns.

6. Local Plan.

i. Meeting of Alliance of Canterbury Residents' Associations– 18th June

Michael went to this and reported that it was a short meeting to plan tactics and for people to share information. Most of the Residents' Associations are intending to hold (or have already held) public meetings, to inform members what is wrong with the Draft Local Plan. The main focus of everyone's anger is the plan for massive house building, especially the 4,000 new homes planned for South Canterbury. All are encouraged to get involved in the public consultation.

Michael considers the best plan is for WinSoc:

- a. to develop its own response (plenty of time: the deadline is 30th August)
- b. to put something on the website encouraging residents to respond
- c. to perhaps make and deliver a leaflet with more detail

ii. Meeting of Canterbury Society – 25th June

Pat reported that the main focus at this meeting was again housing and its link to job creation, which was considered erroneous. The assumption in the Plan that 780 new houses are needed every year for the next 20 years was questioned since both UKC and Christ Church are building more student accommodation, which will free up many HMOs in the city for families. Every year also sees windfall sites for development, such as Howe Barracks, where 400 new homes could be built. The impact of all this new house building on the already serious traffic congestion and air pollution was also considered a significant factor to take into consideration.

iii. Pentland Homes

John has not yet had the opportunity to write and ask for more detail of their proposals.

- iv. Pat had prepared some comments WinSoc might like to make as our response to the Draft Local Plan. These concern the Wincheap Traffic Management Scheme and the apparent abandonment of the plan to build a new tunnel under the railway line to link up with St Andrew's Close from the industrial estate, providing a 'relief road' for Wincheap.

The response could also include a proposal to extend the subway from Castle Street to Wincheap to go under Wincheap to the East Station, thus solving the problem of the lack of a pedestrian crossing in the proximity of the roundabout.

Under the section on Public Art, we could also propose the decoration of all subways in the city. It was noted how the decorated section from St George's Street to New Dover Road rarely has graffiti, in contrast to the other sections.

Pat will circulate her proposed comments to all committee members.

7. Financial statement

Eddie reported that we now have £180.52 cash in hand since receiving £12.00 in late payment of subscriptions and £57.50 in subscriptions at the AGM. Expenses at the AGM amounted to £44.32.

8. Obituaries

Sir Henry Cecil, racehorse trainer; Rory Morrison, BBC Radio 4 announcer and newsreader; Slim Whitman, country music singer; Mick Aston, archaeologist well known from *Time Team*; Douglas Engelbart, inventor of the computer mouse; Bernie Nolan former lead singer of The Nolans; Iain Banks, novelist; Donna Hartley, Olympic runner; James Gandolfini of *The Sopranos*; Bobby Bland, American blues singer; Richard Thorp, Alan Turner in *Emmerdale*.

9. Any other business

- i. Cycling continues on pavements in Wincheap. Sarah suggested drawing a white line down the middle and having the roadside lane for cyclists and the other for pedestrians. We will ask the police for the results of their monitoring of the situation.
- ii. The large notice on Hope Cottage advertising the car wash has been removed.

iii. Dinah Andrews is relinquishing the lease on Jubilee Hall at Christmas. Debra would like to take it over for the community with a board of trustees and has put this proposal to Michael Bovington of the Council Property Services. Cllr Alex Perkins is supporting her in this.

iv. Hambrook Marshes

John hasn't found out anything out about the plans mentioned at the AGM.

v. Walking bus

John has also not had time to find out why the walking bus to Wincheap School seems to have been discontinued.

9. Date of next Meeting

Thursday, 22nd August, 2013 at 7.30pm at 53, Wincheap