

ICKLESHAM PARISH COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE COUNCIL TO BE PRESENTED TO THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING AT THE COMMUNITY HALL, WINCHELSEA BEACH ON MONDAY 5TH MARCH 2018.

This report covers the activities of the Icklesham Parish Council from the start of the Municipal Year in April 2017 to the present day.

1.00 Administration.

1.01 The Council's day to day administration is carried out by two part-time officers. The Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer, Mrs Anna Evett and the Deputy Clerk Mrs Jocelyn Cannings. As the Parish Council does not have its own offices, the staff work from their home addresses. The internal and external audits of the way in which the Council conducts its business did not result in any additional questions or comment from the auditors. Most of the credit for this must go to our officers for the exemplary way in which they manage the financial matters on behalf of the Council.

1.02 The Council is organized into Committees and working groups dealing with specific areas of the Council's business, viz :-

Staffing Committee – responsible for all matters relating to the employment and training of staff. This Committee also reviews the Council’s administrative processes, with regard as to how they may affect the workload and the working environment of its officers.

Allotments Committee: - This Committee is responsible for the overall administration of the Council’s four allotments sites, in Icklesham, Rye Harbour and two sites in Winchelsea. The Committee membership is a mixture of Councillors and tenant representatives from the four sites, two each from the two larger sites and one each from the two smaller sites.

Open Spaces Committee: - This Committee has recently been formed to look after the Council Recreation Grounds and Play areas. Previously the Members of this Committee met only as a working group to make representations to Council. Council still must set the terms of reference for the Committee. In doing so it will review the terms of reference of all the Committees and Working Groups.

Flagpole Committee: - This Committee also has a mix of Councillors and non-councillors. It is responsible for the maintenance of the signal flagpole at Rye Harbour.

Rye Harbour Car Park and Toilets Working Group. This Working Group was originally formed to advise the Parish Council on the potential implications of taking on a 99-year lease for the car park and toilets. It has a mix of Councillors and non-councillors. In the event that the Council is offered the opportunity of taking a lease on the toilets at Winchelsea and Winchelsea Beach, the Council would look to this group to repeat the excellent work it did for Rye Harbour.

Council: - Council is a meeting of all the Parish Councillors. It is the final arbiter on what may or may not be done in the Council's name. It currently meets every month, with the meetings moving from Ward to Ward on a rota. Following a recent decision, when all the new administration processes have been reviewed and updated, it is expected to meet only once a quarter, with an additional meeting in May, when by law it must hold its annual meeting and elect a Chairman and Vice-Chairman for the year. This meeting also carries out the annual review of the Council's Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, Policies and Procedures to ensure that they meet the latest legal requirements.

1.03 During the year the Clerk in accordance with the terms of her Contract of Employment, achieved her Certificate in Local Council Administration. This meant that the Parish Council was able to adopt a General Power of

Competence, which is only available to Parish Councils with a qualified Clerk. This allows the Council to do anything which an individual could lawfully do, except where specific legislation prohibits them from doing so. In addition, the Council can now take the next steps towards achieving the first stage of the Local Council's Award Scheme. Having a qualified Clerk is one of the criteria to be satisfied in order to achieve the award.

2.00 Budget.

2.01 The Council has set its annual budget at £170,234 and this will represent an increase of under 2% on the Parish precept. Inflation is currently running at 3%.

3.00 Actions in the past 11 months.

3.01 **Consultations:** - Council has been notified of consultations from East Sussex County Council on changes to Library Services and Waste and Recycling.

3.02 It has also responded to a joint consultation from ESCC and Rother D C in respect of the decriminalisation of parking across Rother District.

3.03 A consultation has just been received on the draft Rye Neighbourhood Plan. Any response must be made by 6th April.

3.03 **Grants:** - During the year the Council has continued to make grants to local organizations, in particular: -

Grants to the four Churches in the Parish for the upkeep of graveyards.

Grants to the four Community Halls in the Parish to help ensure that hire rates for residents and local societies are kept as affordable as possible.

A grant to the Marsham Older Peoples project which provides a form of day care for older people once a week. This is open to residents of the Parish.

A grant to Rye Harbour Nature Reserve.

A Donation to Rother Rural Trust. This Trust provides grants to residents in rural Rother, particularly those on low incomes, who have a need for financial support to help them improve their life.

3.04 **The Council's own estate:** - The Council has an extensive estate to maintain. The allotments have already been mentioned. In addition, there are five recreation areas which the Council maintains. Four of these are owned by the Council. One is owned by the residents of Rye Harbour but has been maintained by the Parish Council for many years as it was the only one in the Ward until fairly recently when we were offered the chance to take over Pound Field. In addition, there are

seven bus passenger shelters, a footway lighting system, numerous public seats and litter bins (not all of them in recreation grounds) and a significant number of signs. There are public notice boards in each ward.

We have recently taken on a lease of the Rye Harbour Car Park and Toilets, to ensure that they are managed in the best interests of the residents of the village and are available to other residents of the parish, many of whom regularly visit the adjacent nature reserve.

When we took this project on there was some concern in the Parish about the cost commitment in taking on a 99-year lease. At the time, the estimated running costs were in the region of £20,000. To date, the voluntary donations collected from the car park this year have exceeded £11,000 with about six weeks of the financial year left. Expenses have not so far reached the £20,000 mark.

This list is not exhaustive, but it is intended to give an idea of the size of the estate the Council manages on your behalf. One problem with being a Parish Council with four separate communities is that unlike most Parish Council's which serve a single community, we often have four of lots of facilities rather than just one.

Every year the Council funds a Health and Safety Assessment of its estate. Last year this ran to 45 pages. This is an indication of the size of the estate.

3.05 During the year, work has been going on to maintain the estate. The recreation grounds are regularly mown during the mowing season using a contractor on 3-year contract. That contract will be re-tendered during the next financial year. We are currently awaiting the outcome of detailed pitch inspections carried out by the Institute of Groundsmanship under an advisory scheme run in association with the Football Association. In the case of Icklesham Recreation Ground, it is aimed at improving the playing surface of the football pitch. The advice we receive will be just as applicable to other areas of the ground where there are similar drainage problems. In addition, we employ a small works contractor who carries out a variety of tasks such as litter picking, emptying litter bins and carrying out general maintenance work. This contractor is the officers' go-to contractor for urgent works that need to be carried out to protect the safety of the public. He carries out works ranging from resurfacing or repairing pot-holes in Smeaton's Lane, which is owned by the Council, to replacing a single slat in a fence. He also

carries out an important role in making regular visual checks of equipment in the play areas, when doing the litter picks.

3.06 The play equipment is also inspected annually by a specialist engineer, who not only checks for defects, and serious wear on moving parts, but also on compliance with the regulations appertaining to play equipment and play spaces. He produces a report that flags up issues that need to be attended to. He qualifies these as either needing urgent attention or requiring attention as part of a planned maintenance approach before the next inspection is due.

3.07 **Footway lighting.** The Parish Council also owns and maintains the footway lighting system in Winchelsea. This system is maintained by a specialist contractor, who also maintains the lights in the bus passenger shelters that have them fitted.

3.08 **Defibrillators.** I am sure most of you know that the Clerk to the Council managed to obtain free defibrillators for the village halls that wanted one. The Council funded their installation, when it came to light that they required a mains electrical connection. In June, we learnt that the one installed outside the Community Hall, here in Winchelsea Beach was used to successfully revive a patient. As a result, the Council received a

donation from the owners of Winchelsea Sands Caravan Park, on whose site the patient was staying.

3.09 What we learnt from this event is that there is only a 10-minute window of opportunity to make use of the equipment to have a reasonable chance of success. After 10 minutes the success rate diminishes fast. This means that in linear villages such as Icklesham and Winchelsea Beach that more than one such piece of equipment is desirable if the journey time from the incident to the village hall and back will be 10 minutes or more. With summer traffic levels this is likely to be the case in both villages.

3.10 **The sewage flooding** issues continue to be a major problem for part of Winchelsea Beach. Whilst some progress has been made on improving the situation, we are a long way from seeing the day when local heavy rain does not require Southern Water to hire tankers to seek to resolve the sewer overload that causes the flooding. Whilst, it may not be much comfort to those residents most affected by the problem, you may rest assured that your Parish Councillors will continue to press for a long-term resolution to the problem. At least the Planning Committee has made some progress in pressing the Local Planning Authority to take this

issue seriously when considering new development at Winchelsea Beach.

- 3.11 **Road Signs.** The Council has recently replaced the traditional wooden fingerpost at the junction of Monks Walk and Wickham Rocks Lane in Winchelsea. The original sign was broken off in a storm and disappeared from the site. The new post was jointly funded with East Sussex Highways. However, going forward the Parish Council will be wholly responsible for repairs and maintenance. Some years ago, the Council accepted responsibility for a similar post at Broad Street, Icklesham. This has recently been damaged and the Council is pursuing its repair and repainting. We are reluctant to lose these traditional components of the street furniture, which add character to our Parish.
- 3.12 **Scanner Appeal.** The Council donated from its funds to the scanner appeal for the Conquest Hospital. The rationale behind this decision being that any failure to upgrade this facility at the Hospital would mean a long journey to the next nearest facility for those residents of the Parish that are unfortunate enough to need a scan. We all know how difficult that would be for anyone without access to a car.
- 3.12 **Winchelsea Interpretation Boards.** There are a number of these boards around the town, which provide information to visitors. These have all

been repaired as required, and once again contribute positively to the image that visitors to the town take away with them.

3.13 **Winchelsea traffic calming.** The Parish Council is represented on the Group that is negotiating with East Sussex Highways on possible action to reduce the speed of traffic through High Street and German Street. Whilst, progress is slow, the Council have funded survey work during the year, which hopefully contributes to better informed discussions on acceptable solutions. We are now awaiting a feasibility study indicating what ESCC see as both practical and acceptable. Until this is received and evaluated, public consultation cannot usefully proceed.

314 **Proposed Bus Passenger Shelter at Winchelsea Beach.** In December, the Clerk and the Chairman of Council met representatives of East Sussex Highways and Stagecoach to discuss the siting of a shelter to serve the bus stop close to the Community Hall. To our surprise there was more discussion of matters that Stagecoach wanted to see implemented than there was about the siting of the shelter. The proposition put to us was that the kerb needed to be raised to a level that would enable wheelchair access to the bus without the need for a ramp. The bus would then stop using the layby as the necessary changes to the kerb would prohibit this. New bus stop signs are

required on both sides of the road, which the Parish Council would be expected to pay for. Stagecoach are not apparently prepared to make a financial contribution to the cost. We are currently awaiting details of the works required before the Council can consider the cost implications of these demands. Three months on from the meeting and we are no further forward on this project. The bottom line is that these potentially unreasonable demands could mean that the Council may have no alternative but to abandon the idea of providing a much-needed shelter because of the prohibitive cost.

3.15 **Vandalism.** During the year the Council has had to deal with a number of cases of vandalism, particularly in Icklesham Ward.

3.16 **Travellers.** Following the visit of a party of travellers to Icklesham Recreation Ground, we have at last been able to erect a barrier at the entrance to prevent further incursions. This took longer than expected due to difficulties with contractors.

3.17 **Christmas Trees.** In December, for the first time the Council provided each ward with an illuminated Christmas tree for the festive season. These were well received and given the modest cost we hope to make this a regular feature.

3.18 **Spring Clean.** Last year the Council promoted a clean-up in some areas of the Parish as part of the 'Clean for the Queen' initiative. We were due this last weekend to repeat the exercise in Rye Harbour and Winchelsea Beach as part of 'The Great British Spring Clean' but cancelled it due to the weather. A new date has yet to be arranged. Icklesham and Winchelsea Wards will hopefully take part this coming weekend. Our insurance cover only permits us to litter pick within the 30-mph limit.

3.19 At Rye Harbour, some members of the community litter pick every month outside of the winter months. Not only does this make a good use of the equipment funded by the Parish Council but it also attracts positive comments from visitors, who apparently would welcome a similar approach in the own communities.

4.00 Planning Committee

4.01 The Council's Planning Committee is delegated responsibility for all planning matters referred to the Parish Council or affecting the Parish. The Committee meets twice a month to consider how to respond to any planning applications affecting the Parish. The meetings are public meetings and members of the public can speak at the start of the meeting about any planning issue affecting the Parish.

4.02 **Trojan's Plat.** Thanks to the persistence of the Committee and also to the efforts of the Deputy Clerk, who normally clerks this Committee, we have, after 3 years of trying, managed to get the Housing Association to attend to the exteriors of the houses they own at Trojan's Plat. These were looking very shabby and detracted from the character of that part of the Winchelsea Conservation Area.

We have also managed to get some works carried out to the trees on the frontage which seriously affected the light reaching some of the properties and contributed to the algae growth.

5.00 Icklesham Sports Pavilion

5.01 The Council gave their approval this year to the proposals from the Icklesham Trust to replace the existing pavilion with a new pavilion meeting modern standards for such facilities. The proposals have recently gained planning permission.

5.02 Whilst the Trust is busy seeking detailed costings and fundraising, the Council needs to be considering two further actions.

5.03 The existing pavilion is the subject of a lease/licence between the Council and the Trust, that permits the pavilion to be on the land. The new proposal has a larger footprint than the existing pavilion and thus a

new lease/licence will be required before the construction can commence.

5.04 The other matter to consider is a licence for the construction works. The current Health and Safety Legislation applicable to the construction industry means that the Council needs to have in place a formal agreement about compliance with the legislation as well as ensuring that the successful Contractor operates on the site in a manner that will not compromise the use of the Recreation Ground by the public and that sufficient areas of the car park are kept available for users of the Ground and the adjacent Hall.

6.00 Looking to the future.

6.01 The Council must budget a year ahead, so that anything that this meeting indicates it would like the Council to consider as a future project and which requires a budget provision, could not be actioned until the financial year 2019-20.

6.02 **Elections.** That financial year is also the year when the next round of elections take place for both the District Council and the Parish Council.

- 6.03 When you go to the polls in May 2019, you will find that the changes made by the Boundaries Commission to electoral arrangements will have come into force.
- 6.04 The Parish Council will have just 3 Wards. Icklesham electing 5 councillors (currently 4 councillors), Winchelsea electing 2 councillors (currently 3 councillors) and Rye Harbour electing 6 councillors. Winchelsea Beach Ward will cease to exist, but the new combined Ward will return the same number of councillors as the existing Wards do now.
- 6.05 At District level, instead of voting for two councillors to represent the Parish, as you do now; Icklesham will be voting with Fairlight, Guestling and Pett to elect 2 Councillors. Winchelsea will be voting with Rye to elect 2 Councillors and Rye Harbour (including Winchelsea Beach) will vote with Camber, East Guldeford, Iden, Peasmarsch and Rye Foreign to elect 2 Councillors.
- 6.06 **Grass Cutting.** After we had finalized the precept for next financial year, we learnt from Cllr Glazier that one of the economies proposed by the County Highways Service is a reduction in the number of cuts to grass verges. In most cases it is likely to be one cut per year and our perception is that this might well have been reduced to zero were it not

for the highway safety implications of allowing the vegetation to grow unchecked.

6.07 Grass cutting on verges is an issue which the County Council are willing to allow Parish Councils to take on, where circumstances permit. This would obviously need careful consideration by the Parish Council. If this is an issue which the meeting would wish us to look at, now is the time to tell us, as we have until the end of the year to consider the impact on our budget for the financial year 2019-20. It may, of course take longer than that to reach agreement with the County Council and tender the works.

7.00 Communications

7.01 For just over a year now, Cllr Warren and the Chairman have been writing articles about the Parish Council for the Church Magazines in Icklesham and Winchelsea/Winchelsea Beach. Whilst, we appreciate that these magazines are not taken by every household, it is a cost-effective way of getting information about the Parish Council's activities out to the electors. The articles are placed on the Council's website after publication so those of you with internet access can access them.

7.02 The one area where we currently do not circulate information regularly is Rye Harbour, because they do not have the same opportunity to publish material. Any suggestions as to how we might give out information in Rye Harbour would be welcome. We could issue a newsletter, but the work involved in publishing it, together with printing and distribution costs would be prohibitive on a monthly basis.

8.00 Representation on other bodies.

8.01 The Parish Council is a member of the National Associations of Local Councils through its membership of the East Sussex Association of Local Councils. It appoints two representatives to attend meetings.

8.02 The Council is also a member of the Rother Association of Local Councils.

8.03 The Council also appoints representatives to: -

The Rye Partnership

The Harbour of Rye Advisory Committee

The Winchelsea Little Shop Association as the Council is a shareholder.
