



EAST PRESTON PARISH COUNCIL

Council Office, 122 Sea Road, East Preston, West Sussex. BN16 1NN

01903 770050

<http://eastpreston-pc.gov.uk/>

Email: clerk@eastpreston-pc.gov.uk

MINUTES: of the Proceedings of the Monthly Meeting of East Preston Parish Council held at 19.00 on Monday, 4th March 2024 at East Preston Infant School, Lashmar Road, East Preston

PRESENT: Councillors Christine Bowman, Kit Bradshaw, Andrea Chapman, Lisa Duff, Barbara Gale, John Gunston, Helen Hill, Elizabeth Linton, Glyn Mathias, Rick McElroy, and Steve Toney (Chairman)

ALSO: Simon Cross, Clerk to the Council

Arun District Councillors Philippa Bower, Ricky Bower and Paul Kelly (all until 19:20)

Mr G (until 19:41), Mr M (until 19:03) and Mrs M (all until 19:41)

ABSENT: Councillors David Moore and Steven Wilkinson

* * * * *

The following abbreviations may appear in these Minutes:

ADC – Arun District Council;
AoSERA – Angmering-on-Sea Estate Residents' Association
BTP – British Transport Police;
CPRE – Campaign for the Protection of Rural England;
NHS – National Health Service;
NR – Network Rail;
PCSO – Police Community Support Officer;
SLCC – Society of Local Council Clerks;

SW – Southern Water;
TfSE – Transport for the South East;
TRO – Traffic Regulation Order;
VHF – East Preston & Kingston Village Hall Foundation;
WRA – Willowhayne Residents' Association
WSCC – West Sussex County Council;
WSALC – West Sussex Association of Local Councils

* * * * *

The meeting opened at 18.59. Cllr Toney welcomed everyone to the meeting.

176/24 INTRODUCTIONS

Cllr Toney welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained the meeting protocol and safety information.

177/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology and a reason for absence had been received from Cllrs Moore and Wilkinson.

1828 The Council **RESOLVED** unanimously to accept the apologies received from Cllrs Moore (holiday) and Wilkinson (holiday).

Apologies had also been received from County Cllr Roger Elkins, Mrs Linda Denton and Mrs Dorothy Lee.

178/24 DECLARATION OF PERSONAL AND/OR PREJUDICIAL/PECUNIARY INTERESTS

None were declared.

Cllr Toney reminded councillors they could also declare an Interest at the beginning of each Agenda Item.

179/24 PUBLIC SESSION

Agenda Item 12a – West Sussex County Council – Mrs M again thanked the county council for planting the new trees in Sea Road.

Agenda Item 9c – Community Engagement Committee – Mr M reported the Winter 2024 Newsletter had yet to be delivered to Orchard Road. He suspected this meant it had also not been delivered to Hillview Crescent. The Clerk replied he had received confirmation from the delivery company the delivery had been completed. He would contact the company and ask it to prove it had delivered to Orchard Road.

No Agenda Item – Mr M advised the council now it had had Planning Permission granted for the beach access proposed for the bottom of Sea Road, a marine licence would also be required. The Clerk explained this was not a council project and he would make the leading company aware of this.

(Mr M left the meeting at this point.)

Agenda Item 9a – Amenities Committee – Mrs M said she had seen something somewhere about a proposal to improve accessibility to the Village Green. She felt accessibility was already pretty good, although a dropped kerb on the northern side of the Village Green would be very helpful. The Clerk replied the council had received such a proposal from the Disability Action Group, East Preston, and this would be considered at the Amenities Committee meeting to be held on 20th May.

180/24 COUNCIL RESPONSES

Nothing was added.

181/24 ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Cllr Toney invited the district councillors to address the meeting next.

District Cllr Ricky Bower spoke first. He spoke of a forthcoming Planning Policy Committee which sought to adopt a Direction of Travel for ADC's review of its Local Plan. He was concerned the Direction of Travel was very much ADC's vision without sufficient input from infrastructure providers.

ADC had increased its Council Tax by the maximum allowed before needing to call a referendum. This equated to £0.11 per week increase on a Band D property. Cllr Bower detailed some of the cutbacks being made in the council's 2024/25 budget.

District Cllr Philippa Bower said the ADC Environment Committee had held the first meeting of the ADC Flood Forum. Cllr Bower said this was focussed more on the western side of the district and she was not convinced it would prove very helpful to East Preston. She further explained the forum was pressing Southern Water and WSCC to meet more of their responsibilities.

District Cllr Ricky Bower added more help was needed to ensure those with riparian ownership rights over ditches adjacent to or on their land met their responsibilities too. Was this something the parish council could help with?

District Cllr Kelly said Roy Allen of Sea Road Beach Access Limited was liaising with Karl Roberts, ADC Interim Chief Executive, regarding landowner permission to build the beach access on the beach at the southern end of Sea Road. Mr Allen was due to ask a question about this at the ADC Full Council meeting on 13th March.

Cllr Gunston thanked Cllr Kelly for his work last year on the Roundstone Drive allotments site, saying the tidying up work had made the site look much better and had been appreciated by other plot-holders. However, the council had heard nothing further from the ADC legal team on the possible future of the site.

Cllr Gunston said there were flooding sites in the village which might benefit from the work being done by the ADC Flood Forum, for example, Cotswold Way which currently remained flooded long after other flood hotspots in the village had subsided. The Clerk said in this meeting with WSCC Highways on 9th February (see Minute xxx/24 below), he had been told there was a backlog of some 300 gully clearance jobs across the county, approximately 20 of which were being completed each week. Last week, he had tried to escalate gully clearance work in Cotswold Way. He had not been told of any escalation mechanism but had been told Cotswold Way was due to be visited on 8th March, weather permitting.

Cllr Gunston asked whether ADC would be able to provide a map of the village's ditches. Cllr Ricky Bower said it may have been able to in the past, but WSCC had now been the Local Flood Authority for sometime and any maps held by ADC may no longer be up to date. The Clerk said the parish council had access to an online mapping tool that did have contain drainage information.

Cllr McElroy said, about six months ago, the gulleys outside his home had been cleared, very impressively. He stated again if more regular maintenance was undertaken, the long-term expenditure would be less.

(All three Arun district councillors left at the conclusion of this item.)

182/24 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 5TH FEBRUARY

The draft Minutes were circulated to all councillors on 6th February asking for suggested amendments by the 13th February. None were received.

1829 The Council **RESOLVED** unanimously the Chairman could sign the Minutes as a true record of the meeting held on 5th February. Cllr Toney duly did so.

183/24 UPDATE ON MATTERS IN THE MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Council NOTED the following report, which had been circulated in advance of the meeting:

Monthly Update Report

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Minute 101/22 – Traffic Regulation Order for double yellow lines in Sea Road / North Lane**
- 3. Minute 1021/23 – West Sussex County Council – parking restrictions in Vicarage Lane**
- 4. Minute 015/24 – West Sussex County Council – highways maintenance**

1. Introduction

This is the report covering items discussed during Full Council meetings up to and including the meeting held on 5th February 2024.

2. Minute 101/22 – Traffic Regulation Order for double yellow lines in Sea Road / North Lane

The double yellow lines were painted on 20th February. I had expressed my concerns, more than once, to WSCC Highways about these being implemented before any 20mph stretch was implemented – as we have seen in Worthing Road, parking restrictions can unintentionally result in increased traffic speeds.

It is disappointing, the existing double yellow lines, to which these have been joined, were not refurbished at the same time.



The southern end of the new double yellow lines.

3. **Minute 1021/23 – West Sussex County Council – parking restrictions in Vicarage Lane**

No response from Olly King yet about the additional documents requested which had already been supplied by Mr Kimmer.

4. **Minute 015/24 – West Sussex County Council – highways maintenance**

Aside from County Cllr Elkins’s confirmation he had forwarded our letter to Cllr Dennis’s office, there is still no acknowledgement of nor response to the letter we sent on 11th January.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

27th February 2024

The Clerk offered to answer any further questions but none were forthcoming.

184/24 FINANCIAL MATTERS

The Accounts for February 2024 had been distributed to Members in advance of the meeting.

- 1830** The council **RESOLVED** unanimously to approve the Outstanding Purchase Orders report for 2023/24, value £227.38 (excl. VAT).
- 1831** The council **RESOLVED** unanimously to approve the Regular Monthly Payments report for February 2024 totalling £1,186.57 (inc. VAT).
- 1832** The council **RESOLVED** unanimously to approve the Supplier BACS Invoices Paid report for February 2024 (totalling £30,469.08 inc. VAT).
- 1833** The council **RESOLVED** unanimously to approve the List of Sales Receipts & Bank Receipts by Bank report for financial year to date totalling £348,891.82 (inc. VAT).

The council NOTED the Bank Reconciliations to 14th February 2024.

The council NOTED the Budget Summary for 2023/24 to date.

The Chairman thanked Mr Vyse, the council's Book-keeper, for preparing the above reports. Councillors said the recent finance training had helped them to understand the reports better.

185/24 REPORTS FROM PARISH COUNCIL COMMITTEES

The council NOTED the following reports which had been circulated in advance of the meeting:

Committees

Since the last Full Council meeting the following committees have met: Amenities on 12th February; Finance & General Purposes and Major Events on 19th February; and Planning & Licensing on 12th February. The draft Minutes from these meetings have been circulated to all councillors.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

26th February 2024

Amenities Committee

Cllr Wilkinson is the chairman of this committee.

The committee met on 12th February.

Office forecourt cycle hoops – Two new cycle hoops have been installed at the office forecourt. Feedback posted on social media has been very positive: 'Please pass on a big thank you, I was so pleased when I saw the bike hoops. It stops me leaning the bike against the wall'. There is still ample space on the forecourt for two cars to park and for a cyclist to manoeuvre around the hoops.

Trees – the King Charles III Coronation Tree has been planted at the north western corner of the Village Green. The tree species is an Acer campestre, which is the same as the Queens Jubilee tree. A commemorative plaque has been placed at the foot of the tree, inside the metal cage.

Memorial trees - Two memorial trees were planted at Two Acres in February, both trees are Prunus Pandora's, flowering cherry trees. Representatives from each sets of families were present for the planting.

Tree work – Due to the weather the tree work highlighted in the 2023 annual tree report and additional tree work at Warren Recreation Ground has not been completed. It is now looking likely that this will now not take place until the spring 2024. Therefore £4,000.00 which Full Council had agreed to fund the work from its Annual Contingency Budget (resolution 1794 - Essential Tree

Works identified in the Council's Annual Tree Report), will have to come out of the 2024/25 financial years Annual Contingency Budget.

Litter Bins – Committee agreed to a proposal received from the Environment Group, to install two new litter bins, one by the bus shelter opposite Hares and the other at the junction of the Street and Old Worthing Rd. East Preston Film Society kindly purchased both bins and donated them to the village. ADC advised it will be installing them shortly.

Warren Recreation Ground car-park lighting – following a concern raised by a nearby resident, a blind has been fitted to the lantern at the north-western corner of the car-park to reduce light pollution. “We are happy with the situation now and feel that the guard and positioning has vastly improved the light disturbance to 1 Field Court. Thank for your efforts in helping us resolve this matter.”

The committee's next meeting will be on 20th May.

Dawn Reid – **Assistant Clerk to the Council**

22nd February 2024

Audit & Governance Committee

The committee did not meet in February; the committee's next meeting will be on 11th March.

Cllr Glyn Mathias –
Chairman of the Audit & Governance Committee

26th February 2024

Community Engagement Committee

Cllr Linton is the Chairman of this committee.

The committee did not meet in February.

Trying to get buy-in and attendance at the Roundstone Level Crossing public meeting from major stakeholders is proving a challenge. Cllrs Toney and Linton and I have agreed a go/no go date of 7th March, two weeks ahead of the scheduled date. Sir Peter Bottomley MP has agreed to attend, if he can.

Discussions about the cost of the village bus service for the coming financial year are ongoing. We still hope to be able to revise the route to include Angmering Station although the suggestion is meeting resistance from the service provider.

Warm Welcome Space sessions are continuing at both the British Legion and St Mary the Virgin Church.

The committee's next meeting is scheduled for 18th March.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

21st February 2024

Finance & General Purposes Committee

Cllr McElroy is the chairman of this committee.

The committee met on 19th February. The meeting was chaired by Cllr Gunston in Cllr McElroy's absence.

The main item of business was meeting with the solicitor the council had instructed to carry out background checks on the Conservative Hall. The solicitor confirmed he was in touch with the Trustees' solicitor and would chase for some additional information for this meeting.

The committee agreed to change to an alternative accountancy software package. The new package is designed specifically for use by local councils and, after the initial set-up costs, will prove considerably cheaper annually. Adrian will now be working closely with the new provider to ensure a smooth transition. Please be aware future financial reports may be slightly different to the current format.

The committee also agreed to a further three years with Mulberry & Co. providing the council's Internal Audit services. The committee agreed it would probably look to change provider at the end of the three years.

The committee's next meeting is scheduled for 19:00 on Tuesday, 14th May.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

20th February 2024

Major Events Committee

The committee met on 19th February and the draft Minutes have been circulated to all councillors and officers. The meeting was attended by two representatives of East Preston Festival Committee and two representatives from the East Preston & Kingston branch of the Royal British Legion.

D-Day Big Lunch, 2nd June – this event is being led by the East Preston Festival Committee with support from the parish council and the East Preston and Kingston Branch of the Royal British Legion. The Legion reps apologised it had taken so long to assess to what extent the branch could financially support the event, but they hoped to be able to confirm after a branch committee meeting on 29th February.

Both organisations confirmed the event is being led by them with moral support from the council. The council was not providing any human resources on the day of the event.

Funday Sunday, 21st April – Tickets are now on sale and advertised in the Winter 2024 Newsletter. Some tickets have already been sold, £10 a head.

East Preston Food & Drink Festival, 24th August – an initial selection of stalls has been made. This will include the usual mix of past favourites and businesses who have not attended before. Some children's entertainment had been finalised, with more being pursued.

Christmas Celebrations 2024 – all is on track. Children's activities will be in the Conservative Hall this year, allowing more room for more children to get involved simultaneously. To this end, we have also bought a second badge machine. We are going to talk to East Preston Village Preschool about whether it could host something for even younger children in the cricket pavilion.

The committee's next meeting will be on 22nd April.

Cllr Elizabeth Linton –
Chairman of the Major Events Committee

21st February 2024

Personnel Committee

The committee did not meet in February.

The committee did organise financial training for councillors on 26th February. Nine councillors and Simon attended. Of the four unable to attend, two were away, one was working and one was representing the council at another meeting. The training was given by Andy Beams of Mulberry & Co., in his usual engaging style, and hopefully all present found the session worthwhile. Reassuringly, Andy's presentation did not make any of us think the council was doing anything wrong financially. I found the training very comprehensive and helpful seeing how the financial side of the council all fits together. Simon has circulated the slides to all councillors and Andy said he would be willing to spend five minutes with any councillor during his visit to the council on the morning of 15th May.

For info, the ADC basic councillor allowance has increased to £6,378 per annum. The parish council, in line with a number of other local councils, offers an allowance of 10% of the basic district council allowance. To councillors who take the allowance, we pay twice a year, September and March. Your March payment will be the final payment of the 2023/24 year, so your first increased payment will be made in September. Any time you wish to change whether or not you take the allowance, please just let me know.

The committee's next meeting is scheduled for 15th April.

Cllr Lisa Duff – **Chairman of the Personnel Committee**

27th February 2024

Planning & Licensing Committee

Cllr Mathias is the chairman of this committee.

The committee met on 12th February.

The committee considered four Applications. The committee agreed not to raise any objections to two of these, but agreed to raise objections to the other two, both of which were resubmissions. The committee also considered a change submitted to the proposal for 47 new dwellings on land north-east of Kingston Lane; the committee submitted an objection to the proposed change.

Work on the Neighbourhood Plan continues.

The committee's next meeting is scheduled for 11th March.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

23rd February 2024

Additionally:

Major Events – Cllr Linton said the Royal British Legion had been represented at the committee's most recent meeting and had explained they would be able to provide an update on sponsorship of the Big D-Day Lunch following a committee

meeting taking place on 29th February. This had now been going since last summer. The Clerk added he had asked the representatives for an update earlier in the day and had been advised, “We’ve got the paperwork ready so will need an update from county this week, once I have that I’ll forward on.” Cllr Linton had hoped the event would be able to host a replica Spitfire but felt the chances of one still being were now slim.

Personnel – Cllr Duff thanked all councillors who had attended the finance training session run on 26th February.

There were no updates from the council’s other five committees.

186/24 PERSONNEL COMMITTEE – SOCIAL MEDIA

Council NOTED the following report, which had been circulated in advance of the meeting:

Personnel Committee – social media

Council is asked to agree a proposed wording for inclusion in the Protocol on Councillor/Staff Relations regarding Social Media.

Cllr Duff to lead on this item.

In January, the Personnel Committee agreed to add a paragraph about councillors’ and officers’ use of Social Media in the Protocol on Councillor/Staff Relations. The committee is concerned comments on Social Media may inflame councillors and may lead them to commenting in a way which may, wholly unintentionally, bring the council into disrepute. Whilst it is many years since that has happened at this council, it does happen at other councils from time to time, and the committee felt it was best to be prepared.

Cllr Duff and I have worked on this wording together, but that does not mean it’s perfect and cannot be tweaked.

Section 8 of the Protocol is headed Media Relations. We propose to add the following wording as paragraph 8.7:

Tips for social media. Incorrect or critical comments about the council will always be made on social media. If possible, avoid responding - tomorrow is another day and people move on, and forget, very quickly in social media. However, if you do want to reply, always remember people will often see the councillor before the person. Never reply in haste - always try to let an hour pass before commenting. Always feel free to suggest the person contacts the Council Office direct to receive an official response. If you think your posted comment could be misconstrued, let the office know so officers can consider any damage limitation.

Likely impact upon reducing crime and disorder – not applicable.

Likely impact upon the environment – not applicable.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

28th February 2024

Cllr Duff, Chairman of the Personnel Committee, explained the background to this proposal. No questions were asked. Cllr McElroy said there were a number of keyboard warriors in the world and these usually moved on to another topic very rapidly.

1834 The Council **RESOLVED** unanimously to add wording regarding Social Media into Section 8 of the Protocol on Councillor/Social Relations.

187/24 REPORTS FROM PARISH COUNCIL WORKING PARTIES

The following reports had been circulated in advance of the meeting:

Working Parties

None of the other working parties have met this month, although the Environmental Initiatives Working Party has a meeting scheduled for 28th February.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

26th February 2024

20mph Working Party

Cllr Wilkinson is the chairman of this committee.

Further to the update given to the last meeting, I had not heard back from Olly King by the time I met with two of his colleagues as reported in the Clerk's Report below. One explained what he believed a Speed Limit Terminal sign to be. Keith Harris and I then met and amended a map previously given to us by Olly and sent it back to him on 21st February. No response as yet.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

27th February 2024

Environmental Initiatives Working Party (EIWP)

The working party met on 28th February.

We agreed to a walking map walk-through on 20th March, before publication of the map, to ensure there are no obvious mistakes. At the same time, we will also be looking at the verges to help decide which we may suggest EP in Bloom adopt.

We will be holding a meeting with the Repair Café volunteers in late March prior to starting at the Spire Room, hopefully in May.

We discussed flooding issues and would like to understand where the rifes are in East Preston and how the retention basin in Angmering was constructed.

Our next meeting will be on Wednesday 24th April and we will be inviting Christine to talk about the Neighbourhood Plan and our proposed environmental stall in June.

Cllr John Gunston –

Chairman of the Environmental Initiatives Working Party

28th February 2024

Flat Working Party

Cllr Wilkinson is the chairman of this committee.

Nothing to report at this time.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

30th January 2024

Leases Working Party

I have suggested an informal meeting to the Secretary of East Preston & Kingston Bowls Club. He has agreed but is unavailable until the week beginning 25th March.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

26th February 2024

Additionally:

Environmental Initiatives Working Party – Cllr Gunston thanked Cllr Bradshaw for completing the work on the videos to go alongside the East Preston tourist map. Anyone interested could join the walk-through scheduled for the morning of 20th March.

Cllr Gunston took the opportunity to remind those present of the Local Energy Company meeting which was being held in the Infant School on Wednesday, 6th March. All could attend if they wished.

Leases – the Clerk said he had now been able to book an informal meeting with members of the Bowls Club committee at the end of March.

There were no updates from the council's other working parties.

188/24 WEST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL

County Cllr Elkins had sent his apologies for this meeting.

189/24 SUSSEX POLICE

The Clerk reported no report had been received from Sussex Police.

190/24 CLERK'S REPORT

The council NOTED the following report which had been circulated in advance of the meeting:

Clerk's Report

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Police matters**
- 3. Anti-social behaviour matters**
- 4. Freedom of Information / Data Protection requests**
- 5. Meeting with Rustington PC and Compass Travel, 30th January**
- 6. Meeting with Stagecoach, 31st January**
- 7. Friends of St Mary's Christmas Tree Festival, 31st January**
- 8. Meeting with WSCC Highways, 9th February**
- 9. Funeral of Father Stephen Ortiger, 17th February**
- 10. Meeting with Stagecoach and local council clerks, 22nd February**
- 11. Finance training for councillors, 26th February**

12. **Twice-yearly meeting with East Preston Cricket Club, 27th February**
13. **Social media**
14. **MailChimp stats**
15. **A selection of things we have been asked since the last meeting**
16. **Recent bouquets and complaints**
17. **Leave**
18. **March meetings and events**

1. **Introduction**

This is the report mainly covering February 2024 and matters which may not arise elsewhere on the agenda.

2. **Police matters**

A couple of residents have been in touch concerned with the behaviour of, for want of a phrase, a knocker boy in the village – or possibly two different knocker boys.

The first incident, a lady let her into her flat after he claimed to have been at one of her neighbour's. He went wandering her flat, looking at various items, until she somehow managed to persuade him to leave. A neighbour that reported this to me said she herself had had the same dealer in and had sold him some silver. She asked him to provide a receipt, but when she read it, there was nothing legible on the page.

In the second incident, a man had pulled up alongside an elderly pedestrian, who had assumed he was looking for directions. She approached his car, in which was a very friendly (and distracting) Yorkshire terrier. The man claimed they had met before, but the woman was certain they had not. He said he had been buying costume jewellery in the village and asked whether she had any. She said she did not but he asked her to think about it and said he would drop a leaflet round to her. She gave him her address (let's not think about that!). He did call round a few days later, but no sign of a leaflet and claimed she had said she would have things to sell, which she maintained she had not said and did not have. Somewhat disgruntled, he did leave.

After this second incident, although the man/men had not broken any law, they were perhaps not being totally respectful to residents and I reported this to Sussex Police in case there were other incidents there were aware of. No response to date.

3. **Anti-social behaviour (ASB) matters**

No new updates on any previous cases raised to the ADC ASB team.

4. **Freedom of Information / Data Protection requests**

No Freedom of Information requests received since the last report.

No Data Protection requests received since the last report.

5. **Meeting with Rustington PC and Compass Travel, 30th January**

Cllr Linton and I attended this meeting with Cllrs Jamie Bennett and Andy Cooper of Rustington PC, Alison Cooper of Rustington PC, ADC and WSCC, my counterparts Carole Ward and Rosie Costan, and Chris Chatfield of Compass Travel.

The meeting sought to find some common ground between the council and the bus company, and after the meeting, Carole sent Chris a list of suggested alternate routes which might provide a more cost-effective way forward than continuing the existing service.

Cllr Linton will almost certainly wish to comment upon this meeting too.

6. **Meeting with Stagecoach, 31st January**

I had a quick, informal meeting with Rob Vince, Business Development Manager for Stagecoach South and East Preston resident. Although we did not discuss anything of any real seriousness, most of what we discussed is not in the public domain, so I cannot report it here. As and when any of it does become public, I will report on it here.

Part of the meeting I can report upon is my inviting Stagecoach to send a representative to the Roundstone Level Crossing meeting on 21st March. As a local resident, driver and pedestrian and former bus driver, Rob has an almost unique experience of the level crossing, a passion for safety there, and is very willing to attend the meeting.

7. **Friends of St Mary's Christmas Tree Festival, 31st January**

This meeting was called for interested volunteers to get a better understanding of what roles combine to make a successful Christmas Tree Festival, so they could volunteer in the most appropriate way.

Cllrs Toney and Gunston were both there in their private capacities. Probably about thirty willing volunteers were also there.

By the end of the evening, in a private capacity, I had agreed to help on the team running the preview reception.

Assuming enough other volunteers came forward, the Festival would run on 13th, 14th and 15th December.

8. **Meeting with WSCC Highways, 9th February**

This meeting was called and organised by a resident of Sea Lane to tackle WSCC Highways about the need for better proactive drains clearance. Highways was represented by Simon Nevill and the local Highways Steward, James Robinson.

Simon and James fully understood the problems Sea Lane (and other) residents face during heavy rainfall. Simon explained Sea Lane gulleys are proactively cleaned every four years. Anything more than that would be a reactive response to a concern raised by a member of the public. Simon said the contract was currently being renegotiated and, with that in mind, this council has already been in touch with the Cabinet Member for Highways & Transport asking for more regular cleaning to be considered.

I asked whether WSCC Highways could consider making available to trusted town and parish councils a supply of flooding signs that we could be trusted to put out when necessary, particularly in places where inconsiderate driving results in bow-waves up people's driveways. Simon thought this could certainly be considered.

The meeting was held in the Council Office following which the resident took Simon and James on a walking tour of Sea Lane.

9. **Funeral of Father Stephen Ortiger, 17th February**



Fr Stephen's funeral was held at Worth Abbey and livestreamed through the Worth Abbey website. Our Lady, Star of the Sea church organised the livestream to be shown in the church hall, and I attended this with Cllr Toney and former councillor Pat Gander. Although a ticketed event, there were only between twenty and twenty-five of us present. Several other members of Fr Stephen's erstwhile congregation had attended the service at the abbey, also ticket only.

The funeral was led by the abbot who did not introduce himself, nor did he acknowledge, in any way, those people who watched the livestream. It was good to see East Preston's two deacons, Tony Kinal and Allan Veness participating centrally in the funeral service. East Preston was mentioned a few times.

At the end of the livestream, another former councillor, Celeste Amoo, publicly thanked Steve, Pat and me for attending and we received an unnecessary round of applause. None of us was able to stay on for the buffet lunch.

On 21st February, there was a memorial service held at the church. Towards the end of the service, a family friend called Eva was invited to give a eulogy, during which she said the following, "I have to say he loved you guys. I mean, he proudly stomped around Lourdes last year with an I Heart EP bag, giving everyone the lowdown on how East Preston was the best."

10. Meeting with Stagecoach and local council clerks, 22nd February

I attended this meeting at Rustington Parish Council's offices, together with Katie Herr (Angmering PC), Nadine Phibbs (Ferring PC), Laura Chrysostomou and Juliet Harris (Littlehampton TC) and Carole Ward (Rustington PC). Stagecoach was represented by Rob Vince.

The meeting came out of the meeting I had had with Rob above. Rob opened the meeting by explaining he is a Business Development Manager for Stagecoach South, his patch covering Surrey, Sussex and Hampshire. He explained he had no magic wand he could wave but he wanted to hear from us as to our views of what our communities need from a bus service. Rob said the pandemic would have driven all UK bus companies out of business had the government not stepped in with financial support and then incentives such as the £2 single fare cap. Stagecoach believes fare-paying usage has returned to 90% of the pre-pandemic levels, but usage by bus pass holders has only returned to 70% to date – both these figures are approximate and there are variables attached to both which may never be understood.

Each clerk took it in turn to give an idea of what they believed their residents wanted from bus services. Repeatedly, with the exception of Ferring, access to the Wave was a big thing – perhaps it is easier for Ferring residents to go to Splashpoint. I said I believed East Preston residents wanted a more frequent 700 service in the evenings, but also a longer daytime service to the southern end of the village. Ferring and Rustington both said they are well-served by bus services and Angmering and Littlehampton needed improved services to serve their new and upcoming estates better. Rob said it was very unusual for local councils to fund a whole bus service, shelters and benches being more the typical investment by local councils.

Rob explained the complexities of amending an existing bus route or starting a new service. The new 500 service, instigated by WSCC to serve 16 new housing developments between Chichester and Littlehampton had started strongly, but twice been badly affected by long-term roadworks in Barnham; these necessitated a long diversion which had put off a lot of users, although numbers had returned reasonably well afterwards.

After the meeting, I received the following feedback:

“Many thanks to Simon for organising, Carole for hosting and Rob for joining us – very worthwhile.” (Juliet Harris, Littlehampton Town Council)

“Thank you for organising yesterday – it was most useful.” (Katie Herr, Angmering Parish Council)

“Carole, thank you for hosting. Simon, thank you for inviting me. I appreciate that Ferring is a little further east.” (Nadine Phibbs, Ferring Parish Council)

Thanks to Carole and Rosie for hosting the meeting in Rustington.

11. Finance training for councillors, 26th February

I attended this training session, primarily aimed at councillors. Cllr Duff has reported on this above.

12. Twice-yearly meeting with East Preston Cricket Club, 27th February

I attended this meeting with Cllr Toney. Cllr McElroy had hoped to attend but was ultimately unable for family reasons. The Cricket Club was represented by Pete Dallimore (Chairman), Colin Smith (Secretary), Andy Reeves (Treasurer) and Steve Parsons (President). The meeting was held at the cricket pavilion and it was Cllr Toney’s turn to chair.

The 2024 season will start on 11th May, although there is a chance there will be a match on 4th May. Likely close of the season will be 7th September.

The club has sought advice on extending the netting on the eastern boundary and is now awaiting a quotation for said works. It is likely the club will approach the club for a grant.

The club is concerned about more dips having appeared in the outfield, relatively large and could cause injury. The council will ask its contractors for advice in this matter. The outfield mower will be due for replacement soon.

The club asked about defibrillators in the village and we advised of the council’s defibrillator fund if the club wanted to install a defib outdoors making it available for members of the public 24/7.

I confirmed the contact details for the ADC Local Land Charges Property Gazetteer Officer had not changed since I had given them to Andy a couple of years ago. The club needs to contact the officer in order to get a postcode for the cricket pavilion. Without a postcode, the club cannot access postal delivery nor can it upgrade its telephony in the pavilion.

After concerns raised to the council (by two residents) and the club (by a third resident) about birds occasionally getting caught in the netting and dying, I sought advice from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, who suggested collapsible netting (expensive and not practical at this time). The RSPB also suggested coloured ribbons could be tied to the netting to discourage birds from approaching – the club agreed it was willing to give this a go.

The club has bought a new mobile practice net which should be in use during the summer. The club currently has a 1st and 2nd XI and two Colts teams. There is no specific girls team at the moment, but up until the age of 14, girls can play in boys' teams.

13. **Social media**

Only one of the council's posts in February reached more than 500 people:

- Post advertising of the closure of Willowhayne Crescent for partial resurfacing – 2,929 people

† Food & Drink Festival page

▲ East Preston Business Community page

* East Preston Christmas Celebrations page

(posts up to and including 26th February)

The number of Followers is currently 1,865, an increase of 7 on the last report.

14. **MailChimp stats**

Since the last papers were issued, the council has sent out the following email to local residents on the council's main e-mailing list:

Parish Council news – 1st February – sent to 916 subscribers, opened by 656 (71.8%)

Parish Council news – 8th February – sent to 918 subscribers, opened by 678 (74%)

Parish Council news – 15th February – sent to 920 subscribers, opened by 659 (71.9%)

Parish Council news – 22nd February – sent to 920 subscribers, opened by 665 (72.4%)

15. **Things we have been asked since the last meeting**

Two separate enquiries came in about placing white bollards on grass verges which are being repeatedly damaged by drivers driving across them. I raised this with WSCC Highways, which replied, "Highway's no longer adds parking bollards to verges as this is not considered a safety issue. Intervention would only be required if rutting was in an excess of 100mm which current verge damage is not. Highways also doesn't have the power to enforce parking violations. At this point, the customer is best going to operation crackdown and reporting illegal parking to the police. Thank you."

On 1st February, I was called by someone who had had such a bad experience at an East Preston holiday let, they had taken the hosts to court and won their court case. The caller wanted to know how this could be made public to prevent others from having a similar experience. Review software allows the hosts to approve a review before it is made public, and if the review is not approved, it never becomes public. I advised the caller to contact their MP as this is clearly a national problem even though the specifics were an East Preston property rented out through a West Sussex agency.

"Do you know the temporary new routes for the 700 buses please?"

"Did the Yarnbombers get my belated Christmas card? There was a donation in there."

"Do you know anyone who could drive me to a hospital appointment?"

From a resident of St Mary's Drive, "Thankyou for the recent newsletter. It's good to see what is going on around the village, despite me currently being on a ship cruising north up the coast of Mexico."

"The film show is sold out next Monday, can you get me a ticket?"

"I cannot understand why the Yoga classes offered in this village are allowed to be so expensive and rule me(and probably not just me) out. [...] I am left feeling not included and fed up that once again I am going to have to get in the car and drive away from what is on offer here to a class I can afford. Please could someone look into this for me? Secondly, are you aware that the hairdressing salons also charge extremely high prices?! Also needs looking in to."

"I had booked to walk the South Downs Way this year from Winchester to Eastbourne [...] However sadly the company has had to cancel the walk as it is undersubscribed. I wondered if you knew of anyone retired who likes driving and might help. As you know so many people in the village, I thought you might be able to suggest someone."

16. **Recent bouquets and complaints**

(In addition to anything reported above)

From a resident in response to the e-newsletter published on 1st February, "Thankyou for the recent newsletter. It's good to see what is going on around the village, despite me currently being on a ship cruising north up the coast of Mexico. I'm doing a three month-and-a-half around the world cruise on the Queen Victoria cruise ship."

From a Community Volunteer at Warm Welcome Space, "WELL DONE PARISH COUNCIL FOR DOING THIS AGAIN and including St. Mary's Church."

Thanks from Victoria at Waves Music Therapy for including the charity's Children in Need video clip in the e-newsletter published on 8th February, "Oh my gosh, you shared on the EP newsletter!! I have just been stopped in the street! Thank you so much for this mention."

From a resident of Beechlands Close who contacted the council about damage to grass verges (quite a popular topic at the moment), "Thank you for your prompt reply as always."

Following the Warm Welcome Space session at St Mary the Virgin Church on 19th February, I received this message from one of the organisers, Ann, "Thanks again to Helen and Dawn for their help and support. Helen is so used to it all now, she's really indispensable!" During the Warm Welcome Space session at the British Legion on 26th February, an attendee said thank you to the whole council for running these events and for providing somewhere she could meet up with her friends.

From a resident of Roundstone Crescent for reporting verge damage for him, "I appreciate it's not high priority. I'm just happy that you've reported it for me. Thanks again."

17. **Leave**

Dawn has booked to be on leave for the week beginning 25th March.

18. **March Meetings and Events**

This list may be incomplete and is subject to change.

4th Full Council (19:00, East Preston Infant School)

6th Local Energy Company meeting (19:00, East Preston Infant School)

- 11th Planning & Licensing Committee (18:00, East Preston Infant School)
Audit & Governance Committee (19:00, East Preston Infant School)
- 18th Community Engagement Committee (19:00, East Preston Infant School)
- 20th Year-end Finance training (09:00, Council Office) (AV only)
- 25th Planning & Licensing Committee (18:00, East Preston Infant School)

N.B. where committee meetings fall on the same day, the timings of these meetings may be subject to change.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

27th February 2024

Item 5 – Meeting with Rustington PC and Compass Travel, 30th January – Cllr Linton said robust discussions were continuing with Compass Travel and Rustington PC to find a suitable alternative which would cost the councils less. Cllr Linton said she expected to be able to discuss this in more detail at the forthcoming Community Engagement Committee meeting with a view to a full update to the April Full Council meeting.

Cllr Gale added she had recently spoken to someone who had been waiting for the bus opposite the entrance to Vermont Drive. The lady had said how “wonderful” it was to have the bus serving the southern end of the village again.

Item 12 – Twice-yearly meeting with East Preston Cricket Club, 27th February – with reference to the discussion on defibrillators, Cllr Linton said the Willowhayne Residents’ Association was planning on installing six defibrillators on the estate. The Clerk said he had some information on this.

Item 2 – Police matters – Cllr Linton asked whether there had been any further reports of knocker boys in the village. The Clerk said there had not, but he had subsequently received this response from Sussex Police, “No, not that I’m aware of but by the nature of what has happened not necessarily something that people will call in and report to the police. Any messaging that you think is appropriate in your newsletter about not engaging with cold callers would probably be the best way to deter this type of behaviour.”

191/24 EXTERNAL MEETINGS AND EVENTS

The council NOTED the following reports, most of which had been circulated in advance of the meeting:

Other meetings and events – Part 1

Council is asked to note any reports. Where a written report is not included below, please expect a verbal report at the meeting.

Levelling Up and Regeneration Act and updates to the National Planning Policy Framework, 24th January

Angmering Community Centre

Simon, Glyn, and I attended a presentation delivered by Steve Tilbury on the future of planning with emphasis on the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (LURA) and their impact on our current planning system.

The Planning System overall currently is not working well, however, the Government is still aiming to build 300,000 homes in 2024. Some of the current problems are:

- Local plans take too long to produce;
- Appeal led decision making;
- Too many developments of poor-quality design;
- Shortfall of resources and poor performance in many planning departments.

The updated NPPF and LURA are being put in place to offer solutions to the above problems by simplifying planning and to put planning back to the heart of decision making. More focus on design quality and to increase resources within the Planning Departments. The whole infrastructure needs resources but the aim is to follow this acronym:

Beauty
Infrastructure
Democracy
Environment
Neighbourhoods

Changes are being made by Revisions to the NPPF Guidelines (December 2023) and legislation within the LURA. Changes to use classes and permitted development rights are now in situ but need prior approval.

The 5-year housing plan still exists; however, local planning authorities must be able to demonstrate that there are enough deliverable sites for the housing needs over the next five years. If it cannot do so the NPPF says that planning permission should normally be granted for new housing even if it is not in the development plan. This is called the tilted balance.

Our Neighbourhood Plan is very important as we are unable to provide land for large developments therefore the balance tilts in our favour.

The environment pays a much bigger part with new Local Nature Recovery Strategies with a strong emphasis on wildlife habitats, etc. This could help in avoiding housing developments within our strategic gap between East Preston, Kingston and Ferring.

The future holds some major changes in the preparation of local plans and the implementation of the proposals contained in the NPPF and LURA.

A modification requirement for new Neighbourhood Plans will need to meet these future proposals when implemented.

A new Infrastructure Levy is proposed to replace the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) which will be based on final development values and this new Levy has had a strong negative response from developers and local authorities – will it work? – watch this space item!!!!!!

Cllr Christine Bowman –
Vice-Chairman of the Planning & Licensing Committee

26th February 2024

The Martlets 15th Anniversary party, 15th February

The Martlets, Fairlands

Along with Arun Councillors Alison Cooper, Shaun Gunner and Paul Kelly I attended the Martlets Care Home 15th anniversary celebrations on Thursday 15th February. Russell Brown the CEO of Shaw Healthcare gave a short speech to about 30 of the residents about the company and the Martlets before long service awards were made to members of staff - ranging from 5 - 30 years. Shaw Healthcare is employee owned and clearly values its staff as presentations were also made to “Shaw Champions” recognising staff who have made an extra effort. A deputation of Yarnbombers was also given a certificate thanking them for creating an installation for the Martlets based on a bicycle donated by our Chairman Steve Toney. After the presentations we were treated to an excellent buffet lunch prepared by the Martlets kitchen staff.

Cllr John Gunston

18th February 2024

Chairmen's Network Meeting, 23rd February

online

Started at 19.00hrs

Present, Bersted, Clapham, Slindon, Findon, Aldwick Parishes and Littlehampton Town Council.

There was no agenda, left open to the floor.

1, Emergency planning officers from Arun and West Sussex to be invited to the next meeting to address Emergency Resilience and how to set up.

2, Potholes It would appear that the way these are being repaired is not good practice and certainly not value for money.

3, PCSOs When did you last see or a PCSO or even a Police Officer in your parish, let alone have one turn up at a Parish meeting?? We are not the only parish to have these problems.

4, Flooding This was deferred until a later date as the Flood forum was coming up.

Meeting closed at 19.40 hrs.

Cllr Steve Toney – **Chairman of the Council**

28th February 2024

ADC Flood Forum, 26th February

Bersted Community Centre

This was the first of four meetings to take place between Southern Water, Environment Agency, West Sussex County Council, Arun District Council and 4 Parish Councils (Bersted, Middleton on Sea, Barnham and Eastergate and East Preston). There was an independent Chair in Simon Wilson, from the Derbyshire-based meetings facilitation company, Wilson Sherriff.

Southern Water were called first to give some insight into why these “once in a hundred-year events” have happened for the last 3 plus years.

There will be some more paperwork to follow from S.W.A.

For those who are interested, I have given Simon the agenda and follow up papers for your perusal. There is a list of questions submitted by Parish Councils and answers, from the responding agencies.

It was asked if West Sussex Highways and Highways England can attend the following meetings.

The next one is to be in May, no date set as yet.

Cllr Steve Toney – **Chairman of the Council**

28th February 2024

Cllr Toney said the ADC Flood Forum meeting had been the first of four planned.

192/24 RESPONSE TO EXTERNAL MEETINGS AND EVENTS

Nothing was raised.

193/24 NEW ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING (4TH MARCH)

Cllr Linton would chair the meeting as Cllr Toney would be unavailable.

Cllr Duff asked councillors to let her know after the meeting had closed their willingness to be part of the East Preston Carnival Procession.

(Mr G and Mrs M left the meeting at the conclusion of this item.)

194/24 CONSERVATIVE HALL

The council NOTED the following report which had been circulated in advance of the meeting:

Future of the Conservative Hall

Council is asked to consider the next steps related to the future of the Conservative Hall

All councillors present need to be free to express their opinions concerning the future of the Conservative Hall.

An online survey was made available to the public on 8th February, via three e-newsletter (to date), various posters around the village and in the Council Office window, and the Winter 2024 Newsletter. The main questions of the survey was "In principle, do you agree East Preston Parish Council should adopt East Preston Conservative Hall?". There was a supplementary question asking "What are the pros and cons of the proposal?" and a final question asking for respondents' postcodes. At the time of writing, 231 people have accessed the survey, 1 of whom has not answered. Of the 230 that have answered, **214 said Yes (93.04%), 7 said No (3.04%) and 10 said Unsure (4.35%).**

A report has been circulated to all councillors containing the survey results to date and, perhaps more importantly, comments that have been made. All responses via email have been added to the online survey, keeping all results in one place, as has the one in-person comment received. We have received no comments via telephone or letter.

A very small number of residents, three I think, have asked – in person – for a public meeting on this topic.

The council needs to consider its options in this matter and work out the implications of any of those options.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

27th February 2024

All councillors expressed some opinion or other on whether they felt the council should proceed with the adoption of the Conservative Hall. All noted the strong support from the members of the community who had already taken part in the survey publicised through the Winter 2024 Newsletter, the e-newsletter and noticeboards. Since the above report had been written, further residents had replied to the survey and it was still open online.

Councillors agreed there was not yet sufficient legal information available for them to make an informed decision in this matter.

Councillors agreed the adoption was not an overnight task, there needed to be sensible planning looking at aspects including, but not limited to, finances, renovation requirements, staffing, legal liabilities.

1835 The Council **RESOLVED** unanimously to continue to discuss the future of the Conservative Hall through Full Council matters with specific items being referred to the relevant existing committee when appropriate.

1836 The Council **RESOLVED** unanimously to start Full Council meetings at 18:30 for the foreseeable future, whilst the future of the Conservative Hall is likely to take up a fair amount of discussion time.

The meeting concluded at 20.12.

Vice-Chairman: *Cllr Elizabeth Linton* Date: **8th April 2024**

END