



EAST PRESTON PARISH COUNCIL

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AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

MINUTES: of the Committee Meeting held on Monday 13th March, 2023 at 19:00 at East Preston Infant School, Lashmar Road, East Preston

PRESENT: Councillors Lisa Duff, Elizabeth Linton, Glyn Mathias (Chairman), Rick McElroy, Steve Toney and Steven Wilkinson

ALSO: Clerk to the Council, Simon Cross
Councillors Christine Bowman and David Moore

The meeting commenced at 19:00.

Cllrs Bowman and Moore attended the meeting as members of the Conservative Hall Working Party.

217/23 APOLOGIES AND REASONS FOR ABSENCE

All committee members were present.

218/23 PERSONAL AND/OR PREJUDICIAL INTERESTS

Cllr McElroy declared a Personal Interest in Agenda Item 5, *Conservative Hall Working Party: to receive any update*, as his wife is the Chairman of the East Preston & Kingston Village Hall Foundation.

219/23 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

No members of the public were present.

220/23 CONSERVATIVE HALL WORKING PARTY

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

Conservative Hall Working Party

Committee is asked to consider the next steps with regards to the potential purchase of the Conservative Hall.

The valuation report has been received, at long last, and has been circulated ahead of this meeting.

Matters the committee may wish to consider include:

Sharing the report with the Trustees of the Conservative Hall
Meeting with the Trustees (or a representative of) of the Conservative Hall
When should we go out to the public?

And undoubtedly you will have matters of your own you wish to discuss.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

9th March 2023

As Chairman of the Conservative Hall Working Party, Cllr McElroy took the chair for this item.

After some discussion about what repairs have been completed since the April 2022, Report on Building Condition, and what repairs were still required, the committee AGREED unanimously:

To share the report with the current Trustees of the Conservative Hall, via Terry Chapman

To ask Terry Chapman to suggest meeting dates for the Trustees to discuss the report with members of the Working Party

Not to go out to the public yet

To settle the invoice for the most recent Report and Valuation

The Clerk would action accordingly.

(Cllr Moore left at the conclusion of this item.)

221/23 LEASES WORKING PARTY

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

Leases Working Party

Committee is asked to receive any update from the Leases Working Party.

On 20th January, I circulated an initial draft of a new lease for the Bowls Club to the members of the Leases Working Party. Cllr Gunston asked a couple of questions which I have answered to his satisfaction, and Cllr Wilkinson said the lease seemed fine. I received no feedback from the other four members.

Is the Working Party ready to meet directly with the Bowls Club to thrash out the finer points? This would include the financial side of the lease.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

9th March 2023

The committee AGREED to meet with representatives of the Bowls Club to work towards a final version of a replacement lease. The existing lease would expire on 3rd May 2025.

The Clerk said he had calculated the square meterage of the Angmering-on-Sea Lawn Tennis Club to work out a rental per square metre, and then had applied that to the square meterage of the bowls club. The Tennis Club's lease was currently £3,000 a year, from which the Clerk calculated the bowls club's lease would be £1,150.68. The club's representatives had told the Clerk the club had undergone some unexpected expenditure in the past few years and had also had a hit on membership as a result of the pandemic. In light of this, the club had asked whether it would be possible to have an incremental increase over five years to take the annual rent from 5p to the £1,150.68.

As the club would undoubtedly hold out until the end of the current lease to renew, the committee's initial response to this request was the club had a couple of years to raise the money to pay the full amount from the start, although it would be willing to negotiate too.

222/23 RESERVES POLICY

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

Reserves Policy

Committee is asked to consider the need for a Reserves Policy for the council.

This item has arisen from both a member of the public and a comment in the Internal Audit report from 21st September. The member of the public, Mr A, aware the council's reserves are high, has said the council is obliged to have a Reserves Policy. Knowing this, I contacted our Internal Auditor, Andy Beams of Mulberry & Co.. His reply, on 24th November 2022, was, "It's not a statutory requirement to have a reserves policy, although it is good practice if a council has significant reserves. The policy typically outlines the difference between earmarked and general reserves, and may set a target balance the council is aiming for."

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

9th March 2023

The committee considered the point of a Reserves Policy was to ensure an organisation did not go below the amount of money it required to operate for a set period of time. The Clerk said that was not the angle from which the member of the public had been coming. The committee was aware the Internal Auditor always reported on the council's high general reserves and that he accepted the council was not actively trying to build its reserves, setting a negative budget each year and not having increased its precept since 2019/20.

The committee AGREED unanimously a Reserves Policy was not required at this time, as the council had built up reserves which allowed it to respond quickly when needed.

223/23 ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL PLAN

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

Council Plan

On behalf of the council, Cllr Wilkinson has agreed to review the Council Plan adopted in December 2021. As he has mentioned in other meetings, he is hoping to bring the 2022 Council Plan and the 2012 East Preston Action Plan together into one document. He will give any updates to this meeting.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

9th March 2023

Cllr Wilkinson said he had spoken with the Clerk and there were three documents in which he was currently interested: the Council Plan, the East Preston Action Plan and the East Preston Neighbourhood Plan. He was investigating whether there were ways in which these three documents could be combined into a maximum of two documents giving, he hoped, the council the ability to close down the Action Plan as an active document, albeit one which had not been looked at for some years.

The committee AGREED unanimously with his proposal to meet 1:1 with each of the committees' chairmen to update the *Council Activities and our Commitments* section of the Council Plan, considering the actions identified in the East Preston Action Plan. The committee AGREED unanimously that would be sufficient for the first annual review of the Council Plan.

224/23 ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE HEALTH & SAFETY POLICY

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

Health & Safety Policy

On behalf of the council, Committee is asked to carry out the annual review of the council's Health & Safety Policy.

This appears to have last been reviewed in October 2020, and can be found at Appendix A below.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

23rd March 2023

Cllrs Duff and Toney said they had completed the annual Health & Safety audit in late January and, although pretty much everything was in order, actions identified had been recorded by Mrs Reid, the Assistant Clerk. These would be addressed through the coming year.

225/23 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 21ST NOVEMBER 2022

The draft Minutes had been circulated to all councillors on 23rd November, asking for comments by 30th November. None had been received.

The committee AGREED the Minutes could be signed as a true record of the meeting held on 21st November. Cllr Mathias duly completed this task.

226/23 UPDATES ON MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

There were no updates not already recorded above.

227/23 URGENT MATTERS FOR INFORMATION ONLY

Nothing was raised.

228/23 MATTERS TO BE DISCUSSED AT THE NEXT MEETING (17TH JULY)

Nothing was suggested.

The Meeting closed at 19:36.

Chairman: *Cllr Glyn Mathias* Date: **17th July 2023**

(END)