

The Wincheap Society

Minutes of The Wincheap Society Annual General Meeting **at 7.30 pm on Friday, 5th July, 2019, at Jubilee Hall, Cow Lane**

1. Apologies for absence: Hilary Osborne, Tessa Taylor, Paula Spencer, Dick Woods
2. Chairman's Welcome & Report

Welcome everyone! As I say every year at this time, it doesn't seem possible that another year has passed since we were last gathered here. If parts of this report seem disjointed, it is because I did the original draft about three weeks ago and several things have changed in the meantime.

Our small but dedicated Committee has worked very hard throughout the year monitoring planning applications, highway proposals, and anything to do with the Wincheap area. Unfortunately, I have to advise you that our Treasurer and long-time supporter, Eddie Peake, recently died in hospital following a fall. Our sympathies go to his family.

We didn't have to stare for ages at a hole in the ground once the former Roger Britton Building was demolished. The redevelopment of the site is making good progress and is nearing completion. It's only taken the best part of thirty years to rid the area of the eyesore!

The Society continues to support the Litter Round Table, a collaboration between the Council, residents' associations and other interested parties which targets "grot spots" throughout the area. Supporting this, we organized a litter pick on 12th April co-ordinated by Ed Craven. Over thirty supporters attended the clear-up, which produced thirty-five bags of rubbish and a printer. A good photo of the supporters and the rubbish appeared in the Gazette. I have since been told that the Gazette actually printed last year's photo – still, never mind, it's all good publicity.

You may recall me saying last year that a planning application for student accommodation on the site of the former St Mary Bredin School was refused and that the developer would probably appeal. The documents were lodged with the Planning Inspectorate last September but they have only just started the process of appeal. If anyone wants to add comments to the appeal you have until 17th July to do so.

Progress on rejuvenating the Wincheap subway has hit a brick wall. The approaches have been covered with tiles which can have graffiti removed more easily than the painted

walls. The subway was targeted almost as soon as it had been completed. Thanks to committee member, and now City Councillor, Derek Maslin, and long-standing Councillor Nick Eden-Green, who between them have devoted many hours to cleaning the defaced tiles, the graffiti was soon removed. Very many thanks to them. There is a small problem with the tiling in that the grouting is “bleeding”. We understand that the contractors will have to come back and rectify this. Another problem has just come to light in that some of the tiles have become unfixed from the wall, apparently caused by damp, so the City Council have removed great lumps of tiles as they could have presented a hazard to the public. However, KCC are responsible for curing the damp problem. It took them seven months to sort out the lighting, so who knows when this will be done. An attempt has been made to correct the drainage problems. It has been improved but still floods when it rains hard. Installing the special film, bearing pictures of the area, on the sides of the tunnel has not yet been done as the work to improve the lighting has only just been completed. We are advised that this will be done by the end of August, but don't hold your breath!

The Wincheap Society again entered The Wincheap and District Allotment Association's Quiz Night last September. After coming fourth and third in previous years, this time we won!

We sponsored a Christmas Window Display Competition for businesses in Wincheap. There was a mixed response to this. Some traders really threw themselves into it, while others didn't bother at all, which I thought was rather sad. The competition was won by Elite Garages with its wonderful Christmas tree and snowmen made from painted tyres and other decorations using automobile paraphernalia. Apparently, they are already working on this year's display.

We are still involved with the Higher Education/Further Education Community Operation, with Pat liaising. I mentioned the introduction of the Street Marshals Scheme four years ago; the initial contract has come up for renewal. The Scheme has been considered a great success with the number of complaints of noise down a stunning thirty percent with no complaints against the marshals. In view of these excellent results, the steering committee agreed to extend RightGuard's contract for another four years.

KCC's Big Conversation Consultation on bus services had twelve public meetings across the District, four parish seminars, four focus group workshops and a bus summit on 30th October in Maidstone. We made representation regarding the lack of service between Canterbury and Ashford William Harvey Hospital in our area and also the lack of a through service to QEQM Margate. We have been in direct contact with Stagecoach regarding the abysmal service between Canterbury and Ashford, but they say it is uneconomic and timekeeping cannot be improved because of excessive waiting times at the Wye and Chartham level crossings.

We have been in touch with KCC's Public Rights of Way Department regarding Coopers Lane (the footpath between Wincheap and Simmonds Road beside Woollard and Kent, the undertaker's). We advised them that someone had dumped a load of rubble on the path. I think whoever dumped it thought that they were improving the surface but it was really dangerous. It has since been smashed down or worn down but it is still not the most comfortable of surfaces to walk on. KCC say that they have no funds to improve it. The path was targeted in our recent litter pick and is now much improved.

The City Council has applied for planning permission to extend the Wincheap Park and Ride, extending it onto the water meadows and wildlife-friendly river bank. This has stirred up major opposition. There are four hundred and ninety documents relating to this application, of which around four hundred and forty are public comments. Most of these are members of the public objecting to the expansion onto the riverside. However, there is a representation from the Environment Agency which is a very strongly worded objection – most unusual for a statutory agency. I can assure you that the document you see is mildly worded compared with the original draft written by one of the Environment Agency officers. He was so angry when he wrote it that he passed it to a senior before it was sent to have the language considerably toned down.

Ten years ago, following the Park and Ride at Harbledown being abandoned (it was in the wrong place, anyway), a report was commissioned by CCC which said that the Wincheap Park and Ride needed to be expanded with a minimum capacity of twelve hundred spaces over two or three levels. With traffic levels having increased, how can the Council think that we now need four hundred fewer spaces than was deemed necessary ten years ago? We have, in our representation, suggested no expansion onto the water meadows but using the existing footprint as a multi-storey (with lifts!). Now the elections are over, things might get moving. We do not see how the Council can ignore such a large volume of objections but, if it does, we will know that they are totally indifferent towards public opinion. The Council have recently announced their commitment to ecology and wildlife, which will surely help the case against expanding the Park and Ride onto the water meadows. Serco have recently cut the grass and vegetation hard back to ground level, strangely enough in the footprint of the proposed development. The Council deny any connection and say that it was done at the same time last year. Having said that, the plan has been given the go-ahead by one of the committees, but still needs full planning permission.

We have been approached to see if an extra bus stop could be introduced between the Canterbury East and Westgate stops. We contacted Stagecoach about this and were advised that we needed to contact KCC. This we tried to do but were told it was the responsibility of CCC, so we sent our communication to them. Having not heard anything for several weeks, we telephoned the Council and were put through to the person responsible for bus shelters. She hadn't seen the letter we sent, so I explained the

details of what was requested. She said a site visit would be required, but she knows the people to contact at KCC and will sort out the matter. Apparently, siting of new bus stops is the responsibility of three agencies – KCC, CCC, and Stagecoach – so it is somewhat complicated.

As you will see from the Financial Statement, the money we were holding in trust for the resurfacing of Hop Garden Way has finally been used. Owing to changes in personnel, the scheme again got “lost”. Anyway, we finally got through to a Lucy Bigwood who said she would look into the archives and sort it out. Once she had found the “back story”, she said that the engineers would need to re-inspect the site. After their inspection they said that the scheme would now cost ten thousand pounds and that there was no extra money available through the Members Grant scheme. However, following contact with the City Council, funds were found to top up the cost and, at long last, the resurfacing has been completed.

Another concern has arisen in connection with the Park and Ride, namely the number of lorries using the Wincheap Estate to park overnight. It is hoped that some arrangements can be made to have facilities for drivers at the new Park and Ride as well as “official” lorry parking places.

The next section of this report has been compiled by Gillian and summarises some of the struggle we have been having with the “powers that be” over the development at Thanington and the road proposals.

Cllr Nick Eden-Green’s presentation at last year’s AGM, “Traffic Nightmare on Wincheap” summarised various matters of concern to residents arising from Highways England (HE), KCC Highways and CCC decisions and plans for road and traffic systems in Wincheap ward.

Having been ignored or stonewalled for over four years by both CCC and KCC when these issues were raised with them by WinSoc and our elected representatives, we attempted to engage directly with the Department of Transport, of which HE is an agency, through our local MP, Rosie Duffield.

Since the Wincheap traffic plans have become so complicated, and so many planning applications and other reports are relevant, it was decided to concentrate on one main issue, namely the highly dangerous proposed contra-flow on the current north-bound off-slip from the A2 to the A28, that is, the bellmouth junction. HE, as landowner, currently controls the roadway and land immediately adjacent to the slip road, and approved the plans to construct the contra-flow. Our thirty-six page Report comprises an introductory outline, illustrations of the current problematic turnings at the A2/A28 junction and along the A28 (Wincheap) to the east, the development of Pentland’s plans for the altered slip road, two “missing” safety audit reports and our concerns specific to the

swept-path analyses used by Pentland's agents to justify the feasibility of traffic using the bellmouth junction. There is also a thirty-nine page Appendix providing documentary evidence to substantiate the claims made in this Report and identifying links to other sources. These can be viewed on our website. Details are available from the committee.

Rosie Duffield's office forwarded both documents to the Department for Transport (DfT) on 18th December 2018. On 25th March 2019 the DfT replied to our MP with a two-line email to which was attached a short and inadequate response written by Highways England. None of the points we raised were addressed save that of swept-path analyses. HE had undertaken an additional "simple assessment" and "in all cases where the road will remain part of the strategic road network following completion of the proposed works we have found that there is sufficient space for HGVs to turn the corners safely."

The Catch 22 here is that following completion of the proposed works, the section of the slip road comprising the contra-flow will be transferred from HE to KCC Highways.

We had copied the Report and Appendix to KCC and CCC. From CCC, as usual, answer came there none. From KCC, County Councillor Whiting responded: "You will recall that both Cllr Balfour and I have provided detailed responses to all the questions raised by The Wincheap Society and Thanington Parish Council on numerous occasions. You will also be aware that I attended a meeting at the Thanington Resource Centre, along with officers to answer questions directly posed to us by local residents' associations. I do not believe there is anything within the report for which an answer has not already been provided and we are ready to supply information to the MP or DfT should they request it."

With our concerns for these dangerous plans having been dismissed at local, county and ministerial levels, it's hard to know where we might go from here. Thanks to Gillian Bull for all the hours of work she has put into these campaigns.

It is well known that many societies and associations are going through difficult times, experiencing problems recruiting officers and committee members. The Kent Federation of Amenity Societies has been experiencing this for several years. This year was the final straw. They only have two officers (out of six) with nine committee vacancies and so they have decided to wind up the Federation. It is sad to see another group biting the dust due to lack of support and the inability to find willing people to serve on the committees.

I feel that The Wincheap Society may, very soon, be facing a similar situation. We need to find a new Treasurer following Eddie's death. Fortunately, Barney Parsons has come forward to take over the post. Pat Marsh, who has undertaken the role of Membership and Minute Secretary for several years, is leaving the area, so that is another position to fill in due course. We have not had a Vice Chairman for very many years, nor have we had a Secretary, although we have functioned perfectly well by dividing the tasks among the

committee, especially with Pat handling the minutes and membership. Nevertheless, we do need extra committee members so you will be most welcome if you can spare a couple of hours a month for our meetings.

Well, that is a brief summary of our work over the past year, so, as you see, we have been kept busy. It only remains for me to sincerely thank all the members of the committee for their hard work and support throughout the year.

3. Financial Statement

1st June, 2018 to 31st May, 2019

01/06/18	Opening Balance, being made up of:-		
	Cash in Hand	41.12	
	Balance at Bank	180.29	
	Held in trust (at Bank)*	<u>4500.00</u>	
		<u>4721.41</u>	4721.41
	INCOME:-		
13/07/18	Subscriptions at A.G.M.	122.50	
13/07/18	Further Subscriptions	6.00	
05/08/18	Further Subscriptions	25.00	
19/09/18	Further Subscriptions	<u>8.50</u>	
		<u>162.00</u>	162.00
	EXPENDITURE:-		
04/12/18	Challenge Trophies	28.40	
05/12/18	Macmillan Cancer Support	25.00	
21/03/19	Kent County Council	4500.00	
04/05/19	ID Consultants Website Domain		
	Hosting Fee	25.00	
04/05/19	A.C.R.A. Subscription	20.00	
04/05/19	Canterbury Society Subscription	<u>20.00</u>	
		<u>4618.40</u>	4618.00
31/05/19	Surplus Income over Expenditure *		265.01
	Represented by :-		
	Balance at Bank		231.89
	Cash in Hand		33.12

*Opening Balance includes £4500 held in trust for the resurfacing of Hop Garden Way.

7. Election of Committee

All committee members were elected unanimously by a show of hands.

Chairman: John Osborne

Treasurer: Barney Parsons

Minutes/Membership Secretary: Pat Marsh

Committee members: Gillian Bull, Ed Craven, Derek Maslin

8. Any Other Business

- i. Simon Houston brought up the issue of graffiti on Valley Rd and on the side of the Chinese takeaway. The second was cleaned away but tagged again immediately. Simon wondered about installing cctv in the area to catch the taggers. Nick Eden-Green commented that there are 300 cameras in the District and just two people to monitor all the screens. They are also responsible for emergency calls from people with personal alarms. Moreover, the cameras are not always the answer as the picture is often very unclear. The Council will clean off graffiti with the permission of the owner, except on the railway bridge, which is the responsibility of Network Rail. John mentioned how graffiti eventually stops if it is cleaned off immediately. The Council has set a reward of £500 for information leading to the identification of the taggers but no information has been forthcoming so far.
- ii. Viv Woods asked why the new tarmac on Hop Garden Way hadn't gone right to the end near the School. John said he thought the condition of that area had been considered acceptable as there was not enough money to do the entire length. Far more of the Way was in fact tarmaced than the three small areas originally planned.
- iii. Simon asked about the proposal to put double yellow lines on Valley Rd. This is part of the Council campaign to stop people parking on the pavement throughout the District. Nick has complained about this: he considers it a perfectly good compromise to park on pavements in Valley Rd as there is plenty of room for pedestrians/wheelchairs/pushchairs to pass by with such a wide pavement.

Guest Speaker

Michael Walter of Love Hambrook Marshes Trust gave a presentation with slides about the work of the Trust and answered questions from members.