The Wincheap Society

Minutes of the Public General meeting held at Thanington Neighbourhood Resource Centre 29th September 2026 at 7 p.m.

Purpose of the meeting

The meeting had two objectives: - the appointment of new committee members for the Wincheap Society and also to hear a presentation by Dave Wilson: – Chairman of ACRA about Local Government reorganisation and the implications for Wincheap.

Present at the meeting

Jim Hawkins
Clare Morris
Paul Todd
Michael Blanires
Robert Whitaker
Caroline Galbraith
Harmail Sandhu
Lois Sandhu
David Ireland
Barney Parsons
Sharon Gair
Caroline Heggie
Paul Eason
Michelle Crowther
Ian Burr
Dane Buckman
Peter Campbell

Apologies for absence

Mike Ebbs
Hilary Jarman
Helen French
Grace Cooper

Resignations from committee since last committee meeting

John Osborne has stepped down as chair after 30 years' service to the society
Simon Houston and Paul Eason have also resigned from the committee.

New Committee Members

The following agreed to become committee members of the Society and were all elected or re-elected onto the committee unanimously

Caroline Galbraith	Proposed by: David Ireland	Seconded by : Barney Parsons
Grace Cooper	Proposed by: Sharon Gair	Seconded by: Paul Eason
David Ireland	Proposed by: Michelle Crowther	Seconded by: Robert Whitaker
Mike Ebbs	Proposed by : Barney Parsons	Seconded by: Sharon Gair

Barney Parsons Proposed by: David Ireland Seconded by: Caroline Galbraith

Chair and Treasurer/Membership Secretary Position
Barney Parsons agreed to become Chair and Caroline Galbraith agreed to become Treasurer and Membership Secretary. This was unanimously accepted by the meeting.

Local Government Reorganisation and Wincheap

Barney Parsons introduced Dave Wilson to the meeting who gave a presentation on "Local Government Reorganisation – what will it mean for our local area?"

AI generated notes of the presentation and discussion are given below. The presentation slides will be available shortly.

Local government Reorganisation - AI transcript notes of the presentation by Dave Wilson

DW began with an overview of the Government's proposed move towards unitary authorities, combined authorities and mayors.

Local government reorganisation in Kent is creating uncertainty over Canterbury's future representation, city status and the potential role of local councils.

There is currently a pause instigated by central government to the reorganisation process with uncertainty over election dates, transition bodies and the future role of existing councils.

Reorganisation Context – the East Kent Unitary Council

- The Government's December 2024 white paper proposed unitary authorities with combined authorities and mayors across England.
- The proposed East Kent unitary would combine Canterbury, Dover and Thanet, with possible changes affecting Folkestone and Swale. The proposal would have about 470,000 residents.
- The process has been paused, with new unitary arrangements expected no earlier than May 2028 and possible elections or transition arrangements extending into May 2029.
- Canterbury's representation could fall from 11 city and county councillors to about four or six unitary councillors within an East Kent authority of roughly 89 members.

Canterbury community governance status

- Canterbury City Council paused its community governance review after legal advice suggested that a Canterbury town council could put the city charter and Lord Mayoralty at risk.
- The legal advice has not been published. It remains unclear how charter trustees would be appointed, funded and governed, or when the review would restart.

- The consultation reportedly received 89% support for a Canterbury town council, but no parish or town council is currently proposed for Canterbury.

Wincheap Options

- A parish or town council could provide a statutory voice on planning, support neighbourhood and highway improvement plans, organise community activities, and potentially manage local assets such as parks, halls, toilets and play areas.
- Speakers debated whether Wincheap should form a local council, join a larger body such as Thanington, or be represented through another arrangement.
- Open questions include the appropriate boundaries, the level of any precept, the powers devolved by the future unitary authority, and how local planning committees would operate.

Canterbury Representation

- Likely reduction in Canterbury's representation within the proposed East Kent unitary.
- Concern that a large unitary authority could make local priorities less visible.
- Discussion of the pressure on the new authority to deliver major services, including housing, social services, education and highways.

City Status

- Canterbury City Council's concern that a town council could affect the city charter and Lord Mayoralty.
- Proposed use of charter trustees and the unresolved legal and administrative questions surrounding them.
- Questions about the value of city status compared with democratic local representation.
- Rochester was cited as an example of a city losing its status during local government restructuring.

Local Councils

- Potential benefits of parish or town councils included statutory planning consultation, neighbourhood plans, highway improvement plans, community events and management of local assets.
- Examples discussed included Faversham, Ramsgate, Medway and Thanington.
- A local council would set its own precept; an indicative figure of about £50 per household was mentioned, with lower or no charges for some households depending on benefits.

Wincheap Choices

- There was a discussion whether Wincheap could have its own council or form part of a larger parish.
- There was consideration of shared interests with Thanington and uncertainty over Wincheap's boundaries was noted.
- Open questions concerned council size, warding, asset transfers, planning powers and the responsibilities that might be devolved by the future unitary authority.

Planning And Infrastructure

- Concerns were raised about housing growth, transport, water supply, sewage capacity and environmental resilience.
- A town or parish council could provide a more local voice on planning applications, although final planning decisions would remain with the unitary authority.
- The proposed mayoral and strategic planning arrangements remain unclear.

Consultation for Community Governance Review

Winsoc committee will be discussing its response to Stage 2 of the consultation which is open until Thursday 17 December 2026. There is also a separate consultation on a proposal to defer the scheduled parish and town council elections from May 2027 to May 2028. DW encouraged participation in the consultation.