



# **EAST PRESTON PARISH COUNCIL**

## **Council Plan 2022 - 2025**

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## **1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 What is a Council Plan?**

This is the first East Preston Parish Council Plan and it sets out the Council's achievements, its vision for the parish, its purpose, values, objectives, and key priorities for the next four years.

The aim of the Council Plan (the Plan) is to give East Preston's parishioners a clear understanding of what the Parish Council (the Council) does and what it is trying to achieve. It details what the Council intends to focus on over the next three years. The Plan is a 'live' document that we will review annually, use to inform and direct our budgetary decisions, plan activities for the coming year and enable the Council to monitor its progress against the key priorities.

### **1.2 Why has the Parish Council decided to produce a Council Plan?**

Having a Plan provides a framework for the Council to work within, enabling it to operate in a consistent and co-ordinated way, and to be proactive, rather than reactive in its decision making. The Council has formulated its Plan on our understanding of the community's needs gathered from our day-to-day involvement with residents and other key organisations and groups within the parish.

At the same time, the Plan will help the local community to have a better understanding of what the Council does and clarifies what other bodies such as Arun District Council and West Sussex County Council are responsible for delivering.

The Plan is a statement of intent. The Council, however, may have to make decisions contrary to our stated commitments if events such as budgetary constraints, new legislation or changes in our policies make it necessary. Any changes will be reflected in an updated Plan.

This is a 'live' document which the Council will update regularly thereby enabling it to track and monitor its progress against the key priorities. Because the Plan will be available to the public the parishioners will also be able to monitor progress.

### **1.3 Community involvement in the Plan**

To ensure this Plan is consistent with our parishioners' wishes we will consult on its contents through as many channels as possible including our website, key contacts, and organisations in East Preston.

The Plan will be viewable through our [website](#), and at the parish office. It will be the subject of a formal twenty-eight day public consultation in late 2021/early 2022.

During the public consultation period we will be seeking feedback with a view to monitoring the Plan as appropriate.

### **1.4 Monitoring the Plan**

Evaluating progress against the stated activities making up our four-year plan will be an agenda item at the monthly 'full' Council meetings and at every committee meeting. At each of these meetings we will review the progress made, decide where we need to make changes, and ascertain if there are any blockages to progress. We will review and update the Plan annually to keep the document relevant and up to date.

Our Plan will be the main way of informing East Preston what its Council is doing to meet the needs of the community. It is a two-way process - please tell us what you think about the Plan - we welcome your comments.

## **1.5 Have your say**

The plan is very much about steering the village in the way in which the residents would like to see the village develop. If you have any comments about this document, please send them to the Clerk at the Council Office, 122 Sea Road, East Preston, BN16 1NN or [clerk@eastpreston-pc.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@eastpreston-pc.gov.uk) or come along to a monthly council meetings – these usually take place on the first working Monday of the month, more details available from the Clerk or the council’s website.

## **2 THE PARISH COUNCIL**

### **2.1 Overview of the Council**

There are three levels of local government, each with different responsibilities.

The Council is the first and local tier, with an important role to play in promoting East Preston, representing its interests and supporting the work of different groups within the community.

Arun District Council (ADC) is the second tier, and is responsible for services including housing and environment. ADC is also responsible for strategic planning policies for all development including housing and employment sites.

Finally, West Sussex County Council (WSCC) is responsible for highways (both road and footpaths), education, health, and social services, public rights of way and libraries. We also work closely on all issues relevant to the Parish with our Member of Parliament, Sir Peter Bottomley.

Residents elect thirteen parish councillors every four years. The Council elects a chairman and vice-chairman annually. Councillors commit their time to improving East Preston and maintaining it as an attractive and pleasant place in which to live, visit and conduct business. Councillors can claim a taxable annual stipend of £548.

The full Council meets monthly on the first Monday of the month at the East Preston Infant School. All meetings are open to the public to address the Council. If you wish to speak please notify the clerk in advance.

The Council works to its Standing Orders and Financial Regulations, these lay down the rules by which we conduct our business. We have based our Standing Orders on a model adopted in July 2019 by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC). Committees and working Parties work to terms of reference agreed in Council.

In 2011 the national Census noted that the Parish consisted of approximately 3,000 households and 6,000 residents.

### **2.2 Council Staff**

The Council currently has six paid employees - the Clerk to the Council - Simon Cross, the Assistant Clerk - Dawn Reid, Book Keeper - Tracey Khoo, Receptionist/Admin Assistant - Alison Roberts, Weekday Village Orderly - Caspar Williams and Weekend Village Orderly - Stephen Grover. All of the aforementioned report to Mr Cross, and he reports to the whole Council via the Personnel Committee. All except Mr Cross are employed on a part-time basis.

In addition, the Council uses contractors for a number of tasks, including external auditors, grounds and general maintenance.

### **2.3 The Council's vision and objectives**

The Council's vision for East Preston is for it to be a successful, vibrant and attractive place where people want to live, work and visit.

### **2.4 The Council's Mission Statement:**

The Council aims to improve the quality of life for its parishioners by ensuring that it is a desirable, thriving and sustainable place in which to live. We do this in a number of ways:

- We provide a democratic and representative voice for the community,
- Where we provide services, we manage them to a good quality standard, in an efficient, effective and responsive way, at an affordable cost,
- We aim to protect and maintain the ecology, nature and environment of the village within the means available to the Council,
- Where others provide services, the Council will endeavour to ensure that they are dealt with effectively and in accordance with the wishes of the community,
- We work with the community, local authorities and other service providers, businesses and voluntary organisations with the aim of achieving a safe, healthy, prosperous and sustainable community.

To achieve our Mission Statement we need to:

- Serve those who live, work, and visit East Preston
- Put in place policies and initiatives which will help improve East Preston
- Encourage a greater sense of involvement and pride in the community and promote sustainable and vibrant economic activity in the Parish
- Promote and represent the community's views and aspirations at local, district, county and national level
- Seek a fair share of investment in the Parish by local, county, regional authorities
- Encourage the devolution of services to the Council where we can deliver them more effectively, efficiently and, ideally, with no additional cost to the tax payer
- Work in partnership with other statutory and voluntary bodies, businesses and individuals, to ensure an improved standard of services and facilities to meet the needs and expectations of the Parish
- Enhance and promote the cultural heritage of East Preston and safeguard its identity as a village
- Encourage and promote the economic and commercial vitality of East Preston and support small businesses in the Parish
- Promote and support local voluntary groups and clubs that seek to assist parishioners
- Strive for a pleasant, clean and safe environment throughout the parish
- Be professional, competent and caring Council
- Help create a socially inclusive and caring community that embraces all irrespective of age, culture, income, race, sexual orientation, religion or ability. We seek to achieve this by developing their well-being, knowledge, understanding and through mutual co-operation.

### **2.5 Financial information**

#### **2.5.1 Income**

The residents of East Preston, mainly through the 'precept', fund the Council. The precept is the local tax levied by the Council that ADC collects on our behalf as part of the Council tax bill.

The residents in a Band D property contribute £98.43 per annum (correct as of 1 January 2022) to the Council's precept (i.e. £1.89 per week) and this contribution is reviewed annually. In this Plan we will tell you what you get for your money and you can decide whether it represents good value.

We also receive income from:

- Rent from the flat above the Council's office
- Rent from the East Preston Bowls Club
- Rent from the East Preston Cricket Club
- Rent from the Angmering on Sea Tennis Club
- Village Green car park (variable)
- Events such as the Food and Drink Festival, Christmas celebrations, ticket sales for various events (variable)
- Interest from various banks accounts

### **2.5.2 Expenditure**

The main items of expenditure are:

- Office administration, salaries, and contractors
- One-off projects e.g. Sea Road toilets
- General maintenance.

### **2.5.3 Reserves**

Our unallocated reserve is money the Council holds on account in case there is a major problem that affects the Council's business. This could be a disaster that requires major emergency funding. As with all of the Council's financial information - details are updated monthly and can be found on the Council's website.

### **2.5.4 Allowances**

Each councillor is entitled to claim a stipend of £548 per annum and any out of pocket expenses - mileage etc.

## **2.6 Council's main areas of responsibility**

Our aim is to work together to promote and protect the interests of our Parish and maintain the heritage of our village – we have a Conservation Area, two Areas of Special Character and a number of 'listed' buildings. To this end we work hard to serve the village and its residents in all aspects of community life. The Council is non-political and accountable to its electorate. It is made up of thirteen councillors who voluntarily give their time to serve on the Council. The work of the councillors is separated into eight committees and several working parties.

The day-to-day functions of the Council are conducted by the Clerk and his staff. The regular functions of the councillors are undertaken in committees and specific projects/issues are fulfilled by working parties. These are all overseen by the full Council. At present our committees and their functions are as follows:

### **2.6.1 Full Council**

There is a Full Council meeting on the first working Monday of every month, usually excluding August. As with all council meetings, members of the public are always very welcome to attend the meetings. Full Council meetings are held in the hall at East Preston Infant School, Lashmar Road. There is good access to the school building and good facilities within.

## **2.6.2 Amenities**

The purpose of the Amenities Committee is to ensure that the village looks attractive for residents and welcoming to visitors. It is the largest budget holding committee within the Council.

The Committee is responsible for the upkeep of areas such as the Village Green, the Warren Recreation Ground and Two Acres. Some of the committee's work can be highlighted here: maintenance of the public seats and bus shelters, ensuring the village's flower displays and trees are as well stocked as they can be within the Council's financial limitations. The committee ensures that there are sufficient dog waste bins within the parish boundaries and that they are regularly emptied. Maintenance of the village green, the children's play area, the exercise equipment within the Warren Recreation Ground (WRG). Sponsorship is always welcome. Meetings are held every other month on a Monday at the East Preston Infant School.

## **2.6.3 Audit and Governance**

The purpose of the Audit & Governance Committee is to ensure that Council is running to the high standards that the public expect. The committee tests the effectiveness of the Council's processes, and ensures that any recommendations made in internal or external auditors' reports are addressed. The committee is also responsible for ensuring the Council's leases with its tenants are all still fit for purpose and up to date. Meetings are held quarterly at East Preston Infant School, Lashmar Road, East Preston.

## **2.6.4 Community Engagement**

The purpose of the Community Engagement Committee is to work with residents to find out how they would like to see the village develop and to ensure that the council acts upon the wishes of the residents. One important element of this committee's work is conducted under the auspices of the Environmental Initiatives Working Party (WP) which looks at a number of areas including: biodiversity, recycling, food waste, transport, energy, carbon reduction and water usage. The WP meets every other month at the East Preston Infant School, Lashmar Road, East Preston on the last Monday of the month.

## **2.6.5 Finance and General Purposes**

The purpose of the Finance & General Purposes (F&GP) Committee is to manage the Council's money. The committee, working with the Council's other committees, will prepare the annual budget for presentation and ratification by Full Council. The Council's income is generated by the precept (Council Tax) collected each year by Arun District Council, rental income from the flat above the Council Office, land leased to the Angmering-on-Sea Lawn Tennis Club, the East Preston & Kingston Bowls Club, and the East Preston Cricket Club. In addition, the Council raises funds from parking charges levied in the Village Green car-park. A key function of this committee is the management of applications for financial support from organisations serving the parish community - this is known as Grant Aid. The committee meets quarterly at the East Preston Infant School, Lashmar Road, East Preston.

## **2.6.6 Major Events**

The purpose of the Major Events Committee is to manage the major events the Council runs, for example the East Preston Food & Drink Festival and the East Preston Christmas Celebrations. Meetings are held every other month at the East Preston Infant School, Lashmar Road, East Preston.

## **2.6.7 Personnel**

The Personnel Committee is responsible for ensuring that councillors and officers work to the best interests of the council and village as a whole.



Meetings are held quarterly at East Preston Infant School, Lashmar Road. Due to the nature of the meetings, much of the business conducted is confidential and therefore Minutes are not made publicly available.

## **2.6.8 Planning and Licensing**

The purpose of the Planning and Licensing Committee is to consider Planning and Licensing Applications that have been submitted to the local Planning and Licensing Authorities, i.e. Arun District Council and West Sussex County Council. The committee has to respond to Planning Application consultations within national timescales. This requires two meetings to be scheduled each month, but not all are required, The committee has the authority to respond to Planning and Licensing Applications on behalf of the whole Council. Despite the pandemic, during 2020 this committee met ‘virtually’ on thirteen occasions and considered a total of fifty-nine planning applications and one licensing application. In total eleven meetings were cancelled due to the pandemic. Meetings are usually held at the East Preston Infant School, Lashmar Road, East Preston.

## **2.7 Other organisations with service delivery responsibilities**

Arun District Council is responsible for environmental services e.g. housing services, litter, refuse collection, recycling and dog fouling, the maintenance and upkeep of a number of recreational areas. ADC is also the local planning authority with responsibility for all planning approval. The ADC website is available here: <https://www.arun.gov.uk>.

West Sussex County Council is responsible for all highways issues including potholes, lighting, pavements, bollards, co-ordinating and funding some bus routes, health and social care, library services and schools. The WSCC website is available here: <https://www.westsussex.gov.uk>.

We maintain strong links with Sussex Police and the British Transport Police (BTP) . In 2019 we hosted a public meeting with the Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner - Katy Bourne. Also, we have had several presentations at full council meetings from police officers and PCSOs apprising us of how we can improve our interaction. The Sussex Police website is available here: <https://www.sussex.police.uk> and the BTP website is available here: <https://www.btp.police.uk>

Where others provide services the Council endeavours to ensure they deliver them effectively and in accordance with the wishes of the community.

## **2.8 Council governance and communications**

### **2.8.1 Good governance objectives**

The Council aims to be professional, competent, caring, open and accountable in all it does to ensure the sound financial management of Council resources.

The Council aims to:

- Continuously promote public participation in all Council meetings and initiatives
- Be well informed about the needs of the Parish’s residents and businesses by consulting them on major issues
- Reviewing and, where appropriate, improving our methods of distribution of Council news
- Deal with enquiries and reports from members of the public speedily and efficiently.
- The Council recognises the need for good communication in building positive relationships with the public and with organisations that provide services in the Parish. We will continue to seek to improve established channels of communication.

### **2.8.2 Meeting the objectives**

To achieve the objectives detailed above, the Council will:

- Continue to develop the Council’s website providing information about the Council and signposting people to other service providers
- Post regular news of the Councils initiatives on the website and in our quarterly newsletter
- Continue to provide an opportunity at each Council meeting (except the Personnel Committee) for the public to speak and provide comment
- Make updated versions of the Council’s Plan available on the Council website
- Share on the website the Chairman’s annual report of the previous twelve month’s activity
- Invite representatives of outside agencies to address the Council on key matters of interest
- Setup Working Parties with other statutory and voluntary bodies, businesses, residents and other stakeholders and as appropriate external agencies
- Appoint representatives to appropriate external agencies and committees
- Attend relevant conferences and meetings and report findings
- Be involved with appropriate village organisations.

### **3 COUNCIL ACTIVITIES AND OUR COMMITMENTS**

#### **3.1 General**

In this section we explain what we do and where our responsibilities lie. We also tell you what we are ready to commit to on a continuing basis. In this section we explain what we hope to do in the future.

Over the year, the Council held eleven monthly full-council meetings (we don’t usually meet in August), supported by about fifty committee meetings. Councillors attended numerous meetings and events with other agencies such as the NHS Clinical Commissioning Group, the Sussex Community Rail Partnership, West Sussex and Arun Associations of Local Councils, The Baytree Lunch Club, The Martlets care home, Sussex Police, Arun Dementia Action Alliance, Friends of Zachary Merton Hospital, Voluntary Action Arun and Chichester.

To improve safety in the village we support Community Speed Watch and the East Preston Business Community. Recently we have struck-up relationships with the Citizens Advice Bureau and the West Sussex Mediation Service who make use of the Council offices to facilitate their surgeries.

In 2019 the Council hosted a successful evening with Katy Bourne, Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner, to try and address some of the concerns residents had about crime and anti-social behaviour in the village.

We have also had presentations from our local police, Arun District Council’s Community Safety team, British Transport Police, and PCSOs about how best to protect ourselves from crime and how to report matters of interest to the police.

#### **3.2 Amenities Committee**

The Amenities Committee maintains the Council’s open spaces including the Warren Recreation, Two Acres and the Village Green. In addition to keeping those areas looking clean and tidy and well-planted where appropriate, the committee is also responsible for the additional wild-flower meadow at the north end of Sea Lane. The committee was recently responsible for the provision of two major projects: the Multi Use Games Area in Lashmar Road, and the major refurbishment of the Sea Road toilets including modern accessible and disabled facilities.

Forthcoming major initiatives for the Amenities Committee are the ongoing renewal of the boundary fencing around the WRG, improved beach access, energy efficient solar lighting for the WRG carpark and in keeping with the Council’s desire to reduce its carbon footprint - replacing the low level fencing at the village green with a recycled plastic material with a guaranteed 25-year life-span.

### **3.3 Audit and Governance Committee**

The Audit & Governance Committee ensures the Council is running legally, responsibly and transparently in all its dealings with the village residents and its tenants such as the Bowls Club, Tennis Club, Cricket Club and Village Hall. The committee is party to twice-yearly meetings with representatives from each of the above organisations. At those meetings, the organisations give the Council some idea of their future plans, asking permission where appropriate and also confirming they are running as per their guiding document.

Internally, the committee looks at the Council's processes and how these can be improved and streamlined. On behalf of the Council, it reviews the Annual Return and the Internal Audit reports and considers any recommendations within those reports.

On behalf of the Council, because of its role in ensuring the whole Council is running legally, responsibly and transparently, the committee has the ability to make recommendations to other committees if it has any concerns about their ways of working.

### **3.4 Community Engagement Committee**

The Community Engagement Committee oversaw production of the 60th quarterly edition of our newsletter. This is a great way for the Council to keep its residents informed of what is going on in the community. The Community Engagement Committee is responsible for organising events such as: external maintenance of the village library on behalf of WSCC, Merchant Navy Day, bi-annual beach cleans, and the village's Christmas decorations. The committee also provided a defibrillator for the southern part of the village and a familiarisation event for members of the public. Free tennis coaching was provided again for three summer afternoons, in conjunction with the Angmering-on-Sea Lawn Tennis Club. In 2019 the committee organised two successful play-schemes attracting a record thirty children. To date this committee has put up three blue plaques in celebration of local dignitaries and another one is planned in the coming year. This Council acknowledges the problems of the Roundstone crossing and is in constant contact with WSCC to find a better solution to the traffic chaos. The consultation done in 2015 has now gone to WSCC for further scrutiny.

The Environmental Initiative Working Party (WP) has, over the last year, planted a hedge in the WRG, produced a number of booklets and pamphlets on food waste and carbon reduction, and conducted a survey seeking feedback from parishioners. To highlight some environmental issues the WP has also written a number of articles for the Council's quarterly newsletter. Long-term, the WP has two aims: obtaining funding to help communal buildings reduce their carbon footprint, and to set-up an 'East Preston in Bloom' group to help increase the biodiversity in the village.

Every week the Council hosts the 'Littlehampton Committee Fridge' outside the Council's office. This endeavour began during the Covid lockdown as a means of supporting the community through the provision of free food at or near its 'use by date'. The food is donated by local supermarkets and suppliers and if not used in this way it would go to waste.

During the pandemic the Committee organised a group of local volunteers who provided support for other less-able residents who needed care and support. More than 100 volunteers helped over 150 residents.

### **3.5 Finance and General Purposes Committee**

The Finance & General Purposes Committee keeps a close eye on the Council's finances. The Council remains financially stable and healthy and able to carry out its plans. The Council's accounts are maintained by our book-keeper and scrutinised by external auditors to ensure we are compliant with the necessary rules and regulations. Our ethos is one of transparency.

### **3.6 Major Events Committee**

Last year the council set-up a Major Events Committee. The committee arranges the Food & Drink Festival and Christmas Celebrations events. At the conclusion of the Council's four-year term office the committee oversaw a function as a thank-you to the nearly one-hundred local volunteers without whom the village would be a poorer place. The committee plans to hold an annual 'Fun Day Sunday' event open to all ages in the future. To date this committee has put up three blue plaques in celebration of local dignitaries and another one is planned in the coming year. The committee realises the problems of the Roundstone crossing and is in constant contact with WSCC to find a better solution to the traffic chaos. The consultation done in 2015 has now gone to WSCC for further scrutiny.

In the wake of the pandemic the Committee organised a 'thank-you' party for the many volunteers, co-ordinators and service users of the Council's support programme.

### **3.7 Personnel Committee**

And finally, the Personnel Committee looks after, not just the requirements of the staff, but also the councillors. When the Council set-up this committee it was ahead of most councils in doing so. Making this committee responsible for its councillors' needs, such as training, was definitely seen as revolutionary. Now many councils have similar committees looking after their staff and councillors.

### **3.8 Planning and Licensing Committee**

The Planning & Licensing Committee is a statutory consultee of certain planning and licensing applications affecting the village. Our responses are considered by Arun District Council (ADC) and, occasionally if appropriate, by West Sussex County Council, before those authorities make a decision. Where possible the committee comments in-line with the East Preston Neighbourhood Plan and takes into account advice given by the East Preston & Kingston Preservation Society. The committee tries to make sure the proposals do not adversely affect the amenities of neighbouring properties. Members of the committee visit almost all application sites prior to considering them. From time to time, on behalf of the Council, the committee is asked to support comments lodged by neighbouring councils on applications within their areas. The bulk of the committee's work is planning applications, considering approximately 100 applications in a calendar year. Licensing applications and West Sussex County Council planning applications are generally few and far between. The committee welcomes input from applicants and members of the public.

On occasion the committee has to revert drawings to ADC because they either do not provide sufficient information or they do not make sense because of missing details. This is frustrating for the committee and the applicants as these missing details should have, often, been picked up during the ADC Planning Validation process. The committee has been working with the ADC Planning Department on trying to improve the quality of drawings passed through their validation process and will continue to push for improvements in this area for as long as necessary.

At each meeting the committee considers whether or not the right time has come to review the Neighbourhood Plan which was passed in 2015. The committee hopes to move forward with this piece of work now that a new Chairman of the Preservation Society has been selected. The committee is fortunate in as much as it decided not to include any housing numbers in the Neighbourhood Plan and therefore there are no housing numbers which need to be reviewed and revised as frequently as in many Neighbourhood Plans.

The committee would like to work with ADC to improve their online Planning system. Although online the system still feels very paper-based in its functionality and not as flexible as someone viewing applications online might expect.