



EAST PRESTON PARISH COUNCIL

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

Tel: 01903 770050

<http://eastpreston.arun.gov.uk/>

Email: eparishcouncil@btconnect.com

FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

MINUTES: of the Special Meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 29th June 2020 at 10:00 via the Zoom online meeting application.

PRESENT: Councillors J Gunston, G Mathias, R McElroy (Chairman) and S Wilkinson

ALSO: Clerk to the Council, Simon Cross

Keith Chamberlain, East Preston Cricket Club (until 10:23)

ABSENT: Councillors E Linton and S Toney

The meeting opened at 10:00.

The meeting was held in accordance with *The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020* and the council's own *Protocol for Remote Meetings*.

Following the Annual Meeting of the Council on 4th May, the membership of this committee was Cllrs Gunston, Mathias, McElroy and Wilkinson with one vacancy. As Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Council respectively, Cllrs Toney and Linton were entitled to attend and vote at meetings of this committee.

Owing to the COVID-19 pandemic and the inability to hold face-to-face meetings, the Clerk had asked committee members to let him know by 21st June whether or not they wanted to be stand for Chairman or Vice-Chairman of the committee. Committee members were then given the opportunity to vote Yes or No for each candidate. Cllr Wilkinson, not a candidate for either post, confirmed he had acted as a Virtual Teller for both elections.

The following paper had been circulated in advance of the meeting and covered the first two Agenda Items:

Annual appointment of Chairman and Vice-Chairman

Committee is asked to consider the appointment of a committee Chairman for the council year 2020/21.

Committee is asked to consider the appointment of a committee Vice-Chairman for the council year 2020/21.

In this pandemic time of virtual meetings, committee members were asked on 19th June to let me know by the end of 21st June whether or not they wished to be considered for either of the above posts.

At the time of writing, Cllr McElroy has said he will stand as Chairman.

Cllr Linton has said she will not stand for either post.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

22nd June 2020

393/20 APPOINTMENT OF A COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN FOR THE YEAR 2020/21

Cllr McElroy was appointed unopposed.

Cllr Wilkinson confirmed he had seen the votes of the five councillors who had voted and that Cllr McElroy had been appointed unanimously.

394/20 APPOINTMENT OF A COMMITTEE VICE-CHAIRMAN FOR THE YEAR 2020/21

Following the circulation of the above paper, Cllr Gunston had volunteered to stand for this role and committee members were given the chance to vote for him.

Cllr Gunston was appointed unopposed.

Cllr Wilkinson confirmed he had seen the votes of the six councillors who had voted and that Cllr Gunston had been appointed unanimously.

395/20 APOLOGIES AND REASONS FOR ABSENCE

An apology and a reason for absence had been received from Cllrs Linton (away) and Toney (work) and were accepted by the committee.

An apology was also received from Ms Kerry Frost and Mrs Janine Nicholson, both representing the East Preston Festival Committee.

396/20 PERSONAL AND/OR PREJUDICIAL/PECUNIARY INTERESTS

No Personal or Prejudicial / Pecuniary Interests were declared at this point of the meeting.

397/20 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

No members of the public were present.

398/20 GRANT AID 2020/21 – EAST PRESTON CRICKET CLUB

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

East Preston Cricket Club

Committee is asked to consider a funding request received from East Preston Cricket Club.

The council received the following email on 17th June, 2020:

Dear Simon

I hope you are well.

I am writing on behalf of the cricket club to inform the Council of the current 'state of play' regarding the club. In addition to an update on the enforced suspension due to covid 19, I wish to advise the Council of essential repairs and maintenance required to the safety netting at the boundaries of the cricket field and to request a financial contribution from the Council towards the costs of the essential repairs/maintenance.

1. As you are aware, there has been no cricket played so far this season due to covid 19 restrictions. We are expecting further guidance from the England Cricket Board (ECB) and the Sussex Cricket League within the next week or so. We are anticipating that it may be possible to recommence local cricket sometime during July or August, albeit in a very different format (possibly no use of changing rooms, no showers, no teas, no bar and new temporary rules on the field of play). Whether players will wish to participate under such new conditions is uncertain. It may be that the club only plays a few 1st XI and/or junior games this year. I will keep you updated.

2. You may also be aware that the east and west boundary safety nets are damaged and in need of extensive repair. The club has received a quote from Arun Construction for the necessary work. I attach a copy of the quote which sets out the work required and the associated costs. It is self explanatory. I trust the Council has no objection to this work being carried out.

3. The total cost of the work to the netting is £2825 + VAT (£3390 inclusive of VAT). The cricket club would like to request a financial contribution from the Council to meet the cost of these works. The club would be grateful for any contribution and it is noted that, in the past, the Council has contributed up to 66% of the costs of providing and maintaining safety netting at the boundaries of this ground. You will understand that club income has taken a significant 'hit' this year and we would have great difficulty meeting the costs without your assistance.

4. Work will have to be undertaken within the next few weeks **IF** cricket is to recommence this year. Should local cricket be suspended until next year we would expect to carry out the work prior to the start of the 2021 season.

We would be grateful if the Parish Council could give this matter urgent consideration. Please contact me if you require any further information.

Thank you

Regards

Keith Chamberlain

Chairman and President
East Preston Cricket Club

I replied to Mr Chamberlain, asking him to complete a Grant Aid request form. The completed form is available for viewing in the Council Office. The description on the form is "Repair of existing safety netting at the boundaries of the Warren Recreation Ground." The amount sought is 50% of the quotation, £1,695.

The form is accompanied by a set of accounts.

The council set aside £1,000 in its budget for 2020/21 for "WRG Trust – Recreation – WRG Safety".

Mr Chamberlain hopes to join the meeting for this discussion.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

22nd June 2020

Cllrs Gunston, Mathias and Wilkinson had all read through the associated paperwork.

Mr Chamberlain explained the background to the above letter. In the past, the council had contributed up to 66% for the initial installation of the safety netting and the further extension of the safety netting, though both of those events were some time ago.

The Club is responsible for the maintenance of the netting and pays for any repairs, but the life of the netting is perhaps coming to an end although the infrastructure seems sound still.

Mr Chamberlain reported there were holes in need of repair on both east and west boundaries.

Although the club is not yet able to play cricket this season because of the pandemic, the England and Wales Cricket Board and the Sussex League believe teams may be given the green light to play from the end of July. The League is likely to suggest teams play the remaining League fixtures as friendlies. If that is the case, repairs to the netting cannot be delayed.

In response to a question about fundraising, Mr Chamberlain replied the club hosts the Blauw Cup each year, with a number of other teams invited to join in this day of cricket. The club also runs some fundraising events for the juniors and does apply for funds from other organisations when the opportunity arises. Additionally, the club usually receives some private donations each year. The Clerk confirmed the club had received over £1,900 in other donations in the year-ending 31st October 2019.

The Clerk reminded the committee there was £1,000 in the annual budget for Warren Recreation Ground safety. If the committee was minded to donate more, that would need to be agreed by Full Council.

The committee AGREED to donate the £1,000 in the Warren Recreation Ground safety budget line to the East Preston Cricket Club as soon as possible.

The committee AGREED to ask Full Council for a further £500 to donate to the Cricket Club from the reserves.

Mr Chamberlain thanked the committee and left the meeting at the conclusion of this item.

399/20 ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE COMMITTEE'S TERMS OF REFERENCE

The committee carried out the Annual Review of the Committee's Terms of Reference. These had been circulated in advance of the meeting with a few minor changes suggested by the Clerk, mainly to bring the Terms of Reference into line with the council's other committee. The committee AGREED to the revised Terms of Reference as proposed. These will form version 13.

400/20 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 17TH FEBRUARY 2020

The draft Minutes had been circulated to all councillors on 26th February asking for suggested amendments by 4th March. None had been received.

The committee AGREED unanimously the Minutes could be signed as a true record of the meeting held on 17th February. The meeting AGREED this could be done by Cllr McElroy when he was next in the Council Office.

[Clerk's Note: Cllr McElroy signed the Minutes early on the afternoon of 30th June.]

401/20 MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Nothing to report.

402/20 GRANT AID 2020/21 – EAST PRESTON FESTIVAL COMMITTEE

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

Grant Aid 2020/21 – East Preston Festival Committee

Committee is asked to consider a request from the East Preston Festival Committee for Grant Aid funding for the year 2020/21.

At the last meeting, the committee began consideration of a request from the East Preston Festival Committee for £2,000. The committee deferred a decision until it had had a chance to speak to representatives from the Festival Committee.

Since then, of course, the 2020 Festival was cancelled owing to the COVID-19 pandemic. I have written to the Chairman and Secretary of the Festival Committee asking if they are still seeking a grant this year, but have not had a reply from either (at the time of writing).

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

22nd June 2020

The Clerk reported he had now received the following email from Ms Frost, Chairman of the East Preston Festival Committee:

“We are in unknown territory for the foreseeable future until we are given clear guidance in running the Festival and any associated events. Normally we would be asking for assistance with funding the insurance and possibly an event. At the present time, we are unable to predict when and if we will need the Parish Council's assistance this year and wonder if an amount can be kept in reserve for such time as it may be needed. I am guessing everything is a lot tighter due to the last few months, but am very keen to have the opportunity to come back to the Parish Council later in the year once we have some clarification through Government guidelines as to holding such events.”

The Clerk reminded the committee there was a budget line for the current year exclusively for the Festival Committee, and that was set at £2,000.

The committee AGREED it had no problem with leaving that budget line intact and hearing from the Festival Committee again later in the year should they need to claim some of that money. Cllr McElroy restated he would like a conversation with the Festival Committee on how it decides which organisations get donations and for what amount. The committee AGREED the council needed to be seen to ask relevant questions of the Festival Committee, not just hand it money when there were questions needed answering.

The committee also AGREED to consider working with the Festival Committee in supporting some of the charities and organisations it usually supported, if there was money left in this year's budget line for this.

403/20 GRANT AID 2020/21

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

Grant Aid 2020/21

The council budgeted £4,500 for Section 137 Grant Aid donations this financial year.

Publicity about the Grant Aid process started in February, with a closing date for applications of 31st March. Owing to the pandemic, I have not been strict about the closing date.

Below are the applications received this year:

Organisation – charity no	Amount requested? (£)	For?	Amount and date of previous Sec 137 award (if known)	Outcome
4SIGHT Vision Support 1075447	£152	“To support us to improve our communications to our members through our quarterly newsletter”	£180 – April 2019	£152
ABET – Arun Basic Essential Transport	£500	“Tyre for spare wheel, MIDAS course, logo”	£500 – April 2019 (paid in two instalments)	£250 now; £250 to be considered later in the year

East Preston Village Branch – Healthy Walks in Arun	£50	1. OS map 2. Compass 3. Waterproof map cases	£180 – April 2019	£50
St Barnabas Hospice 256789	£341.75	“Community Palliative Nursing Team” “five visits to patients in the East Preston area”	£300 – April 2019	£341.75
Victim Support (Sussex Area) 298028	£200	“Recruit, train and supervise new volunteers to support victims and witnesses of crime”	£200 – April 2019	£200
West Sussex Mediation Service 1084592	£200	“To support the continued provision of free mediation services to residents of East Preston throughout the pandemic and beyond incorporating new technology such as video conferencing”	£200 – April 2018	£200

Where a sum is specified, the above applications add up to £1,443.75.

Members are strongly advised to spend some time looking through the applications received before the meeting starts. There are 33 pages of financial information with the St Barnabas application which will only be printed off upon request. The office will be open from 08:30am for members wishing to read the associated paperwork.

Committee is asked to consider the grant requests above and decide grants where appropriate.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

19th June 2020

Cllrs Gunston, Mathias and Wilkinson had all read through the associated paperwork.

All sums AGREED were agreed unanimously.

The committee AGREED to split the ABET donation into two instalments as the charity was only just getting back up after the pandemic.

The donations added up to a maximum of £1,443.75. The committee AGREED to advertise a second round in the hope some more organisations operating in the village could benefit.

The council had received letters from Just Different and Kent, Surrey and Sussex Air Ambulance. The Clerk was asked to ask these organisations again to submit a completed application form so their letters could be considered in September.

404/20 124 SEA ROAD – WORKING PARTY

The committee considered the following paper which had been circulated in advance of the meeting:

124 Sea Road

Committee is asked to set up a Working Party to consider the future use of the flat about the Council Office.

In 2011, the council purchased the property known as 122-124 Sea Road, East Preston, BN16 1NN, comprising 122 Sea Road, now the Council Office, and the flat above, 124 Sea Road.

The council took out a Public Works Loan Board loan to assist with the purchase, agreeing to pay it back over ten years. The final loan payment will be made in November of this year.

The flat is currently unoccupied, the most recent tenant having moved out in early March.

These two facts make this an ideal time to consider the future of the flat. Does the council wish to seek change of use to extend the office space into the flat upstairs? If so, does it want to do that now or get one final tenant in first? If the latter, does the council want to consider options for other letting agencies?

I would suggest the first step would be to set up a Working Party reporting to this committee but open to all councillors.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

19th June 2020

The committee AGREED unanimously to set up a Flat Working Party. Cllrs Linton, McElroy and Wilkinson would be the initial working party members.

405/20 COUNCIL OFFICE FRONTAGE

The committee considered the following paper which had been circulated in advance of the meeting:

122 Sea Road, Council Office frontage

Committee is asked to agree to start work on replacement of the frontage of the Council Office.

In 2011, the council purchased the property known as 122-124 Sea Road, East Preston, BN16 1NN, comprising 122 Sea Road, now the Council Office, and the flat above, 124 Sea Road.

The council took out a Public Works Loan Board loan to assist with the purchase, agreeing to pay it back over ten years. The final loan payment will be made in November of this year.

Over the past few years, the council has loosely talked about including the same figure as has been included in this year's budget for loan repayment in next year's budget under a new budget line of replacing the frontage on the Council Office. That figure is £15,054.12.

Last September, just to give us some idea of how much we are looking at, I obtained a very rough estimate from a business which recently designed and fitted the new frontage of another business in the southern shopping parade. That came in at about £8,000 for aluminium which I think is the material used on the other local business. The design would be fairly similar to the existing, for example retaining the design of the small windows at the top of the existing windows, but shifting the split of the front door, to make the southern half wider than the northern half.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

19th June 2020

After some discussion about whether or not the replacement of the frontage depended upon the future use of the flat, the committee AGREED unanimously to combine this work with that of the Flat Working Party in a Flat and Frontage Working Party.

406/20 COUNCIL PLAN

Cllr Wilkinson said his original draft of a Council Plan had been drafted by the end of January. He had received input from Cllrs Gander and Linton covering the Community Engagement, Major Events and Personnel committees. Input from the council’s other four committees remained outstanding but should comprise of bulletpoints for Big successes in the past few years; Short-term plans, the next 12 months; Long-term plans, up to three years.

407/20 RISK REGISTER

The committee considered the following paper which had been circulated in advance of the meeting:

Financial Risk Register

Committee is asked to review and update, where appropriate, the council’s Financial Risk Register.

Each year the council should review its Risk Registers and update entries as appropriate. The Financial section of the council’s Risk Register is as follows:

	Area of Risk	Consequences if no action taken	Likelihood	Severity	Measures to avoid, reduce or control risk	
C	Financial Risks					
19.	Failure to set correct precept within sound budgeting arrangements	Shortfall in precept income resulting in overdrawn bank balances and overspending	L	M	All Committee budgets are reviewed by F&GP Committee and approved by full council in accordance with Council’s budget procedures. Up to date bank and working balances should form part of the Council’s deliberations on its budget – <i>they do</i>	F&GP
21.	Legal Expenses - to help bring legal action or defend a legal claim for example employment dispute, contract dispute or legal advice	Potential for council to incur additional expenditure	L	L	RFO consider the implications for the council of taking out legal expenses insurance and inform F&GP Committee of outcome. Legal expenses are covered in the council’s insurance policy.	F&GP
22.	Loss of cash through theft or dishonesty including Fidelity Guarantee	Loss of income and/or liability for unbudgeted expenditure	L	M	RFO to ensure fidelity guarantee cover is adequate and inform F&GP Committee who will review annually. Safe or Secure Cupboard for Cash. Cash not kept in a lockable cupboard is covered by the	F&GP

					<p>council's insurance policy to £250.</p> <p>Loss of cash is covered by the council's insurance policy.</p> <p>There is an Employee Dishonesty cover within the council's insurance policy. This is for £150,000 and is equivalent to Fidelity Guarantee.</p>	
23.	<p>Failure of internal controls, financial regulations and standing orders to detect fraud or corruption See also 22 above</p>	<p>Loss of cash and property leaving the council to make good or write off the loss. Loss of credibility by the council in terms of governance and probity</p>	L	M	<p>Internal auditor to include in annual plan and test compliance. The audit & governance committee will also carry out some compliance testing and check the bank reconciliation statements. The F&GP committee will also keep financial regulations and standing orders under review</p>	A&G
24.	<p>Loss of income</p>		L	L	<p>At its meeting on 20th July, on behalf of the council, the Finance & General Purposes Committee agreed to sign-up for the Leaders Premier Rent Guarantee Service (Minute 465/15). This covers the biggest source of council income, excluding the precept. The remainder of the council's income is not a great enough figure to cover.</p>	F&GP
25.	<p>Loss of income from low usage of the Village Green car-park</p>	<p>There is a low risk the council would need to pay to leave its contract with One Parking early if low usage of the car-park has continued, unacceptable knock-on effects in the surrounding area</p>	L	L	<p>Whilst usage of the car-park is not as high as the council had hoped, it is being used and the council believes usage will come into its own during the summer season. It is disappointing there are still some local businesspeople who appear to be unwilling to park other than on the single yellow line in Sea Road.</p>	F&GP / Amenities

Last year's review made no changes. As the council's reserves have increased, the committee may wish to make a recommendation to the Audit & Governance Committee it looks at increasing the Employee Dishonesty cover.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

22nd June 2020

The Clerk proposed an amendment to no 22 to include wording about the Audit & Governance Committee reviewing the level of Employment Dishonesty cover. The committee AGREED unanimously to the Clerk's proposal and that the rest of the risks did not need amending.

408/20 PURCHASE ORDERS

The committee considered the following paper which had been circulated in advance of the meeting:

Purchase Orders

Committee is asked to consider its Purchase Orders system.

Currently the council raises a Purchase Order for pretty much every piece of expenditure. Tracy no longer feels this is cost-effective, and will provide me with some more detail on this Agenda Item ahead of the meeting.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

22nd June 2020

The committee AGREED unanimously to stop raising Purchase Orders as described by Mrs Khoo.

409/20 BUDGET OVERSPEND

The Clerk reported there had been a budget overspend on the *Office Equipment – off site computing – email for councillors* budget line. The budget line had been agreed at £234 for 13 email accounts at £18 each for the year. After the council's budget had been agreed for the year, central government had announced town and parish councils could no longer publicise on their websites email addresses that were not .gov.uk addresses. The council therefore had to get additional.gov.uk email addresses for council staff. This has brought the annual bill up to £324.

The committee AGREED unanimously to recommend to Full Council acceptance of this overspend.

410/20 ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING (21ST SEPTEMBER)

Cllr Gunston asked the committee to think of ways in which the council could support the village as it returned to post-pandemic normality. Cllr McElroy suggested the council should remind residents it is here to help them even if that help was only signposting them to a different organisation. Perhaps a newsletter article could be written.

The Meeting closed at 11:11.

Chairman: *Cllr Rick McElroy* Date: **21st September 2020**