



EAST PRESTON PARISH COUNCIL

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ANNUAL PARISH MEETING - EAST PRESTON

15th April 2019

The Annual Parish Meeting at East Preston duly convened and held this day at the East Preston Infant School, Lashmar Road, East Preston.

Present:

Parish Councillors Andrea Chapman, Lisa Duff, Barbara Gale, Pat Gander, Elizabeth Linton, Glyn Mathias, Rick McElroy, David Moore, Danny Shah, Steve Toney (in the Chair) and Steve Wilkinson

West Sussex County Councillor Roger Elkins (East Kingston and Ferring) (until 19:47)

Chief Inspector Kris Ottery, Sussex Police, Arun and Chichester District Commander (until 19:27)

Members of the Public:

Chris and Valerie Eschbaeher, Maureen Fraser, Peter Galloway, David Gander, Sue Morley, Danny Reginiano, Peter and Sioned Vos and Jennifer Wallace

Clerk to the Council:

Simon Cross

Assistant Clerk to the Council:

Dawn Reid

Apologies:

Parish Councillor Christine Bowman; Celeste Amoo

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

APM2019/01 - To receive a presentation from Chief Inspector Kris Ottery, Sussex Police

Sussex Police Chief Inspector Kris Ottery, introduced himself as the District Commander for the Arun & Chichester area, an area that stretched from Emsworth to Ferring, Haslemere to Selsey.

Prior to the meeting, CI Ottery had been for a wander around the village and said he found it to be “a lovely village.”

Throughout his career he has always worked in the Arun & Chichester District. Policing meant a great deal to him.

Those present were aware of the recent increase in investment to support policing, something he personally welcomed.

His team included uniformed response officers based in Bognor Regis and Chichester with support from neighbouring officers in Durrington. There was a prevention arm to his team, officers plus Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs), civilian support and an enforcement team. The prevention team's focus was on public engagement.

CI Ottery gave some figures on what has been going on in East Preston & Kingston. In 2018, there were 247 reported crimes. He then provided figures by category; not all of the incidents resulted in a "crime", which is why the figures do not add up to 247.

- 107 anti-social behaviour crimes
- 90 anti-social behaviour nuisances, tree damage, bus shelter damage, bin fires
- 56 violent crimes in public, mainly youths assaulting each other or shoplifters assaulting those who intervene or within families
- 55 cases of domestic abuse
- 50 criminal damage
- 41 thefts, mainly from shops
- 16 burglaries, half the 2017 figure
- 16 vehicle crimes, keyings, tyre deflations, stones put through windows
- 0 serious sexual assaults

During the year there had been a small series of burglaries in East Preston, Kingston and Ferring. The perpetrator had been traced to Worthing and arrested in a cross-border operation.

There is a Sussex Police officer dedicated to tackling anti-social behaviour within the district and working closely with Arun District Council. A great number of interventions were carried out and most anti-social behaviour did not escalate into adult criminality.

The main focus of the precept uplift (i.e. increased investment) were the missing persons team and the child sexual exploitation team. Resourcing priorities are on gathering intelligence.

CI Ottery's team had already expanded by four police officers in the Neighbourhood / Prevention arm. Sussex Police was already recruiting an additional 100 PCSOs, and some of those would come to Arun and Chichester.

Sussex Police was concerned about drug gangs operating in the county, exploiting children and also "cuckooing" in vulnerable people's homes. In this area, this was mainly a problem in Littlehampton and Bognor Regis. CI Ottery was hopeful if it was stamped upon quickly enough and often enough in those towns, it would not spread to the outlying villages. Early intervention was essential.

CI Ottery asked those present to keep on reporting suspicious goings-on. The better the information gained, the easier it was to pursue cases and nip criminal activity in the bud.

CI Ottery then answered questions from the floor.

Was there evidence drug abuse was a factor in any of the other lines of crime? Yes, drug abuse was a bit of theme throughout all crimes. Anyone arrested was now searched as a matter of course, and that was how most drug possession crimes were found. That said, drug abuse crime levels were still low in this area. In domestic abuse cases, it was more likely alcohol was a factor than drugs.

How many incidents are actually attended? Impossible to say, but CI Ottery said he was confident the incidents that needed to be attended were. He held a morning meeting and if there was a case which had not been attended he felt should have been, he would have that attended.

Referring to county drug lines, was it true Angmering station was well used? CI Ottery replied there were cuckoo houses in Bognor Regis, Littlehampton and Rustington and, as rail was a popular method of travel, Angmering station will undoubtedly have been used. Use of hire cars was increasing and gradually replacing rail travel as it could be more covert. Drug offences in East Preston were not especially related to county drug lines drug dealing.

What could be done about vehicles speeding along Vicarage Lane, mainly after dark? There were reduced road policing teams and these were supplemented by the Sussex Police-supported Community Speed Watch volunteers. However, they were not allowed on duty after dark. The road policing teams did not have the resources available to attend every "accident waiting to happen" site, just on the off chance of catching someone speeding. Mobile Speed Indication Devices (SIDs) were sometimes effective in such locations. Displaying posters designed by local schoolchildren was another suggestion.

Could the mobile camera van be located in Vicarage Lane? There were ten mobile camera vans covering the whole county. Deployment was generally based upon collision data.

With no further questions forthcoming, CI Ottery left the meeting at the conclusion of this item.

APM2019/02 - To receive a report from the West Sussex County councillor representing East Preston.

County Cllr Roger Elkins started by saying it was great news all current councillors had been re-elected for the coming term. Cllr Elkins believed this was because residents appreciated the amount of work done by the council. In particular, he personally wanted to thank Cllr Toney and Mr Cross for how well they keep him informed of local matters of concern.

Since last year's meeting, building works on the Infant School had completed and wasn't this now a fantastic extended facility. Staying with the school's extended facilities, Cllr Elkins said he had attended a great Parish Council end-of-term party the previous Friday, in the wonderful setting of the rainforest-themed library.

Cllr Elkins referred to grants West Sussex County Council made to community groups, most recently in East Preston to the 1st East Preston Scouts to provide improved storage. This was recognition of the great work the Scouts do in the community.

Tree works in advance of the dualling of part of the A259 had taken place ahead of the nesting season. Compulsory Purchase Orders were now being processed to buy the necessary land for the dualling. The construction phase was expected to last for eighteen months, starting at the end of 2019.

Following a challenge to the chosen route for the A27 Arundel Bypass, a further public consultation exercise was to be undertaken, and then once a final choice has been made, a further consultation on just that choice will take place. The money was still available for this project and it was now likely to start in 2022.

West Sussex Fire & Rescue Services was still recruiting. A recently recruited on-call fire fighter lived in East Preston.

Cllr Elkins had met various sets of residents affected by parking concerns in and around the lower end of Sea Road. Various petitions had been signed and submitted through the County Council's Traffic Regulation Order process. Cllr Elkins hoped a scheme could be agreed which would successfully address a range of issues.

The County Council was looking at making libraries into community hubs. This was being trialled in Worthing, and Cllr Elkins expected this to be viewed positively by relevant members of the public.

Cllr Elkins then responded to the following questions.

Was any thought given to making it simpler for traffic to and from East Preston wishing to travel north-south across the A259? Cllr Elkins believed there were no changes planned except for traffic to continue to use the existing roundabouts. This decision had been taken after analysis of traffic flow calculations.

Were these traffic flow calculations modelled on the age profile of this area? Cllr Elkins was not able to answer that question definitively but there were guidelines for safe access.

Was a westbound slip-road off the A259 into East Preston still on the table? No, it was not part of the current design. There were various problems with the proposal and its difficulty in meeting Highways England standards. Cllr Elkins said he understood the concerns, but the focus for now had to be on getting the A259 improvements delivered as there may be some knock-on positive benefits in this matter. Cllr Elkins said he did not know who had "cut out" the slip-road from the project.

Had the traffic flow data been revisited at all, as it was at least two years out-of-date and everyone accepted traffic volumes had increased tremendously in the meantime? Cllr Elkins believed the peak build-up at certain times of the day had not changed. It was possible the rush hour backlogs will clear with dualling.

APM2019/03 - To receive a report from the Arun District councillors representing East Preston.

None of the three Arun District Councillors representing East Preston & Kingston – Cllrs Ricky Bower, Terry Chapman and Mike Clayden – were present.

APM2019/04 - To confirm the Minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting held on 21st May 2018

The Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 21st May 2018 were signed by the Chairman as a correct record. There were no objections.

These Minutes had previously been noted by the Parish Council at its meeting held on 4th June 2018, Parish Council Minute 422/18.

Cllr Elkins left the meeting at this point.

APM2019/05 - 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 Spring 2019 Newsletter, read:

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

"I was elected Chairman just over a year ago, at the beginning of April 2018. Where to start recognizing what the council has done over the past year? It might be easiest to give a brief overview of each of the council's seven committees and what they have been up to.

"The Amenities Committee looks after the council's open spaces, 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 top of Sea Lane. The committee was the driving force for the provision of the Multi Use Games Area on Lashmar Road. Opening this officially in August was the culmination of project first made public in the newsletter in early 2013. Lots of hurdles were overcome to bring this asset to the village. Thank you to the members of the public who helped with some funding of this project. The committee has also progressed the refurbishment of the Sea Road toilet block, which will hopefully start at the end of this summer.

"Talking of the newsletter, the Community Engagement Committee oversaw production of the 50th quarterly edition of the newsletter. This is a great way for us to keep in touch with you, both telling you what we have been up to and asking your opinion on some of the ideas we have. During the year, some of the committee's workload was split off to a new Major Events Committee – more on that later. The Community Engagement Committee remained responsible for last year's Food & Drink Festival, Christmas Celebrations and events during the main East Preston Festival. The committee also provided a defibrillator for the southern part of the village and a familiarization 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, and will be provided again on Friday mornings this year. The committee offered the public cakes and an ear at the Come and Meet Your Local Councillors event in Festival week, as well as bringing Owls About Town back to the village that week. Two successful playschemes were offered by the committee during the year, the February one attracting a record thirty children. The committee also arranged the spruce up of the library building on behalf of West Sussex County Council. The committee continues to follow its aim of improving the wellbeing of as many East Preston residents as possible.

"The council set up a Major Events Committee part-way through the year and that will run the Food & Drink Festival and Christmas Celebrations events in future. This committee oversaw last week's end-of-term party at which we thanked nearly 100 local volunteers, without whom the village would be a poorer place. New this year will be a Silver Sunday event in October, supporting the Age UK initiative of the same name.

"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. Thank you for trusting us in this particular way.

"The Planning & Licensing Committee reviews numerous Planning Applications in the village and occasional Licensing Applications, our responses being considered by Arun District Council before it makes its decisions. Where possible, we try to comment upon Planning Applications in line with the East Preston Neighbourhood Plan and sometime Arun District Council agrees with us, sometimes not.

"The Personnel Committee looks after not just the requirements of the staff but also the councillors. When the council set up this committee in about 2008, it was ahead of most councils in doing so. Making this committee responsible also for councillors' needs, such as training, was definitely seen as revolutionary. Now many councils have similar committees looking after their staff and councillors. The committee's biggest task for the year was appointing a new Assistant Clerk to the Council, and that was successfully completed in December following over seventy applications being received.

"Finally, the Audit & Governance Committee ensures the council is running legally and responsibly both in its dealings with you as village residents, but also with its tenants such as the Bowls Club, Tennis Club, Cricket Club and Village Hall.

"Over the year, the council held eleven monthly Full Council meetings, 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 – the list goes on. Knowledge gained at these meetings informs the council's decisions and direction.

"The council also hosted a successful evening with Katy Bourne, Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner, to try and address some of the concerns residents have about crime and anti-social behaviour in the village. We have also brought Chief Inspector Ottery to the village to talk to you earlier this evening. At monthly Full Council meetings now, we try to have a guest speaker and in recent months we have heard from Arun District Council's Community Safety team, the West Sussex Mediation Service and British Transport Police.

“Although this report only covers the past financial year, it would be naïve not to recognise this report also mentions the end of the current four-year term for the council. On 7th May 2015, just seven councillors were elected in an Uncontested Election. Over the following few months, those seven councillors and the council’s officers worked hard to build the council up to full strength. “For various reasons, over the four years Joop Duijf, Paul Kelly and Rob Ellis all resigned and very sadly Hazel Tester passed away in March 2018, still very much missed. I thank each of them for their contribution but, more importantly, I thank all the current councillors for their hard work on behalf of the village over the past term – in addition to successes mentioned above, I would like to add an improved and tidied Warren Recreation Ground; a car-park at the Village Green which, whilst the introduction of charging was controversial, is paying for itself now and raising funds for other village projects; a quiz afternoon tea to mark the Queen’s 90th birthday; support for the Christmas Day lunch at Our Lady, Star of the Sea; support for the St Mary the Virgin Christmas Tree Festival; twice-yearly beach cleans and recent support of the Keep East Preston Tidy campaign; Community Speed Watch and support of the East Preston Business Community. I could easily go on, but hopefully you will recognise the council’s hand in at least some of the above achievements and will have your own favourites.

“I thank all my fellow councillors and the council’s officers who work almost tirelessly it seems for the benefit of the village. They are all quiet, low-profile people, but I know they like to be thanked if you see them out and about! I would also like to thank the Clerk for all his work above and beyond the call of duty.

“Most importantly though, thank you to all of you who regularly show your faith in and support for the council. We hope to serve you by continuing to improve the village where we can. Thank you.”

APM2019/06 - To consider any written resolutions received by the council no later than 10th April 2019

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

APM2019/07 – Public question time.

Cllr Toney opened the meeting up to members of the public to have their say on any matter affecting East Preston.

Mr Vos asked whether sponsorship had been found for the South Strand toilet block. Cllr Toney handed this question over to Cllr Wilkinson who was the council’s official representative to the South Strand Community Toilets group. Cllr Wilkinson provided a short update on the current situation which had seen a smaller working party develop from larger meetings with interested parties which had started back in August 2018. The group was in the process of being registered with the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA). Pledges had been received varying from £5 to £1,500 a year. The lease from Arun District Council (ADC) to the Parish Council had expired on 31st March. ADC was continuing to keep the toilet block open on the understanding the South Strand Community Toilets group would be in a position to agree a lease in a matter of months. The group was confident it would be able to secure the funding to keep the toilet block open. In response to a suggestion the group became a charity so donations could receive additional Gift Aid funding, Cllr Wilkinson said that would likely be considered in due course.

Mrs Wallace asked whether the council had a contingency plan should the committee of the East Preston & Kingston Village Hall Foundation be unable to find sufficient committee members to run. Mr Cross responded the Chairman of the Village Hall Foundation believed sufficient members had been found to keep the committee running. The council did not have a contingency plan for the situation suggested by Mrs Wallace.

Mrs Wallace also asked whether the Twinning Association Charter, which formerly hung in the Warren Room, had been located. Mr Cross said he did not believe it had. He had worked with the former Chairman of the Twinning Association and a local resident who was gathering together the Twinning Association’s history to deposit at the West Sussex Records Office, but nothing had yet come to light. He knew the Bookings Secretary, Mrs Toni McElroy, had looked thoroughly through the Village Hall, including the loft space, but the charter had not come to light. The charter had presumably gone missing at the time the Village Hall committee gave the Millennium Wall-hanging to the council and various East Preston Festival artefacts back to the Festival Committee. It was reasonable to think the charter had been returned to someone in the Twinning Association. Someone somewhere knew where it was. Mr Cross had suggested to the lady compiling the Association’s history, an article be published in the Littlehampton Gazette, perhaps with a picture of the charter in Brou. This suggestion had been received positively.

Mrs Fraser offered the council the thanks of the residents of East Preston for all the work it does. Cllr Toney thanked Mrs Fraser.

With no further questions forthcoming, Cllr Toney closed the meeting at 19:55 and invited those present to join the council for a drink and less formal conversation.