



EAST PRESTON PARISH COUNCIL

Council Office, 122 Sea Road, East Preston, West Sussex. BN16 1NN

Tel: 01903 770050

<http://eastpreston.arun.gov.uk/>

Email: clerk@eastpreston-pc.gov.uk

FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

MINUTES: of the Meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on Tuesday, 14th May 2024 at East Preston Infant School, Lashmar Road, East Preston at 19:00

PRESENT: Councillors John Gunston, Elizabeth Linton, Rick McElroy (Chairman), Steve Toney and Steven Wilkinson

ALSO: Clerk to the Council, Simon Cross

Roy Allen, Sea Road Beach Access Limited (until 19:36)

Neil Ellis, Patricia Gander, Kevin Hill, Adrian Miller and Tony Page, East Preston Men in Sheds (all until 19:30)

ABSENT: Councillor Glyn Mathias

The following abbreviations may appear in these Minutes:

ADC – Arun District Council;

WSCC – West Sussex County Council.

The meeting opened at 19:02.

Cllr McElroy welcomed everyone present and led a round of introductions.

Following the Annual Meeting of the Council on 13th May, the membership of this committee was Cllrs Gunston, Mathias, McElroy and Wilkinson with one vacancy. As Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Council respectively, Cllrs Toney and Linton were entitled to attend and vote at meetings of this committee.

343/24 APPOINTMENT OF A COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN FOR THE YEAR 2024/25

Ahead of the meeting, the Clerk had asked for any candidates to let him know their willingness to stand – Cllr McElroy had put himself forward.

The Clerk confirmed there were no other candidates. The meeting AGREED Cllr Wilkinson could act as a second teller alongside the Clerk.

Cllr McElroy was appointed unopposed.

Cllr Wilkinson confirmed all five councillors present had voted.

344/24 APPOINTMENT OF A COMMITTEE VICE-CHAIRMAN FOR THE YEAR 2024/25

Ahead of the meeting, the Clerk had asked for any candidates to let him know their willingness to stand – Cllr Gunston had put himself forward.

The Clerk confirmed there were no other candidates. The meeting AGREED Cllr Wilkinson could act as a second teller alongside the Clerk.

Cllr Gunston was appointed unopposed.

Cllr Wilkinson confirmed all five councillors present had voted.

345/24 APOLOGIES AND REASONS FOR ABSENCE

An apology and a reason for absence were accepted from Cllr Mathias (previous commitment).

346/24 PERSONAL AND/OR PREJUDICIAL/PECUNIARY INTERESTS

Cllr Gunston	Grant Aid 2024/25 – East Preston Yarnbombers	Personal; Mrs Gunston was an East Preston Yarnbomber
Cllr McElroy	Grant Aid 2024/25 – East Preston Men in Sheds	Personal; Mrs McElroy was the Chairman of East Preston & Kingston Village Hall Foundation
Cllr Toney	Grant Aid 2024/25 – Viking Explorers	Personal; Cllr Toney was Chairman of the 1 st East Preston Scouts

347/24 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The meeting AGREED members of the public could speak at the appropriate Agenda Item if they wished.

348/24 GRANT AID 2024/25 – EAST PRESTON MEN IN SHEDS

The committee NOTED the following report, which had been circulated in advance of the meeting:

Grant Aid – Men in Sheds

Committee is asked to consider the following Grant Aid request for the current financial year.

Organisation – charity no	Amount requested? (£)	Councillor notes:
East Preston Men in Sheds 1202293	£15,000 “to enable Men in Sheds to expedite community projects and return that investment tenfold; to provide a safe space to help reduce social isolation”	

The council budgeted £7,000 for Section 137 Grant Aid donations this financial year, and most of that sum, if not all, is likely to be allocated during the next Agenda Item.

The size of this request, which has not been finalised at the time of writing, pending receipt of some quotes, means this request cannot be considered as part of the council’s annual Grant Aid budget. The council can award larger grants from its reserves though, and this request should be considered at such. (It would still be a Section 137 Grant Aid donation, as the council can spend up to £10.81 per elector (approx. 5,000) as Grant Aid donations for 2024/25, i.e. c.£54,000.)

The detail of this request will be finalised ahead of the meeting.

Representatives of East Preston Men in Sheds will attend the meeting and will give a short presentation on the group's current plans and how it would spend any donation given.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

9th May 2024; updated 10th May 2024

Mrs Gander thanked the committee for allowing East Preston Men in Sheds to present to it and led her fellow Men in Sheds in a round of introductions.

Mrs Gander provided some background to the international Men in Sheds organisation and explained East Preston Men in Sheds had been started as a parish council initiative after the East Preston Voluntary Service had uncovered examples of loneliness in East Preston during the COVID pandemic in 2020. Then a parish councillor, in January 2022, Mrs Gander had led the initiative and had attended initial meetings of the group, with the Clerk, until attendees had felt capable of setting up their own committee structure. Mrs Gander provided some NHS statistics on how living alone and loneliness can increase the risk of certain conditions such as dementia and heart disease.

The group had had some ups and downs in the subsequent two-and-a-half years, but had registered as a charity and the core membership had stayed strong and determined to succeed, even when faced with obstacles such as failing in its bid for a National Lottery grant. The group remained committed both to having its own premises within the centre of the village, a dream which had very recently taken some great steps forward with the membership putting together its own flat-pack cabin building in the car-park of East Preston & Kingston Village Hall, and in tackling loneliness and mental health issues within the village. Mrs Gander stressed Men in Sheds was an organisation open to anyone over the age of 18, regardless of gender.

Mrs Gander then handed over to Mr Hill, who gave a presentation explaining the group's request for a grant of £15,000. Mr Hill's presentation had been made available to committee members ahead of the meeting. Mr Hill noted membership and interest in the group was, as expected, now growing now premises were very visible in the centre of the village. The Clerk confirmed the Council Office had also noted a very recent increase in enquiries about the group. Mr Hill said a grant of £15,000 would enable the group to strengthen the cabin and fit it out, with a view to a grand opening at the end of July 2024. Men in Sheds saw this as a good publicity opportunity for the benefit of the group, the council and the village as a whole. The grant would "enable Men in Sheds to expedite community projects" marking a return on investment, but also provide members of the community with "a safe space to help reduce social isolation" and other community benefits.

In response to a question from Cllr Toney, Mr Ellis explained what kit would be installed in the cabin. This would not include any hot working.

Cllr Gunston expressed concern the grant, if given in full, would probably be the biggest grant the council had ever given. Mr Hill confirmed the group hoped to be self-funding once up and running, through membership fees, selling items made and through donations received for project work undertaken around the village, for example, public seat repairs.

Cllr Linton said some organisations asked for matched funding, but here Men in Sheds were asking for a grant smaller than the funds it had already raised. Cllr McElroy said he appreciated the fact the group had already registered as a charity and done impressive fundraising for itself.

The Clerk explained because of the size of the grant being requested, any recommendation made by the committee this evening would need to be agreed by the whole council at the monthly meeting on 3rd June. All present confirmed their understanding of this.

The committee AGREED unanimously to recommend to Full Council a grant of £15,000 to East Preston Men in Sheds. The committee recognised the benefit of the organisation to the village, both to its members and to the wider community.

(The five members of East Preston Men in Sheds left the meeting at the conclusion of this item, all very grateful for this outcome.)

349/24 GRANT AID 2024/25

The committee NOTED the following report, which had been circulated in advance of the meeting:

Grant Aid 2024/25

Committee is asked to consider the following Grant Aid requests for the current financial year.

Publicity about the Grant Aid process started in February, with a closing date for applications of 31st March. The following fifteen applications have been received.

Organisation – charity no	Amount requested? (£)	Outcome
4SIGHT Vision Support 1075447	£385 “So that we can continue supporting anyone in your Parish of East Preston who is blind or sight impaired and needs our help.”	£385
Air Ambulance Charity Kent Surrey Sussex 1021367	£300 “Contribution to operating costs of HEMS (Helicopter Emergency Medical Service)”	£300
Arun Counselling Centre 293053	£300 “A grant from East Preston Parish Council will enable us to offer free sessions of confidential, professional counselling/psychological therapy for residents in East Preston.”	£300
East Preston Junior School Family Support n/a	£500 “To support school families in need with food hampers in summer and Christmas breaks.”	£500
East Preston Yarnbombers n/a	£375 “To purchase supplies required to decorate Two Acres with a summer display”	£375 *
Friends of Oak Grove College, Durrington 271168	£254.92 “Library books for Children/Young People @SEND school.”	£254.92
Friends of St Mary’s 1180544	£190 “To purchase 19 robust Christmas Tree stands”	£190
Home-Start Arun, Worthing and Adur 1132416	£1,000 “To give vital support to vulnerable families in East Preston so their children have a better start in life.”	£1,000
Sea Road Beach Access Limited n/a	£3,000 “To pay for the materials of phase one of the boardwalk at the end of Sea Road; that provides access for <u>all</u> to reach East Preston beach.”	Deferred
South Strand Community Toilets (SSCT) n/a	£510 “Essential repairs to roof at SSCT”	£255
St Barnabas House 256789	£460 “To help St Barnabas House hospice care for adults with life-limiting conditions and enable them and their families to live life to the full as long as possible.”	£460
Tyler’s Trust 1162827	£500	£300

	“Provide bespoke gift boxes for children with life-threatening illnesses and support their siblings and parents.”	
Victim Support (Sussex Area) 298028	£200 “Train volunteers to fully support victims and witnesses of crime”	£200
Vikings Explorer Scout Unit 305868	£200 “To assist Explorer Scouts (aged 14 - 18) in obtaining their top Scouting Awards by supporting them in being able to undertake their expeditions in unfamiliar and challenging countryside.”	£200 †
WADARS 1149884	£500 “We would like help with the cost of running our animal ambulances to help us rescue more local wildlife.”	£500

The council budgeted **£7,000** for Section 137 Grant Aid donations this financial year.

The total value of the above requests is **£8,674.92**.

As before, committee members are advised to call in at the Council Office in advance of the meeting to read the application forms for themselves.

Councillors may wish to think about a maximum sum we award the above organisations.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

8th May 2024

N.B. when circulated the Outcome column detailed additional information available electronically.

The committee considered the request from Sea Road Beach Access Limited first, whilst Mr Allen was present. Mr Allen confirmed the council had covered the costs of the Planning Application (approx. £120 plus fees) although this had not been mentioned in the grant application, which had been completed by another Director of the company. Mr Allen also confirmed the proposal had Planning Permission but had not yet received Consent to Build from ADC although this had been requested in the middle of March. The committee AGREED to defer further discussion of this request until Consent to Build had been given.

(Mr Allen left the meeting at this point.)

The committee then considered the rest of the requests received and AGREED donations as per the Outcome column above.

The donations totalled £5,219.92, leaving £1,780.08 in the Section 137 budget line for 2024/25.

* Cllr Gunston did not vote on the award to East Preston Yarnbombers as his wife is a member.

† Cllr Toney did not vote on the award to Viking Explorers as he is the Chairman of 1st East Preston Scouts.

350/24 SECTION 144 GRANT – EAST PRESTON FESTIVAL COMMITTEE

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

Section 144 Grant Aid – East Preston Festival Committee

Committee is asked to consider the following tourism grant request for the current financial year.

Organisation – charity no	Amount requested? (£)	Councillor notes:
------------------------------	-----------------------	-------------------

East Preston Festival Committee n/a	£2,000 “Festival insurance for 2024/25 and children’s entertainment for the 2024 Festival Community Fete”	
--	--	--

The council budgeted £2,500 for Section 144 tourism grants this financial year. This budget line is specifically for East Preston Festival Committee grants.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

9th May 2024

The committee discussed this request at some length. Concerns were expressed about the loose organisation of the Festival Committee and its ongoing apparent lack of visible accountability. In light of this, the committee AGREED to award the Festival Committee £400, effectively sponsorship for the children’s entertainment for the 2024 Festival Community Fête. The committee AGREED to suggest to the Festival Committee it should investigate becoming a charity, or a similar recognised body, in order to receive benefits such as Gift Aid which would increase the amount of money the committee raised (and, by extension, donated) each year.

If the date of the council’s insurance renewal fell before this year’s Festival Week, the council would pay the renewal. If not, the council would consider whether or not to pay the insurance for the next year taking into account any progress made by the Festival Committee towards becoming a more formal entity.

351/24 GRANT AID 2024/25 – EAST PRESTON CRICKET CLUB

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

Grant Aid – East Preston Cricket Club

Committee is asked to consider the following Grant Aid request for the current financial year.

Organisation – charity no	Amount requested? (£)	Councillor notes:
East Preston Cricket Club n/a	“The repairs to the netting above the barn on the eastern side are scheduled for the week commencing 29th April (weather permitting). On behalf of the Cricket Club, I am respectfully asking if the Council could see their way to making a contribution towards the costs of the operation.”	

Councillors may be aware the annual repairs to the cricket netting at the Warren Recreation Ground have been completed this week, and this has included the tying on of strips of ribbon designed to scare birds away from the netting (after the council received two concerns last year about pigeons getting fatally caught in the netting last year).

The quotation of the works is for £1,125 excl. VAT, and the club has asked whether the council would be willing to contribute to the works.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

9th May 2024

The club had also provided the full quotation for the works and the club’s accounts as at 31st October 2023.

After discussion, the committee AGREED unanimously to contribute £850 towards this year’s repairs to the safety netting at the Warren Recreation Ground.

This left £930.08 in the Section 137 budget line for 2024/25.

352/24 FUTURE OF THE CONSERVATIVE HALL

The committee NOTED the following report, which had been circulated in advance of the meeting:

Conservative Hall Working Party

The committee is asked to consider any financial next steps in this project, including the possible ringfencing of some finance.

Cllr Wilkinson's suggestion the council ringfence some of its reserves in anticipation of this project has previously been deferred as the council was not really progressing this project sufficiently for it to be able to justify such ringfencing. Now though, the council's consideration of this matter is far more serious and ringfencing an amount of money can be justified, even if it is eventually returned to reserves because the council has decided not to proceed with the project. Does that make sense?

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

9th May 2024

The committee AGREED unanimously it would be prudent to ringfence an amount from the council's reserves although no decision had yet been taken to adopt the Conservative Hall. The committee AGREED unanimously an initial £100,000 as that covered the amount in the *Schedule of Significant Repairs Evident on Inspection 16.02.22*. The committee understood estimated costs were very likely to have increased, and further ringfencing may be necessary in due course.

353/24 ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE COMMITTEE'S TERMS OF REFERENCE

The following paper was circulated in advance of the meeting:

Terms of Reference

Committee is asked to review and agree the committee's Terms of Reference for the coming year.

The current Terms of Reference were and adopted by the committee on 16th May 2022, and were last reviewed, without changes, on 15th May 2023.

At the time of writing, I have proposed no changes this year.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

9th May 2024

The current Terms of Reference were circulated with the Supporting Papers for the meeting. The committee AGREED unanimously no changes were needed currently.

354/24 NALC MODEL FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

The following paper was circulated in advance of the meeting:

NALC Model Financial Regulations

Committee is asked to note new Model Financial Regulations exist.

The council was informed by WSALC on Thursday, 9th May, there are new National Association of Local Councils Model Financial Regulations. As that was only today, I have not had a chance to have a look at them to see how different they are. I have looked at the paperwork, and there is no simple list of changes.

There is an associated news bulletin:

In response to the evolving landscape of local governance, the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) has published its latest edition of Model Financial Regulations for local (parish and town) councils.

Local councils across the nation are increasingly delivering on a diverse array of responsibilities and services for their communities. While these endeavours yield tangible benefits, they also entail managing finances effectively and adhering to pertinent regulations. The prudent handling of funds, especially those raised through the precept from local residents, is important and paramount for sustaining essential services and activities.

Recognising the challenges inherent in financial control at the local level, NALC has stepped in to provide invaluable assistance. The revamped Model Financial Regulations bring together all the essential procedures and financial regulations that councils need to implement to ensure that they manage their finances effectively and transparently. The document comes with an introduction to help explain how to use it, with clearly marked areas where the council can tailor the document to fit its needs.

Key features of the updated regulations include a user-friendly introduction to aid councils in navigating the document effectively. Additionally, the regulations are designed with flexibility in mind, allowing councils to adapt them to suit their specific requirements seamlessly. This flexibility ensures that councils of all sizes and operational scopes can benefit from the guidelines provided.

The Model Financial Regulations are exclusively accessible to local councils that are members of NALC and their respective local county associations. Members interested in accessing the document can download it from the NALC website or obtain it through their local county association. Please get in touch with your local county association if you have any questions about this document or other finance-related issues.

In due course, and usually there is no great hurry in these matters, I will find time to look through the new Model and see how they differ from our current Financial Regulations. If any committee member would like to assist, please just let me know. Thanks.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

9th May 2024

The Clerk reported he had asked NALC whether there was a summary document. The reply received was, “There will not be a document summarising the changes from the old MFRs. Given there was quite a significant review and re-write we didn't feel a summary list of changes would be helpful. I would treat it as a new document rather than a revision of the old one.”

Cllr Gunston offered to review the new Model Financial Regulations against the council's existing Financial Regulations.

355/24 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 19TH FEBRUARY 2024

The draft Minutes had been circulated to all councillors on 20th February asking for suggested amendments by 27th February. None had been received.

The committee AGREED unanimously the Minutes could be signed as a true record of the meeting held on 19th February and Cllr McElroy duly signed the Minutes.

356/24 MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

The committee NOTED the following report, which had been circulated ahead of the meeting:

Updates from previous meetings

Minute 969/23 – Boom Community Bank – the number of East Preston households banking with Boom has increased very slightly since the council deposited money with the bank. Both organisations have publicised the working relationship and I understand Bognor Regis Town Council has recently deposited with Boom too.

Boom is currently considering an offer to use the council forecourt for a publicity event.

Minute 1039/23 – Ringfenced reserves – further to me having given Kevin at the British Legion a defibrillator fund application form, I have had a conversation with another committee member there to explain it all. In due course, we may receive an application.

Minute 156/24 – change of accountancy software – the council is now using Rialtus software, currently alongside SAGE, but once we have completed the year-end for 31st March 2024, we will terminate our contract with SAGE.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

9th May 2024

Nothing was added.

357/24 ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING (19TH AUGUST)

Nothing new was suggested.

The Meeting closed at 20:22.

Chairman: *Cllr Rick McElroy* Date: **19th August 2024**

(END)