



EAST PRESTON PARISH COUNCIL

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ANNUAL PARISH MEETING - EAST PRESTON

22nd June 2020

The Annual Parish Meeting at East Preston duly convened and held this day via the Zoom online meeting application.

Present: Parish Councillors Christine Bowman, Kit Bradshaw, Andrea Chapman, Lisa Duff, Barbara Gale, Pat Gander, John Gunston, Elizabeth Linton, Glyn Mathias, David Moore, Steve Toney (in the Chair) and Steve Wilkinson

West Sussex County Councillor Roger Elkins (East Preston and Ferring)

Arun District Councillor Ricky Bower

Members of the Public: Sue Morley

Clerk to the Council: Simon Cross

Apologies: None

The Chairman of the Council, Councillor Steve Toney, opened the meeting at 19:00, and thanked and welcomed those attending.

APM2020/01 - To confirm the Minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting held on 15th April 2019

The Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 15th April 2019 were agreed to be a true record. The meeting agreed these could be signed by Cllr Toney when he was next in the Council Office.

These Minutes had previously been noted by the Parish Council at its meeting held on 13th May 2019, Parish Council Minute 417/19.

APM2020/02 - To receive the Annual Report of the East Preston Parish Council

Cllr Toney's report had been made available to all attendees before the start of the meeting. Cllr Toney asked if anyone present needed him to read it; nobody said they did.

The report, which was to be included in the Summer 2020 Newsletter, read:

“Here is the council's Annual Report for the past financial year.

Working for the Local Community

“As I start to write this report, it is 1st April. Nearly three months later, it is no April Fool’s joke the world is still in the grip of COVID-19, the Coronavirus. I am very proud at the way in which this council and the village as a whole has risen to the challenge of looking after our less able neighbours during this crisis.

“As it became clear a lockdown was very likely, this council’s Community Engagement Committee took the seed of an idea and transformed that, almost overnight, into the East Preston Voluntary Service. All councillors and council officers have either worked as service coordinators within the service or have been volunteers or, where neither of those have been possible, have supported the initiative from afar. The service coordinators in particular have worked especially hard to ensure local residents, unable to help themselves as much as they usually would, have not been left out in the cold. As time passed, we became aware of West Sussex County Council setting up its Community Hub, and we asked our volunteers whether or not they would be happy to have their details passed on to the county council as we fully believed its Community Hub service would replace our own East Preston Voluntary Service. However, the reverse was true and some called to the Community Hub service were referred to our own service, and we helped wherever we could. In addition to the predicted tasks of shopping and prescription collecting, volunteers have also mown lawns, helped find a collecting laundry service, talked to a few lonely people, collecting people’s rent money and paid their rent for them and other diverse activities.

“But what of the first eleven and a half months of the council’s year?

“The 2019-2020 council year started with the Local Elections at the beginning of May. All twelve of the sitting councillors stood for re-election together with one other member of the public. As there are thirteen spaces on the council, there was no need for people to come out and vote, nor was there a need for the massive co-option exercise which had been necessary in 2015. This allowed the council a degree of continuity not seen on some other local councils. Cllr Gunston was the one new member and I hope he will agree that he has fitted in well. I was very pleased and proud to have been re-elected Chairman of the Council with the ever-reliable Cllr Elizabeth Linton as Vice-Chairman.

“In August, Cllr Danny Shah resigned from the council for personal reasons. After a co-option exercise, Cllr Kit Bradshaw took up office in November, bringing the council back up to full strength.

“The biggest project to conclude during the year was the refurbishment of the Sea Road toilet block. We believe the toilet block was originally built in the late 1940s. It had long been little better than functional, but for the past few years the council has been working towards refurbishing the toilets, not just upgrading the existing Ladies and Gents but making half of the block into the best possible Hoist-Assisted Toilet possible in the space available, whilst using the other half of the block to create two spacious unisex cubicles. Our thanks to the local businesses that helped bring the project to fruition and all the individuals and organisations who helped with the funding of the project.

“Staying with toilets and one of the matters raised at last year’s Annual Parish Meeting, the council’s lease on the South Strand Toilet Block expired on 31st March 2019 and we chose not to renew the lease on an asset which is outside this council’s boundary. However, the council has agreed to provide some financial support for the new, independent South Strand Community Toilets group, in recognition of the value the toilet block provides to residents of and visitors to East Preston.

“Events-wise, the council added another Food & Drink Festival and another Christmas Celebrations to its tally. New in the past year was Funday Sunday, an initiative aimed at bringing together some local residents who might otherwise be home alone all day Sunday. Home alone doesn’t just mean home alone on your own, it can also mean home alone with your partner, not seeing anyone else for the whole day. Our first Funday Sunday was held in October on a Sunday afternoon in the Village Hall. About 25 local residents attended and spent the afternoon dancing to live music supplied by Vintage Candy. When they weren’t dancing, guests enjoyed a full afternoon tea and lively conversation. We hope to be able to run at least one Funday Sunday this year, but this will depend upon government advice on social distancing.

“As part of East Preston Festival, the council ran a successful Come and Meet Your Local Councillors event. Attendance was back up on 2018 although the weather was unremarkable. As the event coincided with the Alzheimers Society’s *Cupcake Day*, the council offered refreshments in exchange for a voluntary donation. Thanks to Cllr Chapman’s delicious cupcakes, we were able to donate £50 to the Alzheimers Society. It is sad this year’s Festival will not be able to go ahead because of the pandemic, but the council will offer whatever help it can to ensure next year’s Festival is one of the best ever.

“Financially, the council has been careful with your money whilst still working to improve life in the village. In their most recent assessments, the council’s independent internal and external auditors both raised no major concerns about the management of the council.

“The council is always approachable and willing to consider ideas you have for ways in which life in the village can be improved. Please submit suggestions in writing (letter or email) so the correct committee can consider them or our officers can report on previous discussions on the same matter. We look forward to hearing your ideas and hopefully implementing some of them to make the village even lovelier.

“I would like to finish by thanking my fellow councillors for their hard work throughout the year and their support of me, and also by thanking the council’s officers who really do work tirelessly for the village.”

No questions were asked of the Chairman.

APM2020/03 - To receive a report from the Arun District councillors representing East Preston.

District Cllr Ricky Bower started by saying the Conservative group was now the largest at Arun District Council following the upset of the Local Elections in May 2019. However, the group was not in administration of the council, that was being carried out by the Liberal Democrats in alliance the Independents, without a formal agreement. This was a very frustrating situation for Conservative District Councillors.

The Local Plan will be reviewed sometime in the next five years as the housing requirement is 2,500 short of the identified housing needs. The Liberal Democrat / Independent group was seeking to prevent the development of several sites included in the Local Plan as Strategic Sites, opposition which would almost certainly lead to developer success as appeal. There was a threat to the East Preston – Kingston strategic gap with a plan to shift development away from Strategic Sites on to other sites. Highdown Hill was also under threat from inappropriate development.

Cllr Bower reported the leader of the Conservative Group had changed from Cllr Terry Chapman to Cllr Shaun Gunner, elected last year as a District Councillor for Rustington East.

With reference to the COVID-19 pandemic, the District Council had just had a meeting at which it was prophesied the council would have more than a £5m shortfall. Central government was looking to make more money available to offset such situations.

In response to a question from Cllr Toney, Cllr Bower said there were grants available from the District Council for the provision of hand-sanitiser stations. The Clerk added he had been in touch with some Community Engagement councillors and some local businesses about what we could apply for from this fund, and hand sanitisers and signage were the top suggestions.

APM2020/04 - To receive a report from the West Sussex County councillor representing East Preston.

County Cllr Roger Elkins started by thanking “all those involved in the fantastic activities in East Preston.” He noted everyone’s disappointment at the unavoidable cancellation of events that have been “most enjoyable to attend” in previous years.

Cllr Elkins continued by giving a quick indication of how the budget of approximately £550m was spent. Adult Social Care costs £200m. That puts a major pressure on other services offered by the council. Children & Young People’s budget is £170m, a £12m increase over the previous year following an OFSTED report into the service. The increase was mainly being used for the placement of children, over 700 children were currently placed away from their families in the county, a significant increase over the past few years. In comparison, the Fire & Rescue Service has a budget of £35m. A recent independent report into the Fire & Rescue Service noted several improvements in the Fire & Rescue Service.

Back in October 2019, Cllr Paul Marshall became Leader of the Council, replacing Cllr Louise Goldsmith. Cllr Duncan Crow had become the new Cabinet Member for the Fire & Rescue Service and Communities, these changes ahead of the County Council Elections in 2021.

Moving on to talking about Highways, there was further consultation on the works planned for the A27, following a challenge by the South Downs National Park Authority. The council was still awaiting confirmation of the route from Highways England. Cllr Elkins hoped the works would be delivered in 2022.

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, work on the A259 had stopped. Cllr Elkins was pleased to report the work was expected to start again in late summer. The budget was still in place.

Within East Preston, there were Traffic Regulation Order designs being drawn up for Sea Road and Lashmar Road. Details of these are imminent. There was some debate as to how the Traffic Regulation Orders could be advertised within the COVID-19 world.

Cllr Elkins reported the Community Hub set up in response to the pandemic was in touch with between 10-11,000 residents across the county. This was working well, the majority of the 10-11,000 residents were being supported by their own local communities, only a few hundred needed to be served directly by WSCC.

In response to a question about when OFSTED would be re-inspecting the Children and Young People’s Service, Cllr Elkins said he would need to find out an answer to that question and then report back. Cllr Elkins confirmed the WSCC Cabinet received regular update reports on the how the Children and Young People’s Service was performing.

APM2020/05 - To consider any written resolutions received by the council no later than 17th June 2020

The Clerk to the Council confirmed no such resolutions had been received.

APM2020/06 – Public question time.

Cllr Toney asked Mrs Morley if she had any questions to which Mrs Morley replied that she had no questions but she offered “many many thanks for everything that everyone is doing.” Mrs Morley went on to say, “All those wonderful bicycles, aren’t they marvellous? Absolutely fantastic, makes up for the Festival.”

With no questions forthcoming, Cllr Toney read out the final paragraph of his report, “I would like to finish by thanking my fellow councillors for their hard work throughout the year and their support of me, and also by thanking the council’s officers who really do work tirelessly for the village.”

Cllr Toney closed the meeting at 19:29.

Chairman: *Cllr Steve Toney*
Cllr Steve Toney

Date: 21st June 2021