

THE CORPORATION OF WINCHELSEA

Registered Charity Number 1192506

ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2025

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Introduction

1. The Corporation of Winchelsea was saved under s.14 of the 1883 Municipal Corporations Act and subsequent amendment to that Act under various Charity Acts. It was entered on the Charity Commission's Register of Charities on 24 November 2020.

2. Its objectives are:

a. To preserve the historic traditions associated with the role of Winchelsea as an Ancient Town of the Cinque Ports Confederation.
b. To promote the preservation and maintenance of the historic Court Hall and town gates of Winchelsea and any other land and properties therein, in its charge.
c. To hold the Court Hall and the three town gates, namely New, Ferry (Pipewell) and the Strand as designated land for the purposes of the Charity.
d. To oversee the state of the Court Hall, the three town gates and town well. Ensuring they are preserved for the public benefit, working with other agencies to maintain their appearance.
e. To maintain and manage a museum for the public benefit providing a record of the Town of Winchelsea and its people.

Governance

3. Its governance document is a Scheme approved by the Charity Commission. Led by a Mayor who fulfils its ceremonial functions. The governing council comprises of up to 12 additional Trustees. It meets 6 times per year and is supported by sub-committees dealing with the museum, fabric, strategy, insurance and assets, grant funding, finance and compliance. It has 3 officers, namely a Town Clerk, a Chamberlain and a Sergeant-at-Mace. Periods of office for all those covered by this paragraph span one year and are renewable.

4. The following formed the Executive Board of the Corporation in 2025, acting also as Trustees of the Charity and having the ancient title of Jurat:

Peter Cosstick (Mayor)
Michael Melvin
David Merrifield
John Rodley
David Page
Berenice Scott
Stephen King (Deputy Mayor)
John Clarke
Ian Kingham
Alison Casey
Jonathan Murphy (Treasurer)
Christopher Chappell
Phil Mack (from 21st April 2025)

Principal address:
The Court Hall
High Street
Winchelsea
East Sussex
TN36 4EA

Website: www.winchelsea.com

Meeting the Public Benefit

5. Both the Court Hall and Museum are valuable assets to the local community and visitors. The Court Hall is generally used for meetings, presentations, talks, exhibitions, and a number of other events. During 2025 the Court Hall was used on 140 occasions and is available for use throughout the year.
The Museum continued to open 6 days a week between April and October, as well as most Bank Holidays . It proves to be a valuable source of education and information for the local community and visitors. The Museum continues to go from strength to strength. During 2025 a further record was broken with over 2000 visitors benefiting from this facility.

6. Regarding the care of properties in the charge of the Corporation, our long-term agreement (to 2026) with Zurich Insurance was renewed for the current year on favourable terms. The Corporation has a rolling maintenance programme to ensure the upkeep of property and buildings

7. On 21st April 2025 a number of priorities were announced for the year ahead during the Mayoring Ceremony. We are delighted to report all of these, and more have been achieved.

- Full restoration of the West Gable wall early 2025. Associated ground works were completed, together with the installation of a unique trough/planter donated by two residents
- Full renovation of the Court Hall toilet
- Court Hall main entrance doors were replaced and associated stonework repairs completed.
- Restoration work to stonework to the Museum entrance
- Replacement of an industrial Dehumidifier for the Museum
- Provision of a gun carriage for the 'Anne' cannon
- Other restoration and enhancement projects included the external Museum and Court Hall notice boards, provision of 'dimmable' lighting in the Douglas Turner Room, and restoration of the original Mayors Robe, believed to be over 80 years old
- Following a productive and successful meeting with East Sussex County Road Safety Officers a request has been placed to improve traffic signage to help protect the New Gate from vehicle damage, which will be funded ESCC.
- Investment of a SAGE accountancy package to streamline reporting and general financial management
- There were a record number of 2033 visitors to the museum. We have continued to work with FOAM to offer a visit to the museum as part of the Cellar Tour booking.
- Four Historic Tours of Winchelsea were also run by the Mayor to raise funds for FOAM and the Museum which amounted to £705 being raised, with 47 people attending
- All Corporation revenue streams were up on 2024. Court Hall hire charges were not increased, yet revenue doubled.
- Several fund-raising events took place during 2025, including a Pub Quiz, educational presentations, and the highly successful event 'Tales from the Court Hall' all resulting in £1730 being raised
- The 'Under one roof' event in the Court Hall allowed residents and members of the public to learn/join various local societies
- Further presentations of the Cinque Ports and Winchelsea Corporation were held, resulting in 50 residents attending.
- We continued to support local business and attractions through marketing including the continued production and circulation of the free visit 'Discover Winchelsea' guide, and our website.

8. On 21st April it was announced that the Mayoress's chosen charity for the year would again be Demelza East Sussex children's charity. During the past nine months many members of the Winchelsea community have been working very hard to raise funds for this worthy and local charity, with £2,900 raised to date. Another amazing achievement that demonstrates how much can be achieved by a community working together for a common cause.

9. Mayoral activities, both inside the Town and throughout the wider Cinque Ports community, continue at a steady pace. For the fourth year running, the Mayoring Ceremony was conducted in two locations with the Mayor initially being sworn in at the Court Hall and continuing in the Church for a ceremony attended by approximately 200 people. We are very grateful to the Church for allowing us to use this wonderful facility.
Winchelsea has been working closely with the Confederation in relation to improve the marketing of the Cinque Ports and wider issues. The edited film version of the 'Cinque Ports' featuring David Starkey has now been incorporated on the Cinque Ports website (a Winchelsea initiative). Work continues with our local school in respect of a project for students in relation to the Cinque Ports and Winchelsea which is due to be completed by March 2026

10. In July a very special event was held at Walmer Castle, hosted by the Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, Admiral Sir George Zambellas. All fourteen members of the confederation were represented . It was a great honour and privilege for myself, the Mayoress, Town Clerk and our two nominated worthy causes, namely Demelza East Sussex and Pett Level Independent Rescue Lifeboat, to represent Winchelsea and be presented to HM King Charles III.

Finance

11. Revenue income and expenditure exceeded expectations with income generation up, and expenditure down against forecast. The Accounts attached to this report show the existing investments and reserves. The Corporation is grateful for the support of the Friends of the Ancient Monuments and Museum (FOAM) and the Millennium Artefacts Committee and to many members of the community for their support this year. With no regular revenue raising powers, Corporation reserves are vested in a Bond designed to cover one year of expenditure, plus that required to meet arising capital projects when necessary.

11.1 It should be noted that during 2025, the Corporation paid £34,808 for much needed various renovation, restoration, and capital projects. A total of £16,391 was received towards these projects with £14,391 being provided by FOAM, and a grant of £2000 being received from the Sussex Community Fund.

11.2 The fact that our revenue budget performed exceptionally well, resulted in less funds being used from our reserves to complete our much needed projects, yet still meet our everyday operational costs.

Looking Ahead

12. The Corporation's priorities for 2026 will be

- Continue with restoration and renovation projects of the Court Hall and Museum, Town Gates and Well, together with any other essential maintenance identified and agreed.
- Continue to engage with Local Authorities to seek solutions to help protect and prevent vehicle damage to all three Town Gates.
- Build on our close relationship with the Confederation of the Cinque Ports. Working with members and our community to ensure ongoing promotion, education and visibility of the unique role played by the Confederation in respect of our Maritime Naval history, traditions and historic Town.
- Ensure the smooth transition of the Cinque Ports Speakership being transferred to Winchelsea, in May 2026.
- Continue to forge our relationship with our local community, partners and school and where possible/appropriate assist and support identified projects.
- Support local business, attractions and events through on-going promotion of Winchelsea through the production and circulation of the free visitor guide 'Discover Winchelsea' together with development of our website, winchelsea.com and other suitable media platforms.
- Maintain and enhance visitor experience to the Town and Museum
- Continue to raise the profile and transparency of the Corporation with all members of the local community.
- Continue to increase the Corporations revenue streams, where possible reduce costs, and constantly identify and improve on the way we operate.
- Review the ownership of Corporation Property and Corporation stability

13. In conclusion, I would like to acknowledge and thank all those who have supported and assisted the Corporation during 2025. This includes the Freemen, Jurats, Officers and all those who have helped as volunteers in the Museum, and with many other activities relating to the Corporation and our wonderful historic Town.

14. In addition, our grateful thanks are extended to our local community for all the additional help given to the Corporation, in relation to time, provision of facilities, and financial support. FOAM have been outstanding in relation to their various fundraising events and providing the Corporation with much needed funds to help meet our objectives in relation to the maintenance of the Court Hall and the Gates

15. Also acknowledged is the help of our Local Authorities, namely East Sussex County Council, Rother District Council, Icklesham Parish Council and our local Ward Councillors for their support. We are very grateful to all concerned.

Peter R Cosstick
Mayor
For and on behalf of the Corporation of Winchelsea

Statement following Independent Inspection of Accounts
Year Ended 31st December 2025

White Cottage
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East Sussex TN36 4ED

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E-mail: jrnaylor@gmail.com

24 January 2026

J Murphy Esq
Treasurer Winchelsea Corporation
4 Hiham Green
Winchelsea
East Sussex TN36 4HB

Dear Jonathan,
As requested, I have carried out an independent review of the Winchelsea Corporation accounts for the year from 1 January to 31 December 2025. These are my thoughts.
You provided a profit and loss account and balance sheet for review.

GENERAL COMMENTS
I would like to start by congratulating the treasury team on moving the Corporation's accounts onto a dedicated accounting software platform, as discussed last year. This has clearly improved the presentation, made the review process easier, and will be of real long-term benefit in allowing meaningful year-on-year comparison of operational performance.
It is clear that the year saw unusually high levels of expenditure on a number of major projects. The work carried out helps to protect and enhance important assets under the Corporation's care, but it is important that the impact of these costs is properly understood when reviewing the year's results.

HEADLINE NUMBERS
The profit and loss account shows total income for the year of £36,308.97, resulting in a net deficit of £11,354.93.
This equates to a net margin of *negative 31%*, which would not be sustainable if it were a normal operating position. Even before overheads, the Corporation generated a gross surplus of only £1,500, representing a gross margin of 4.13%. This indicates that most income is absorbed before overhead costs are taken into account.
Taken at face value, these figures raise concerns, which is why we met to look more closely at what was driving the results.

LOOKING BEHIND THE NUMBERS

The reported deficit of £11,355 does not arise from normal day-to-day operations, but from a planned programme of capital investment in the Corporation's property and facilities. During the year, several major improvement projects were completed, including essential door replacement works, refurbishment of toilet facilities, repairs to the west wall and stonework improvements to the museum entrance. These works were necessary to maintain safety, accessibility and the long-term condition of the Corporation's assets.

When these one-off capital projects are stripped out, the underlying operational position shows a *surplus of around £17,500*. Core activities therefore continued to cover their running costs and make a positive contribution to reserves.

The trustees consider the use of reserves for these improvements to be appropriate and consistent with the Corporation's longer-term aims. The completed works should help reduce future maintenance risk, improve the visitor experience and support income generation in the years ahead.

The trustees are satisfied that the Corporation remains financially viable, with adequate reserves, and that the reported deficit reflects planned investment rather than any weakness in day-to-day operations.

ACCOUNTING APPROACH

The costs of these one-off works have been treated as direct expenses. If they had instead been treated as capital expenditure, the costs could have been spread over several years and depreciated annually. This would have reduced the impact on this year's reported performance and made year-on-year comparisons more straightforward.

As the Corporation does not pay tax, there is no financial advantage in changing the accounting treatment. I simply note this point because it makes comparisons of operational performance between years more difficult.

You were able to show me management reports produced by the accounting software that exclude capital works and other one-off items, which should allow for clearer year-on-year comparisons going forward.

OTHER POINTS

- The potential to bring the sales reporting for *Discover Winchelsea* and the *Official Town Guide* closer together. You explained that these are separate entities and should continue to be accounted for separately, but would look at presenting them more clearly within the sales listings.
- The continued use of a coin-operated electricity meter for the Court Hall. This has been mentioned in previous reports and remains worth noting. That said, the decision to retain this arrangement is understandable given that several external organisations use the space and prefer to pay for electricity on an "as and when needed" basis. You also noted that electricity usage and cost remain under review.

On this basis, I have no further matters to raise and am happy to approve the accounts for publication, reflecting the way in which the Corporation has chosen to account for this unusual year.

With kind regards,
Jeremy R Naylor

The Corporation of Winchelsea

Profit and Loss Report

01 January, 2025 - 31 December, 2025

Sales		
4001 - Court Hall Hire	810.00	
4003 - Fundraising / Events	1,730.00	
4004 - King's Dues	580.43	
4005 - Discover Winchelsea Guide	1,000.00	
4006 - Donations	821.17	
4007 - Gift Aid	292.00	
4008 - Electricity Coin Meter	148.00	
4010 - Museum Income	8,934.92	
4013 - Sale of Official Town Guide	600.00	
4200 - FOAM	14,391.26	
4410 - Interest Income	2,970.61	
4412 - Website Apportionment	302.00	
4900 - Other income	3,728.58	
	Total Sales	**£36,308.97**
Direct Expenses		
5060 - Door Project	14,579.77	
5061 - West Wall Project	3,303.41	
5062 - Museum Entrance Stonework	1,335.12	
5063 - CH Toilet Refurbishment	9,600.60	
5064 - Anne Gun Carriage	2,029.20	
5065 - Dehumidifier	3,960.00	
	Total Direct Expenses	**£34,808.10**
	GROSS PROFIT / LOSS	**£1,500.87**

Overheads		
5020 - Museum Stock / Expenses	852.74	
5021 - Discover Winchelsea Guide	912.19	
5022 - Poppy Appeal Donation	50.00	
6000 - Marketing	118.14	
7110 - Water Rates	406.57	
7130 - Premises Insurance	3,089.54	
7200 - Electricity	1,120.51	
7540 - Internet / IT Charges	563.87	
7610 - Accountancy Package	99.00	
7800 - Repairs, Maintenance and Renewals	3,135.50	
7810 - Cleaning / Gardening	414.00	
7900 - Bank Charges and Interest	67.95	
8200 - General Expenses	241.34	
8210 - Subscriptions	505.89	
8220 - Town Clerk Expenses	72.27	
8230 - Chamberlin Expenses	150.00	
8240 - Mayor's Allowance	1,056.29	
	Total Overheads	**£12,855.80**
	NET PROFIT / LOSS	**-£11,354.93**

The Corporation of Winchelsea Balance Sheet

As at 31 December 2025

(Registered Charity Number 1192506)

Account number	Account description	31 Dec 25 YTD	31 Dec 24 YTD	Var %
	Assets			
	Fixed Assets			
	Fixed Assets	0.00	0.00	0.00%
	Noncurrent Assets	0.00	0.00	0.00%
	Intangible Assets	0.00	0.00	0.00%
	Total Fixed Assets	**0.00**	**0.00**	**0.00%**
	Current Assets			
	Current Assets	0.00	0.00	0.00%
	Bank	76,273.69	87,628.62	(12.96%)
1200	HSBC Current Account	1,431.25	12,068.79	(88.14%)
1220	UTB 1 year Bond	50,000.00	50,000.00	0.00%
1230	UTB 40 Day	10,837.74	16,351.83	(33.72%)
1240	Santander *	0.00	9,208.00	(100.00%)
1250	HSBC BMM ACCOUNT **	14,004.70	0.00	0.00%
	Total Current Assets	**76,273.69**	**87,628.62**	**(12.96%)**
	Total Assets	**76,273.69**	**87,628.62**	**(12.96%)**
	Liabilities			
	Current Liabilities			
	Current Liabilities	0.00	0.00	0.00%
	Bank Overdraft	0.00	0.00	0.00%
	Other Current Liabilities	0.00	0.00	0.00%
	Total Current Liabilities	**0.00**	**0.00**	**0.00%**
	Future Liabilities			
	Long Term Liabilities	0.00	0.00	0.00%
	Total Future Liabilities	**0.00**	**0.00**	**0.00%**
	Total Liabilities	**0.00**	**0.00**	**0.00%**
	Total Net Assets	**76,273.69**	**87,628.62**	**(12.96%)**
	Equity			
	Equity	76,273.69	87,628.62	(12.96%)
	Profit And Loss - Prior Years	87,628.62	0.00	0.00%
	Profit And Loss - Current Year	(11,354.93)	87,628.62	(112.96%)
	Total Equity	**76,273.69**	**87,628.62**	**(12.96%)**

Notes:

* Santander Account closed in September 2025

** HSBC BMM Account (Deposit Account) opened in November 2025