



EAST PRESTON PARISH COUNCIL

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ANNUAL PARISH MEETING - EAST PRESTON

21st June 2021

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, Rick McElroy, David Moore, Steve Toney (in the Chair) and Steve Wilkinson

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

Arun District Councillors Ricky Bower and Terry Chapman (East Preston and Kingston)

Members of the Public: Miss Gold-Beves, Sue Morley

Clerk to the Council: Simon Cross

Apologies: Arun District Councillor Paul Kelly

The Chairman of the Council, Councillor Steve Toney, opened the meeting at 19:02, and thanked and welcomed those attending.

APM2021/01 - To confirm the Minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting held on 22nd June 2020

The Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 22nd June 2020 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 6th July 2020, Parish Council Minute 438/20.

APM2021/02 - 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 so Cllr Toney just read the final two paragraphs of the full report below.

The report, which was to be included in the Summer 2021 Newsletter, read:

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

Working for the Local Community

“2020, the year none will probably ever forget. The first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, a situation which is still having a marked impact upon many people’s lives a year and a half after we first started to talk about it. For many of us, I expect 1st April 2020 feels a lifetime ago.

“Just before the beginning of the new financial year on 1st April, 2020, central government announced the first lockdown as a measure to reduce the spread of the virus. In preparation for such a move, the council launched the East Preston Voluntary Service, much about which has been written and spoken elsewhere. But the achievements of the Voluntary Service in supporting East Preston residents who found themselves more vulnerable than usual bear repeating. Other councils managed their service on a task-based model and so can tell you exactly how many tasks volunteers carried out for those in need. The coordinators of the Voluntary Service (myself and Cllrs Bradshaw, Duff, Gander, Gunston and Linton and the Clerk) decided to set up more of a buddying system, whereby a household in need was paired with a household willing to help. We cannot say how many tasks have been and are still being carried out but we can say over 150 households were willing to help over 150 other households in the village, pairing up to provide direct 1:1 contact and, beyond that, two-way friendship. We have had our hearts warmed numerous times hearing great stories from volunteers and those who have benefitted from their assistance. Most of the help needed was shopping or collecting prescriptions, but there were also a number of more unusual requests the service fulfilled such as the lady who desperately wanted just a packet of Bourbon biscuits at a time when she could not go and get them herself, a volunteer standing in a front garden tuning the guitar for a man with dementia, volunteers walking dogs big and small, mowing lawns and helping with pest control.

“By the time this report is published in the Newsletter, the council hopes to have been able to hold an afternoon tea-party to celebrate the achievements of the Voluntary Service and the friendships that have arisen.

“As far as we can tell, the virus has not affected the village too badly. A few of us will have lost dear friends and relatives and our condolences to those people, but thanks to residents mostly respecting government guidance and regulations, many of us have a full set of friends and relatives still intact. Although often a struggle, local businesses have, on the whole, survived and we ask residents to keep supporting our local businesses. On behalf of the whole council, I really want to thank those business owners who found ways to adapt and work within the government guidelines to keep serving residents in ways old and new.

“The council also had to adapt to work within the government guidelines. No longer able to meet in person, I was delighted with how quickly councillors and officers adapted to holding meetings online. Thanks also to the members of the public that embraced the new technology and attended meetings throughout the pandemic; your tangible support is much appreciated. As you would expect, some council projects had to be delayed as they would best be served by face-to-face meetings, but generally the council was able to get on with its businesses of being in the heart of the village and supporting residents and businesses alike.

“Disappointingly, the council had to cancel all its big, regular events during the year, but came up with or supported others’ ideas to keep the village entertained in different ways. Our thanks to the East Preston Festival Committee for its unconditional support of the Brighten Up East Preston events at Christmas, which were much appreciated by local residents. Any conversation about brightening up East Preston cannot conclude without praising the East Preston Yarnbombers who once again brought delight and smiles to almost every East Preston resident, regardless of age. Just as the Festival continues to put East Preston on the map, so the Yarnbombers are doing so in a different way, encouraging tourists into the village, bolstering local businesses. We have no idea who most of you are, but we tip our knitted hats in your honour. Thanks also to everyone who wrote a poem or painted a pebble or posted an inspirational message around the village. You are probably all too modest to understand quite how important an impact your creativity had. The council’s Major Events Committee is busy, with its fingers crossed, hoping to run East Preston Food & Drink Festival and East Preston Christmas Celebrations events this year together with a much-delayed second Funday Sunday in October. Such events will, of course, depend upon government guidance on social distancing.

“Despite the pandemic, it should be noted the council received a wholly clean bill of health from both the Internal and External Auditors for the year-ending 31st March 2020. This achievement cannot be underestimated in underlining how responsibly the council handles your money.

“As a way of connecting with residents in these curious times, the council reintroduced Councillor Walkabouts. For these a pair of councillors go for an hour-long walk in different areas of the village, chatting to villagers they come across. It has been very pleasing to hear the mostly positive comments those we have spoken to have had. All comments are fed back to the council by participating councillors and are considered by the relevant council committee or passed on to the relevant authorities.

“The council remains 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.

“As in previous years, 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 maintained a visible presence throughout the lockdowns and who really do work tirelessly for the village.”

No questions were asked of the Chairman.

APM2021/03 - To receive a report from the Arun District councillors representing East Preston.

District Cllr Chapman started by thanking the parish councillors and officers of the council for their exceptional work over the past year in keeping the business of the parish running in difficult and unprecedented circumstances. Cllr Chapman said he believed most residents had great confidence in the council, which could sometimes be seen by some of the unusual requests made of the Clerk. Mrs Morley put her thumbs up in support of Cllr Chapman's comments.

Cllr Chapman explained the Conservatives had regained control of Arun District Council with the support of three Independents who had not been Independents at the time of the 2019 local election. The council had just moved to a new system of governance – there was no longer a cabinet system but in its place were committees with some executive powers. The former Development Control Committee had been restructured as the Planning Committee with fewer members overall. Cllr Chapman had been made Chairman of the committee and District Cllrs Bower and Kelly had also been elected to the committee. Additionally, Cllr Bower had been made Chairman of the Planning Policy Committee, of which Cllr Chapman is also a member. This did mean the three district councillors could receive observations from members of the public but would have to be very careful in how they responding to avoid accusations of predetermination. The three could advise East Preston and Kingston residents on Planning process.

Cllr Chapman reminded the meeting ADC had, not so long ago, passed a Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) covering the coastal area of Arun. Cllr Chapman felt the district council was not currently able to enforce this. One of the provisions of the PSPO was for dogs to be kept on leads on beaches during the summer season. No signs have been implemented to advise of this and Cllr Chapman's questions about when any signs will be put up have got unanswered.

Cllr Chapman concluded the felt the village was generally "in good heart." He again thanked the council and the volunteers that have been working alongside the council across the village. Cllr Chapman said it was good to know the parish council's Councillor Walkabouts were bearing fruit. He himself usually spent about an hour a day walking around the village, talking to people, and almost all of what residents had to say was positive.

District Cllr Bower thanked the parish council for the work it had done over the past year. He felt this work showed the village in its best possible light. As far as the pandemic was concerned, he felt East Preston residents had responded very well to the challenges thrown up. The district council had been supporting West Sussex County Council in delivering general support and the vaccine programme with great success.

Following on from Cllr Chapman's comments on Planning, Cllr Bower said he and his colleagues could provide information on process but could not express any opinions on Planning Applications within the village. The new Planning Policy Committee had had one meeting so far, and had not yet decided whether or not to undertake a Local Plan review. Cllr Bower referred to challenges nationally with changes proposed to Planning Policy by central government, in light on which it may be prudent not to undertake a Local Plan review at this time.

The council was picking up on projects in Littlehampton and Bognor Regis which had not progressed much in the first two years of the current district council term.

Cllr Bower concluded by again thanking the parish council and confirming district councillors would continue to support East Preston residents to the best of their ability.

There being no questions for the district councillors, District Cllr Chapman left the meeting at this point.

APM2021/04 - To receive a report from the West Sussex County councillor representing East Preston.

County Cllr Roger Elkins expressed particular thanks to everyone for embracing online technology so meetings could be held openly and the democratic process continue unimpeded. He thanked the Clerk for managing the technology and all councillors for not having any problems with making best use of the technology, highlighting how the community has worked together. He thanked the community of East Preston for supporting its members through the pressures of the pandemic. Cllr Elkins added the council's thoughts were with those residents who had been impacted by the pandemic.

Cllr Elkins said he was delighted to have been re-elected to the county council in May. He further thanked the residents of East Preston and Kingston for the high turnout; even with the unusual restrictions on polling stations, the turnout in the ward was within 1% of previous turnouts. Cllr Elkins said he had chosen to stand down from his cabinet role, but was continuing to work with the Local Government Association on coastal issues.

Cllr Elkins went on to talk about improvement works to the A259, and the slight delay that had been incurred owing to the pandemic-related pressures on one of the utility companies involved.

A local enquiry was scheduled for August concerning the £11m project to improve the Lyminster by-pass.

A public consultation was underway for proposed improvements to the A259 between Littlehampton and Bognor Regis.

The county council was concerned about the increase in Ash Dieback seen affecting trees across the county.

Remarkable improvements had been noted in the provision of Children's Services and the West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service.

Cllr Elkins ended by thanking the councillors and the Clerk for continued good work.

In response to a question, Cllr Elkins explained construction work on the Arundel by-pass was likely to start in 2023 or 2024. Preparatory surveys were taking place and work was also being undertaken to mitigate the impact on the villages closest to the selected route. Cllr Elkins confirmed people were working full-time on the project.

APM2021/05 - To consider any written resolutions received by the council no later than 18th June 2021

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

APM2021/06 – Public question time.

Mrs Morley asked whether the Clerk had any information on why the landlord of The Clockhouse had new seating outside his pub. The Clerk said he had not seen the landlord to speak to, but had asked someone close to the landlord who had not been able to give an answer.

Miss Gold-Beves appeared to have nothing she wanted to raise.

Cllr Toney added, on behalf of the parishioners, thanks to the East Preston Yarnbombers again for the joy their work brings to the village. He closed the meeting at 19:36.

Chairman: *Councillor Steve Toney*

Date: 13th June 2022