

The Wincheap Society

Minutes of The Wincheap Society Annual General Meeting at 7.30p.m. on Friday, 14th June, 2013, at Jubilee Hall, Cow Lane

1. Apologies for absence: Eddie Peake, Paula Spencer, Morag Kemp, Pamela Slade, Tessa Taylor, Nick Eden-Green, Michael Rundell, Maggie Hendry, Dennis Gabb, Wendy Gabb, Pat Reed, May Ingles, Barbara Forwood, Tracy Moon
2. Welcome and Chairman's Report

John outlined Wincheap Society activities over the past year. A lot of time was spent supporting the Wincheap Action Group in their opposition to the development of the Printing House. Although the plans rejected by the Council were ostensibly for a family entertainment, the fear is that the applicant will be granted a D2 classification. Once this is achieved, little could be done to prevent the establishment of a night club. The applicant has appealed against the Council decision to the Planning Inspectorate, who made a site visit on 13th June. Sarah was present at the visit and reported that the result of the appeal is expected in five weeks' time.

John continued his report with the planning application for the former Roger Britton Carpet showroom (190 Wincheap), envisaging one retail unit and housing on the site. While some local businesses have some reservations about the plan, the Committee feels it is basically reasonable. It has been an eyesore for so long that we are inclined to feel that anything will be better than what is there now.

The Committee has, of course, been monitoring other planning applications. Many give no cause for action.

Our website is still up and running; John attributed the difficulty in keeping it up-to-date to his own inexperience with modern technology and the consequent delay in getting information to those responsible for updating the site.

Improvements have been made during the year to the 'pigeon-proofing' of the railway bridge, not altogether successfully.

A replacement purple beech tree has been planted outside Canon Appleton Court after considerable difficulties encountered in receiving replies to communications with KCC tree officers.

One of our concerns at the moment is cycling on pavements. One of our members was almost knocked down as she came out of her front door. We have written to Ann Barnes, Kent Police and Crime Commissioner, expressing our concern over this issue and the lack of police presence in the area. She actioned a reply from local police, who said there are many Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) vacancies due to a recruitment freeze. This

means regular patrols are no longer made as they were in the past by our former PCSOs Trevor Ingram and Sam Milton. However, the local force say they will monitor the situation with regard to cycling on pavements. Our Committee will be pursuing the matter.

We have been trying to clean up the area in relation to bags of rubbish and wheelie bins left out on the wrong days or for long periods. We are making some progress but are waiting for the new bin scheme to be introduced before taking further action. We will then be preparing a letter/booklet to HMO residents, welcoming them to our community and pointing out the importance of respecting the way the waste disposal system works, as well as other guidelines for living in our community, such as not creating noise or a nuisance after 11pm.

John said the Council made a good effort, following our prompting, at cleaning graffiti and rubbish from Wincheap before the arrival of the Olympic Torch. Members expressed concern at the Meeting about the poor state of the subway from Wincheap to the Castle, one having written to the newspapers about it. It was agreed that this matter would be on the agenda for our next Committee Meeting.

The Draft Local Plan has recently been published and is open for consultation until the end of August. The Canterbury Society is hosting a Public Meeting in the United Reformed Church at 7.30pm on 25th June, where Council leader John Gilbey and Chief Executive Colin Carmichael will be presenting the Plan and answering questions from the public. Committee members will be attending.

The Canterbury Society has also published *The Future of our City – a Residents' Vision for Canterbury*, which our speaker, Jan Pahl, Chair of the Society, was to present after the break. We are affiliated to the Canterbury Society, as well as to the Kent Federation of Amenity Societies.

A few weeks ago we held a very enjoyable Quiz Night, something we hope to repeat next year.

In conclusion, the Wincheap Society has had a very busy year. John thanked all members of the Committee for their support and hard work during the year.

3. Financial Statement

Our treasurer, Eddie Peake, being indisposed, John presented his financial statement (attached). There were no questions or queries concerning it.

4. Election of Committee

John Osborne was unanimously re-elected as Chair and Eddie Peake as Treasurer. Joe Passey, Sarah Walter, Morag Kemp, Anne Foster and Pat Marsh were also re-elected en bloc to the Committee. Debra Johnson and Gaurav Kathuria were co-opted.

5. Any Other Business

The serious congestion on Hollow Lane at dropping-off and picking-up times for Wincheap Primary School was discussed, as well as cars parked with two wheels on the pavement at these times. The question of the 'walking bus', which seems to have ceased operation, was discussed. This matter will be on the agenda for the next Committee Meeting.

6. Talk by Professor Jan Pahl, Chair of the Canterbury Society, on *The Future of our City – a Residents' Vision for Canterbury*

Jan first explained what the Canterbury Society does and that its chief aim is to make the city a better place to live in. The *Vision* sprang from the general feeling that the voice of residents is not much heard in Canterbury, owing to the large number of students and tourists, who are, of course, vital to the city's prosperity but contribute to the problems caused by too many people and too much traffic.

The document was created with input from 13 Residents' Associations, including the Wincheap Society. The survey used to establish residents' priorities for action in the city was handed out for all attendees to complete during the talk. It was collected at the end.

The different chapters of the *Vision* were written by different people and it was launched by celebrity Griff Rhys Jones, President of Civic Voice, who wrote the Foreword, at an event attended by TV and radio at the Abode Hotel. It has been taken seriously by Canterbury City Council, who have incorporated at least some of its 81 recommendations into the Draft Local Plan.

As time was short, Jan outlined the *Vision's* recommendations on just a few of the key issues, followed by questions and discussion.

On city governance, it was pointed out that, like the Council's Executive, the Planning Committee has a large proportion of members representing wards outside the city itself. This means the voice of city residents is not properly heard in these forums, a situation which must be remedied.

On housing and the environment, the majority of residents do not want endless growth; they want a greener city. This conflicts with the Draft Local Plan, which is proposing 780 new houses a year. People feel 550 per annum, the average in recent years, is quite sufficient. The Plan proposal for 4,000 houses on a mainly greenfield site in South Canterbury was considered undesirable for a number of reasons. Developing the colliery brownfield site at Hersden was felt to be preferable, especially since the rail bus which used to run from there could be reinstated and take commuters directly to Canterbury West Station. The serious problems of the shortage of social housing, high rents and high house prices in Canterbury were all discussed. The solution was considered to be the building of more affordable homes.

As for student housing, the construction of new accommodation blocks at Canterbury Christ Church and UKC was welcomed as opening up city HMOs to families as much-needed starter homes. However, the view was put forward that these blocks would vacate

HMOs in Whitstable, Herne Bay and the villages, rather than those in Canterbury. It was felt that the Universities should have limits on the number of students who can live off campus, as is the case in Oxford.

On the pressing issue of transport, traffic and air pollution, Jan said the *Vision* shares the recommendations of Dr Lynn Sloman's Blueprint for Sustainable Transport (<http://www.transportforqualityoflife.com/u/files/130114%20Sustainable%20Transport%20Blueprint.pdf>). They chiefly concern building better, continuous cycle paths, more regular and frequent bus routes, and the promotion of car-sharing schemes. This prompted discussion of the need to extend the bus service in Wincheap to Sundays, bank holidays and evenings. This will form another item on the next Wincheap Society Committee Meeting agenda, when it will be recommended that this issue, as well as the need for more pedestrian crossings on Wincheap, will be brought to the attention of the Council.

The final matters raised by Jan and discussed at the AGM were conservation and open space. The conservation officers employed by the Council have been decimated; there will now be one. National government guidelines are that every child should be within 400m of a playground. It is hoped to reduce this to 300m in Canterbury. Attendees drew attention to the fact that swings and other broken facilities in playgrounds are not replaced or repaired; this is another issue for the Wincheap Society to address with the Council.

In the discussion, two further issues were brought up:

1. the lack of leisure activities for young people in Wincheap;
2. the need for stricter licensing laws in Canterbury.

Jan ended by announcing three Canterbury Society events of interest to members:

- 25th June meeting on the Draft Local Plan mentioned by John in his report (2. above)
- 6th July - Canterbury Society will organise the cleaning of the river between The Miller's Arms and Sainsbury's (meet at 10.30am on the bridge on St Radigund's St, waders provided)
- 22nd October - Meeting with Ann Barnes, Kent Police and Crime Commissioner, at the United Reformed Church at 7.30pm

John closed the AGM at 9.15pm.