



# EAST PRESTON PARISH COUNCIL

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- MINUTES:** of the Proceedings of the Monthly Meeting of East Preston Parish Council held at 18:30 on Monday, 7<sup>th</sup> October 2024 at East Preston Infant School, Lashmar Road, East Preston
- PRESENT:** Councillors Christine Bowman, Lisa Duff, Barbara Gale, John Gunston, Helen Hill, Elizabeth Linton, Glyn Mathias, Rick McElroy, David Moore, Steve Toney (Chairman) and Steven Wilkinson
- ALSO:** Simon Cross, Clerk to the Council
- Toni McElroy, East Preston and Kingston Village Hall Foundation (until 19:34)
- Jan Quick, Disability Action Group, East Preston (until 19:34)
- Mr K, Mrs L, Mr M (each until 19:34) and Mrs M (until 19:41) and Mrs W (until 19:34)
- Cllr Roger Elkins, West Sussex County Council (until 19:34)
- Cllrs Philippa Bower, Ricky Bower and Paul Kelly, Arun District Council (all until 19:34)
- ABSENT:** Councillors Kit Bradshaw and Andrea Chapman

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The following abbreviations may appear in these Minutes:

ADC – Arun District Council;	SW – Southern Water;
AoSERA – Angmering-on-Sea Estate Residents’ Association	TfSE – Transport for the South East;
BTP – British Transport Police;	TRO – Traffic Regulation Order;
CPRE – Campaign for the Protection of Rural England;	VHF – East Preston & Kingston Village Hall Foundation;
NHS – National Health Service;	WRA – Willowhayne Residents’ Association
NR – Network Rail;	WSCC – West Sussex County Council;
PCSO – Police Community Support Officer;	WSALC – West Sussex Association of Local Councils
SLCC – Society of Local Council Clerks;	

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The meeting opened at 18.31.

## 719/24 **INTRODUCTIONS**

Cllr Toney welcomed everyone to the meeting, explained the meeting protocol and safety information and led a round of introductions.

## **720/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology and a reason for absence had been received from Cllr Bradshaw and Chapman.

**1891** The Council **RESOLVED** unanimously to accept the apologies received from Cllrs Bradshaw and Chapman (both unwell).

Apologies had also been received from Mrs Denton.

## **721/24 DECLARATION OF PERSONAL AND/OR PREJUDICIAL/PECUNIARY INTERESTS**

Cllr McElroy declared a Personal Interest in *Agenda Item 11b – Finance & General Purposes Committee – East Preston and Kingston Village Hall Foundation*, as Mrs McElroy is the Chairman of the East Preston and Kingston Village Hall Foundation.

## **722/24 PUBLIC SESSION**

**No Agenda Item** – Mrs M simply thanked the council for all its hard work.

**Agenda Item 13a – West Sussex County Council** – Cllr Bower, speaking as a resident rather than as a district councillor, reported concerns about traffic behaviour in and around the service road at the northern shops.

**Agenda Item 13a – West Sussex County Council** – Mr K said he had discussed with the Clerk concerns about the short-sightedness of the county council when it had made improvements to the A259, as there was now far more traffic using the A259, causing long tailbacks on roads feeding on to the A259. Mr K cited a recent example when he had been travelling south on the A280 at 16:00 one weekday and had been part of a 300-yards long queue. As he nearer the A259/A280 roundabout, he could see there was traffic stretching back along the A259 in both directions, and when he had exited the roundabout he found himself part of a queue waiting for the Roundstone Level Crossing gates to open. Mr K said he knew the Clerk had forwarded his concerns on to County Cllr Elkins.

**No Agenda Item** – Mrs L said most of her questions had already been answered in the Supporting Papers for this meeting. Mrs L had recently travelled by bus to Worthing. At several points on the journey, east of Ferring, she had noticed bunching of the no. 700 Stagecoach bus service, confirming her belief it is traffic anywhere west of Brighton which can lead to the bunching of buses. Such bunching cannot wholly be blamed about the level crossings at Ferring and East Preston.

**Agenda Item 23 – Conservative Hall** – Mrs L asked whether there was any more news on the future of the Conservative Hall.

**Agenda Item 11a – Finance & General Purposes Committee – Sea Road Beach Access Limited** – Mr M spoke about accessibility matters in the village. The machine to pay for parking in the Village Green car-park is not easily accessible to less able people, often obstructed by bicycles attached to the bicycle rack in front of the machine – this makes the car-park unusable for those people.

Access to the Village Green is limited because proposals for a path around the Village Green have been turned down by the council and because the grass is often too long for manually-operated wheelchairs.

Mr M said the council was not supporting the Sea Road Beach Access project, constantly changing the goalposts whilst having more than enough money in the bank to support the project's request for £10,000, and yet the council gave similar financial support to other projects around the village. Mr M said the request for funding for the Village Hall was only because of the marital link between a councillor and the chairman of the Village Hall Foundation.

Mr M named three councillors he felt were always anti any project that would improve life for disabled residents.

Mr M questioned why financial decisions were left to only five members of a thirteen-strong council.

Mrs W added an estimation that 20% of East Preston residents had some form of disability.

District Cllr Bower said Mr M's comments were out of order.

## **723/24 COUNCIL RESPONSES**

**Agenda Item 11a – Finance & General Purposes Committee – Sea Road Beach Access Limited** – Cllr McElroy, one of the three councillors named by Mr M, explained the medical conditions which meant one of his sons was a regular mobility scooter-user. The schemes put forward by the Disability Action Group were considered carefully, usually by the council's Amenities Committee, but were rejected if the committee felt the proposals were unworkable or would have an impact upon the majority of residents. The council's resolution to provide financial support for the Village Hall was in response to new legislation following the Grenfell fire and were to make the Village Hall safer to use for everyone.

The Clerk responded to Mrs W's comment, and said he believed several of the council's membership had a disability of some sort, above the 20% figure quoted by Mrs W. Mrs W accepted this.

Mrs McElroy, as Chairman of the Village Hall Foundation, expanded on the works required at the Village Hall.

Mr M apologised for having been angry during his statement and explained he feels very passionately about such matters. He asked the council to think more positively of ways in which the village could be more accessible.

**Agenda Item 13a – West Sussex County Council** – County Cllr Elkins said he agreed with Mr K's comment about the increase in traffic on the A259 and said he believed that was because the improvements had been so fantastic. Although not a WSCC road, Cllr Elkins said there were still lots of challenges with the A27, and now the agreed Arundel bypass had been scrapped by the current government. Cllr Elkins felt the A259 was also experiencing increased traffic volumes because more people were finally returning to a place of work rather than working from home as they had during and since the 2020 pandemic. Cllr Elkins also felt greatly increased housing targets would inevitably lead to even greater traffic volumes.

Cllr Mathias said he remembered the original design for the A280 had been for it to be a dual-carriageway, but when the relevant developer said they could not afford that, the plans had been changed to the current single-carriageway in place. District Cllr Bower said he did not remember that.

## **724/24 MINUTES OF THE MONTHLY MEETING HELD ON 2<sup>ND</sup> SEPTEMBER**

The draft Minutes were circulated to all councillors on 4<sup>th</sup> September asking for suggested amendments by the 11<sup>th</sup> September. None were received.

**1892** The Council **RESOLVED** unanimously the Chairman could sign the Minutes as a true record of the meeting held on 2<sup>nd</sup> September. Cllr Toney duly did so.

## **725/24 UPDATE ON MATTERS IN THE MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

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

# **Monthly Update Report**

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Minute 649/24 – Public Session**
- 3. Minute 666/24 – Conservative Hall**

## **1. Introduction**

This is the report covering items discussed during Full Council meetings up to and including the meeting held on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2024.

## **2. Minute 649/24 – Public Session**

In the council e-newsletter published on 5<sup>th</sup> September, I made a general plea for householders to keep their bins off the pavements. I expected some outcry about this, but did not receive one. I also mentioned to ADC Cleansing there was nothing on the ADC website about bin etiquette, and my contact said he would pursue this.

### 3. **Minute 666/24 – Conservative Hall**

Cllr Wilkinson and I did draft a couple of versions of a statement we could publish in an e-newsletter, but nothing I was happy with. Aware of the need not to antagonise the Trustees further in case the venue became available to us again, I contacted Terry Chapman as Chairman of the Trustees. He said he would provide me with a suitable statement at the appropriate time. That has not happened yet, but councillors have seen information he has provided in their confidence for the time being.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

30<sup>th</sup> September 2024

**Minute 666/24 – Conservative Hall** – Cllr Linton read the following statement to the meeting:

I speak for myself, and I hope for other Councillors, and am hopeful the Clerk will correct any mistakes I make.

On the 15<sup>th</sup> June 2022 the Parish Council was first officially offered the Conservative Hall by the Trustees to maintain it as a Community Asset. Shortly after this the Conservative Hall working party was created.

A Valuation was done on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2023 at a cost of £1695.

The Trustees said the hall would be given to the Parish Council at no cost.

An article, approved by a Trustee, was in the February 2024 Newsletter and they suggested we find out the mood of the village. We duly consulted the villagers and 90.46% came out in favour of the Parish Council acquiring the hall for village use. This was in May this year.

The Parish Council received an email in July from the Trustees confirming that, at their Branch Committee meeting earlier in the month the offer to the Parish Council had been withdrawn as, I quote “The Committee noted with regret that the Parish Council had embarked on a Parish wide consultation on the potential transfer without engaging with the Trustees of the hall at any time before, during or after the exercise. The Parish Council had then published the outcome of the consultation, again without engaging with the Trustees” end quote.

I see no transparency in the Trustees procedures and cannot find any record of a Branch meeting.

Residents will have been as surprised as I was at the sight of the For Sale sign at the Conservative Hall and I believe the hall is about to have a new owner.

So far, the Conservative Hall working party has had at least 5 meetings and costs incurred of £2416. This may not be the final figure.

I am disappointed the Trustees refused to engage with representatives of the Parish Council and am sorry if villagers are unhappy at the final outcome.

Cllr Wilkinson commended Cllr Linton on a very eloquent statement.

### 726/24 **FINANCIAL MATTERS**

The Accounts for September 2024 had been distributed to Members in advance of the meeting.

- 1893 The council **RESOLVED** unanimously to approve the Outstanding Purchase Orders report for 2024/25, value £0.00.
- 1894 The council **RESOLVED** unanimously to approve the Regular Monthly Payments reports for September 2024 totalling £973.48 (inc. VAT).
- 1895 The council **RESOLVED** unanimously to approve the Supplier BACS Invoices Paid reports for September 2024 totalling £23,425.88 (inc. VAT).
- 1896 The council **RESOLVED** unanimously to approve the List of Sales Receipts & Bank Receipts by Bank report for financial year to date totalling £344,180.80 (inc. VAT).

The council NOTED the Bank Reconciliations to 13<sup>th</sup> September 2024.

The council NOTED the Budget Summary for 2024/25 to date.

Cllr Toney thanked Mr Vyse, the council's Book-keeper, for preparing the above reports.

## 727/24 REPORTS FROM PARISH COUNCIL COMMITTEES

The council NOTED the following reports which had been circulated in advance of the meeting:

### Committees

Since the last Full Council meeting the following committees have met: Community Engagement, Finance & General Purposes and Planning & Licensing. By the time of this meeting, the draft Minutes from all of these meeting should have been circulated to all councillors.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

27<sup>th</sup> September 2024

### Amenities Committee

Cllr Wilkinson is chairman of this committee.

The committee did not meet in September.

**Warren Recreation Ground Boundary** - Committee recently granted a western resident's request, to lay a gravel pathway adjacent to the properties fencing line backing on to the recreation ground. The resident has also cleared the area behind the cricket nets. Committee agreed this has greatly improved the overall appearance of this section of the boundary. The resident thanked the committee for agreeing to the request and said he is now able to access his fence for regular maintenance work.

**Warren Recreation Ground Trees** – The further reduction work to the eastern boundary trees is now completed. This work was delayed until the cricket season had finished. Neighbours thanked committee for agreeing to this work and said the amount of light to their property has greatly improved. Neighbours also praised the tree surgeon for doing a marvellous job.

**Village Green Car Park** – The committee began researching other car park management companies, following an increase in the level of complaints the council office was receiving relating to the current car park management company. Most complaints were about poor customer service and not receiving parking fine notification letters. Committee considered Arun District Council Parking Management, National Parking Control (NPC) and the option of staying with the current

provider. After receiving excellent recommendations from Lancing PC, the committee agreed to engage the services of NPC to manage the car park.

The agreement with the current provider will end on Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> October 2024, with all equipment being removed by 18<sup>th</sup> October 2024. NPC indicated it has the equipment ready for installation and can meet the allocated timescale. Realistically there may be a very interim period where the council is unable to charge for parking. Members of the public will be notified of the changeover via the council newsletter.

**Village Green storm damage** – on 30<sup>th</sup> September, Caspar reported a fallen White Poplar tree in the south-western corner of the Village Green. This had fallen across and broken a section of low-level fencing and was completely obstructing the pavement. Simon asked Ferring Nurseries if the tree could be removed and this work was completed by 11:00 on the same day.



**Memorial Tree warden** – the committee accepted the kind offer of Paul Wicks to provide some TLC for the village’s memorial trees. An agreement has been drawn up, and Paul will begin on 1<sup>st</sup> October. His role will be about ensuring the areas immediately around memorial trees are kept clear and tidy.

The committee’s next meeting will be on 11<sup>th</sup> November.

Dawn Reid – **Assistant Clerk to the Council**

30<sup>th</sup> September 2024

## **Audit & Governance Committee**

The committee has not met since July.

The committee’s next meeting is scheduled for 18<sup>th</sup> November.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

30<sup>th</sup> September 2024



## **Community Engagement Committee**

Cllr Linton is chairman of this committee.

The committee met on 23<sup>rd</sup> September.

Some of what was discussed follows:

**Roundstone Level Crossing meeting, 10<sup>th</sup> July** – the follow-up, online meeting with stakeholders in early October will be attended by Cllrs Toney, Linton and Gunston.

**Merchant Navy and Emergency Services Days** – the committee agreed both days had been suitably marked and this would continue.

**St Mary the Virgin Christmas Tree Festival 2024** – Cllrs Chapman and Duff were still considering what the council's tree could represent.

**Newsletter, Autumn 2024** – the committee considered further content for the next paper newsletter.

**Village Bus Service** – both East Preston and Rustington parish councils considered a further offer from Compass Travel to continue funding the No. 12 bus service at a reduced rate. The committee agreed it was not possible to continue funding the service at this time. Rustington Parish Council made a similar decision.

**East Preston Calendar 2025** – an initial design has been finalised although some of the photographs provided need to be of a higher resolution. The print run will be lower this year.

**Bleed Control kits** – the committee felt there was insufficient need to bleed control kits in the village, a business's First Aid kit would probably be just as useful as the over-sophisticated bleed control kit.

**Warm Welcome Space** – the committee agreed to start working towards a 2025 offering.

**Chairman's Annual Charity quiz** – the committee agreed to offer an autumn quiz afternoon in future years to balance the Spring *Funday Sunday* offerings. This initiative will be transferred to the Major Events Committee.

The committee's next meeting is scheduled for 25<sup>th</sup> November.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

30<sup>th</sup> September 2024

## **Finance & General Purposes Committee**

Cllr McElroy is the chairman of this committee.

The committee met on 16<sup>th</sup> September. This was an additional meeting specifically to consider a limited agenda. Representatives of Sea Road Beach Access Limited and East Preston & Kingston Village Hall Foundation attended.

**Sea Road Beach Access Limited** – the committee considered a Grant Aid application for up to £10,000 to complete the fundraising for the company’s project to build a boardwalk at the southern end of Sea Road. The committee had concerns and discussed these with Roy Allen, a director of the company. The committee agreed it would consider this application further once a sample of boardwalk had been installed and signed-off by a recognised safety organisation such as RoSPA. Mr Allen explained he was no longer installing a test segment. The committee felt donating money to an unproven scheme was not a good use of public money and, at Mr Allen’s request, included a statement to that effect in the company’s Newsletter No. 12.

**East Preston & Kingston Village Hall Foundation** – the foundation was represented by Chairman Toni McElroy and Trustee Nicola Adams. As councillors will already know, the hall has recently been subjected to a thorough Fire Risk Assessment and its committee is looking to implement the recommendations quickly in order to keep the hall fully available. Cllrs Toney and Wilkinson had already agreed to work with the hall’s committee and Cllr Bowman on this. The committee agreed the Village Hall could build ramps into the Warren Rec and the Warren Rec children’s play area. A recommendation to grant an initial £10,000 is to be considered later on this Agenda.

**Insurance** – the committee agreed to a three-year agreement with the council’s insurance.

The committee’s next meeting will be on 18<sup>th</sup> November.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

30<sup>th</sup> September 2024

## **Major Events Committee**

The committee did not meet in September.

Cllr Linton is Chairman of the committee.

The committee’s next meeting is scheduled for 21<sup>st</sup> October.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

30<sup>th</sup> September 2024

## **Personnel Committee**

The committee did not meet in September.

The committee’s next meeting is scheduled for 14<sup>th</sup> October.

Cllr Lisa Duff – **Chairman of the Personnel Committee**

30<sup>th</sup> September 2024

## **Planning & Licensing Committee**



The committee only met on 9<sup>th</sup> September, no meeting was needed on 23<sup>rd</sup>. Cllr Bradshaw chaired the meeting as Cllr Bowman was on holiday.

The committee considered just a single Application for South Strand, and agreed not to object to the proposal to combine two cottages into one. The committee did agree a comment should be made to ADC about this loss of housing stock.

The committee did reconsider an Application for The Ridings and agreed it would object to aspects of this proposal.

The Neighbourhood Plan review is progressing.

The committee's next meeting is scheduled for 14<sup>th</sup> October.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

24<sup>th</sup> September 2024

Additionally:

Community Engagement - Cllr Linton advised the meeting the Roundstone Level Crossing follow-up meeting was to be held on 10<sup>th</sup> October.

There were no updates from the council's other committees.

**728/24 AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE – ANNUAL GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31<sup>ST</sup> MARCH 2024**

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

**Audit & Governance Committee – Annual Governance and Accountability Return for year-ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024**

**Council is asked to note the conclusion of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024.**

Cllr Mathias to lead on this item.

On 25<sup>th</sup> September, the council received the External Auditor's report on the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for the past financial year.

In the covering letter from the External Auditor, there was the following paragraph:

“The Council is required to approve Section 1 and 2 of the return individually in a specified order and although the minutes record this, the minute references used were the same on both sections 1 and 2 and therefore this was not clear on the face of the return. Best practice would be to provide an individual minute reference or sub-reference for the approval of each section and reflect this reference on the return so the order of approval is more easily identified.”

I have followed the same format for years, for a lot longer than we have had our current external auditor, which is six or seven years. I will accept the advice but question why this has not been raised before.

Within the External Auditor section of the Annual Return itself, the following two comments were made:

“The Council have not been able to provide explanations in an appropriate format for their significant variances in Box 3 to bring them within the acceptable level of 15% or £500. This is required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations and proper practices. Whilst we have been able to review the income lists provided and identify amounts to explain the variance, the council are responsible to undertake this work as part of their budget and monitoring processes. We have concerns therefore regarding the adequacy of their financial management systems in regard to meeting the requirement of proper practice and as such we would have anticipated ‘No’ responses to Assertions 1 and 3 on the Annual Governance Statement.”

“On review of the Council’s notice of public rights for 2024 posted on the website, we have noted that the start and end dated have been incorrectly dated as 2023. We believe this is a human error on completion and that the requirements to publish the notice of public rights were met correctly.”

Regarding the explanation of variances, which Andy, Adrian and I pored over a lot, I have asked the external auditor if they can provide some guidance based upon the statement, “identify amounts to explain the variance”.

I hold up my hand to not changing the dates correctly on the Notice of Public Rights.

The Notice of the conclusion of the audit was published on 26<sup>th</sup> September (same date as the past two years, coincidentally) on the council’s website and in the Council Office window.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

26<sup>th</sup> September 2024

Cllr Mathias confirmed the Clerk was following-up on a comment made by the external auditor in order to avoid having a similar problem next year. The Clerk added the external auditor had provided an initial response, “As a result, we requested the income lists which enabled us to see the amounts making up the Box 3 figure. However, the income lists would require significant time to analyse and breakdown into various categories to explain the variance. We would expect the council to be able to produce the information required in response to our queries.” This suggested the external auditor had also been unable to trace what the council failed to trace.

#### **729/24 FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE – SEA ROAD BEACH ACCESS LIMITED**

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

### **Finance & General Purposes Committee – Sea Road Beach Access Limited**

**Council is asked to agree a recommendation to pledge conditional financial support to Sea Road Beach Access Limited.**

Cllr McElroy to lead on this item.

At its meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> September, the committee considered a grant application from Sea Road Beach Access Limited for £10,000, the sum required to make-up the shortfall in monies received towards the construction of a boardwalk at the southern end of Sea Road.

After nearly an hour’s discussion, including one of the directors of Sea Road Beach Access Limited, Roy Allen, the committee agreed to recommend to Full Council it offer financial support on condition a safety report was carried out once installation had been completed and any recommendations from such a safety report had been implemented. No sum was set for the extent of this conditional financial support.

Cllr McElroy introduced this matter. The committee had spent a significant amount of time at its meeting discussing this with Mr Roy Allen, Director of Sea Road Beach Access Limited. Whereas he had initially talked of a trial section of boardwalk being implemented, Mr Allen said the company had decided against that and would simply implement the whole boardwalk in one go. Cllr McElroy explained the grant requested was public money and the council had a duty to its residents to ensure money was spent responsibly. The committee felt funding a scheme which was untried and untested was not responsible. The committee was, however, recommending the council pledged to provide some financial support to the company once the scheme had received safety sign-off from a recognised body such as RoSPA. The amount of financial support would be agreed at that time.

**1897** The council **RESOLVED** unanimously to pledge conditional financial support to Sea Road Beach Access Limited.

**730/24 FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE – EAST PRESTON & KINGSTON VILLAGE HALL FOUNDATION**

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

**Finance & General Purposes Committee – East Preston  
& Kingston Village Hall Foundation**

**Council is asked to agree a recommendation to grant East Preston & Kingston Village Hall Foundation £10,000 for the purposes of completing actions identified in the Fire Risk Assessment dated 29<sup>th</sup> July 2024.**

Cllr Gunston (Vice-Chairman of the committee) to lead on this item.

Following the visit last month of the Chairman of the East Preston & Kingston Village Hall Foundation, Mrs Toni McElroy, councillors will be aware the above Fire Risk Assessment identified a number of actions required at the hall. These are mainly the outcome of tighter legislation followed the Grenfell Tower fire.

An initial quotation received has been for just under £30,000. In light of this, the committee agreed to recommend a grant of an initial £10,000 to enable to Foundation committee to start on the required works.

Cllr McElroy declared a Personal Interest in this matter as noted in Minute 721/24 above, took no part in the discussion and chose not to vote.

Cllr Gunston introduced this matter.

Mrs McElroy provided an update on work already completed as part of this project.

**1898** The council **RESOLVED** unanimously to grant £10,000 to East Preston & Kingston Village Hall Foundation for the purposes of completing actions identified in the Fire Risk Assessment dated 30<sup>th</sup> July 2024.

**731/24 REPORTS FROM PARISH COUNCIL WORKING PARTIES**

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

**Working Parties**

The Leases and Environmental Initiatives Working Parties met in September.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

30<sup>th</sup> September 2024

## **20mph Working Party**

Cllr Wilkinson is the chairman of this committee.

Traffic speed surveys have been completed for The Street and Sea Road and the data is being considered by Keith Harris, coordinator of the village's Community Speed Watch initiative.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

30<sup>th</sup> September 2024

## **Conservative Hall Working Party (CHWP)**

Cllr Wilkinson is chairman of this working party.

In line with rumours circulating, the Trustees have confirmed the building has been sold, subject to contract. We await further information in the public domain.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

30<sup>th</sup> September 2024

## **Environmental Initiatives Working Party (EIWP)**

The working party met on 30<sup>th</sup> September.

We discussed a number of new activities.

We agreed to set up a small sub-committee, including Roger an allotment holder who joined us at the meeting, to put together a submission to Arun to take over the maintenance of the East Preston allotments.

A number of parishioners replied to our request with information about hedgehogs and we will be promoting ways to encourage them (hedgehogs rather than parishioners) into gardens.

Wendy is working on green wheelie bin stores with EP in Bloom and Men in Sheds and Michał will be applying for a licence to plant wildflowers on the verge at the end of St Mary's Close.

Repair Café opens again on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> October from 10-1.

Next meeting will be Monday 11<sup>th</sup> November.

## **Leases Working Party**

The working party met as part of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting, and agreed to undertake a professional valuation of the club. I have made initial contact with the company which undertook a valuation of the Conservative Hall. I have informed the club and its solicitors of this fact.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

30<sup>th</sup> September 2024

Additionally:

20mph Working Party – the Clerk advised Mr Harris was analysing the data received from the speed surveys and would come back to the council in due course.

Environmental Initiatives Working Party – Cllr Gunston added the working party was making headway on the village's allotments with five people willing to be members of a committee managing the site on ADC's behalf.

Leases Working Party – the Clerk advised he had actioned the working party's request for a valuation of the Bowls Club but the preferred company was responding only slowly and had not yet committed to providing a valuation. He had informed the club and its solicitors of the council's wish for a valuation for the purposes of negotiation.

There were no updates from the council's other working party.

### **732/24 WEST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL**

County Cllr Elkins said the council had been busy since returning from its summer recess.

The council was seeking the views of bus users aged between 16 and 20, and publicity had been sent out by the parish council about this survey.

The parish council had also publicised the start of winter opening hours at Recycling Centres, active from 1<sup>st</sup> October. The county council had published on YouTube some films giving up-to-date guidance on recycling matters in the county.

Applications were currently being taken for school places from September 2025. This was for all ages of student.

The project to install Real Time Bus information displays at a number of bus-stops across the county was complete and had been well-received by members of the public.

WSCC Highways had followed through on a commitment made at the 10<sup>th</sup> July Roundstone Level Crossing meeting and had redone the road markings at the level crossing and had provided additional yellow hatching at the junction of North Lane and Worthing Road which, he hoped, had made some improvement to traffic flow. Cllr Toney said he had already seen a bus ignore the yellow hatching and sit at the gates with its tale overhanging the hatching.

Cllr Elkins ended by reminding the meeting Citizens Advice could help local residents maybe struggling from the removal of the Winter Fuel Allowance.

The Clerk asked which organisation controlled the information on the Real Time Bus information signs. There had been instances recently where the boards were still showing buses due even though the road was closed for that week. Cllr Elkins said the bus companies were responsible for the information and he had asked about this very aspect following comments received from local residents; he awaited an answer.

Cllr Toney asked whether the current £2 flat rate for bus travel was continuing. Cllr Elkins replied he believed the fare would continue at least until the end of the current year. He offered to find out whether there was an update to that.

Mrs L asked for an update on the Traffic Regulation Order for double yellow lines at the junction of Lashmar Road and North Lane. Parents were regularly parking inconsiderately on the south side of North Lane and this caused other parents and the school crossing patroller immense problems. Mrs L had personally spoken to some of the perpetrators, some of whom had been apologetic, others had been belligerent. Cllr Elkins said he had recently seen plans which he had believed were the final design for this matter, but the plans had then been recalled by Highways and he awaited an update. The Clerk asked whether the plans included bus cages for the eastbound and westbound stops immediately east of the junction, but Cllr Elkins could not swear such had been included in the plans. The Clerk said he had, in July, chased the matter of the cages which had been subject to consultation in April 2023, following which the council had heard nothing more. The Clerk added he had requested extra Civil Parking Enforcement visits at the times suggested by the school crossing patroller. Cllr Mathias said Sussex Police, although reluctant, could intervene in cases of inconsiderate parking. District Cllr Kelly said inconsiderate parking could also be reported via the LoveMyStreets app.

### **733/24 ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL**

District Cllr Ricky Bower said he was delighted with the additional yellow hatching at the level crossing, and said he believed it had had some positive effect.

He said he was also delighted by the improvements to the A259 and accepted there had been an increase in traffic because of the lack of an Arundel by-pass.

He ended by saying the consultation on proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework was a travesty. The proposed changes did not remove the need for a five-year land supply which would keep up the pressure on this area to build more homes than could be supported.

District Cllr Philippa Bower said a working party of the council's Environment Committee had agreed a £6 fee for the new parking badges which would be operational in Bognor Regis and Littlehampton town centres. The parking app, which provided an alternative, could be bought for only £4.

Cllr Bower added the ADC Flood Forum was doing well, and the council had enforced improvements to ditches on the Angmering-on-Sea private estate. It was now clear East Preston had probably had the worst flooding experience in the district at the time of Storm Ciarán almost a year ago.

(County and District Councillors and all members of the public except Mrs M left the meeting at the conclusion of this item.)

### **734/24 SUSSEX POLICE**

No report had been received.

### **735/24 CLERK'S REPORT**

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

## **Clerk's Report**

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Police matters**



3. **Anti-social behaviour matters**
4. **Freedom of Information / Data Protection requests**
5. **Merchant Navy Day, 3<sup>rd</sup> September**
6. **Emergency Services Day, 9<sup>th</sup> September**
7. **Community Speed Watch, 11<sup>th</sup> September**
8. **East Preston Repair Café, 14<sup>th</sup> September**
9. **Meeting with Stagecoach South, 23<sup>rd</sup> September**
10. **Half-yearly meeting with ADC Monitoring Officer, 25<sup>th</sup> September**
11. **Funeral of Fr John Quigley, 26<sup>th</sup> September**
12. **East Preston Beach Clean No. 22, 29<sup>th</sup> September**
13. **Social media**
14. **MailChimp stats**
15. **A selection of things we have been asked since the last meeting**
16. **Recent bouquets and complaints**
17. **Leave**
18. **October meetings and events**

### 1. **Introduction**

This is the report mainly covering September 2024 and matters which may not arise elsewhere on the agenda.

### 2. **Police matters**

The council has reported nothing to Sussex Police in the past month.

The WSALC and Police & Crime Commissioner fora Cllr Bowman and I have attended in the past are now being incorporated into each district's Association of Local Council meetings. As a standalone, these meetings were usually scheduled for about ninety minutes; as part of the district meetings, these are now likely to be about half an hour long.

I have lined up Daniel Sykes to attend the Annual Parish Meeting in May. Daniel is the Protect and Prepare Officer for the Surrey and Sussex Cyber Crime Unit, providing bespoke cyber security advice to all individuals and businesses reporting cyber-crime and training our communities to be cyber resilient.

### 3. **Anti-social behaviour (ASB) matters**

At the time of writing, a homeless man continues to live on Langmeads Field, now in a tent which has had the whole front panel torn asunder. A third email to ADC again received no acknowledgement. A member of the public witnessed the man swearing at a couple whose dog had perhaps strayed too close to his tent. I encouraged the member of the public to report this to ADC's anti-social behaviour team, and we received the following response on 17<sup>th</sup> September, "Our rough sleeper initiative team is aware of him and regularly visit to check his welfare and attempt to progress engagement. Unfortunately, he is unwilling to 'play ball' so the next step would be to pursue enforcement action by way of eviction. ADC Parks team is aware of his presence and I am currently awaiting their request to assist with serving eviction notices. As far as the shouting and swearing is concerned, this is a police matter under the Public Order Act and should be reported by the recipient of the abuse if they deem it necessary at the time."

4. **Freedom of Information / Data Protection requests**

No Freedom of Information requests received since the last report.

No Data Protection requests received since the last report.

5. **Merchant Navy Day, 3<sup>rd</sup> September**

Once again, the council marked Merchant Navy Day with a short event which included raising the Red Ensign by the War Memorial. Cllr Linton led the event, supported by Cllrs Duff, Gunston and Moore. Here is the text Cllr Linton read:

“Merchant Navy Day is dedicated to honouring the contributions of the men and women who embody the Merchant Navy and we are here today to pay tribute to our merchant seafarers, both past and present.

“Today, our merchant seafarers enable approximately 95% of the UK’s trade which moves by sea. Without seafarers, our shops, chemists and supermarkets would face empty shelves. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the UK Government recognised Merchant Navy workers as key workers, reflecting their vital role in maintaining the supply chain.

“In 1928, His Majesty, King George V recognised their invaluable contribution by appointing a member of the Royal Family as the Head of the Merchant Navy, honouring their service with the same respect given to the armed forces.

“Today we celebrate the people behind the Red Ensign, the official flag of Britain’s Merchant Navy. Fondly referred to as the Red Duster, it symbolises the pride and dedication of our merchant seafarers. It also represents the enduring nature of the merchant seafarers who fly it. Despite their critical role and Royal acknowledgement, these hardworking individuals don’t always receive the recognition or support they deserve. Every year on the 3<sup>rd</sup> September, we have an opportunity to come together to recognise the important role merchant seafarers play and to say “thank you”. Let’s honour these hardworking individuals and raise the public’s awareness of how crucial they are to our economy and security, together as a community.”



Cllr Linton in front of the Red Ensign, flanked by Lt Brian Osborne, Father Richard Bromfield and Midshipman Ella Bartlett.

The council thanks Father Richard Bromfield for leading the religious side of the event.

Subsequently, Midshipman Bartlett has been promoted to Sub-Lieutenant, I believe.

6. **Emergency Services Day, 9<sup>th</sup> September**

The council marked this simply by raising the Emergency Services flag for the day.

7. **Community Speed Watch, 11<sup>th</sup> September**

I carried out a Community Speed Watch shift in The Street with Danny Reginiano and Maureen Fraser. We monitored southbound traffic. We were there from 09:30 for an hour and recorded 91 southbound vehicle movements. Almost all drivers were driving within the speed limit but, within the last ten minutes, two vehicles reported to Sussex Police for being driven about the Community Speed Watch threshold.

No advice from members of the public on this occasion. One or two drivers made the usual point of driving past really slowly but no verbal or worse abuse.

8. **East Preston Repair Café, 14<sup>th</sup> September**

I attended the first half of this session. This was the first three-hour session.

In addition to any report Cllr Gunston may provide, I arranged for Rachel Carruthers, WSCC Waste Prevention Officer, to attend part of the session. Rachel had been very interested in the council setting-up a Repair Café and had said she would like to attend once the café was up and running. Rachel brought with her a community volunteer and a wealth of information both on paper and in her head. After the session, Rachel emailed, "It was great to see the repair café in action and we were able to have some meaningful conversations with most in attendance, the volunteers there are amazing and so inspirational."

The next session will be on Saturday, 12<sup>th</sup> October.

9. **Meeting with Stagecoach South, 23<sup>rd</sup> September**

Cllrs Toney and Linton and I met with James O'Neill, Commercial Director for Stagecoach South. The meeting was to discuss the future of bus services within the village. Rob Vince, our usual Stagecoach South contact was unavailable, but James is his manager.

James explained all bus services are licenced by the Transport Commissioner who, in turn, monitors those services to ensure they are running punctually and with the minimum of disruption, such as cancellations. The Transport Commissioner can issue heavy fines for companies who are failing to meet their targets.

Since the introduction of the revised Southern timetable in June, punctuality figures for the 700 have dropped (through no fault of their own). The company has been looking at the rail timetable to see where there are sufficient gaps in level crossing downtime to be able to offer a more punctual service.

Any permanent changes to the published service require 10 weeks' notice. The company is still considering its options for improving the punctuality of the 700 without building in extended wait times which also upset passengers.

Although the majority of the hour-long discussion was about the 700, there was also some discussion about the future of the 9 and whether there was scope for that to come into the centre of the village.

Throughout the meeting, James stressed he understood the bus requirements of East Preston residents and how he would not leave the village without a regular bus service, although he could not say in what format that would be.

#### 10. **Half-yearly meeting with ADC Monitoring Officer, 25<sup>th</sup> September**

This meeting was cancelled owing to the Monitoring Officer's illness. Had the meeting gone ahead, I would have raised the fact we have received no responses to our questions about the homeless man in Langmeads and nudism on Arun beaches.

#### 11. **Funeral of Fr John Quigley, 26<sup>th</sup> September**

Cllr Moore attended this as the council's official representative. Fr Quigley had been parish priest at Lyminster before retiring into East Preston. During his retirement, he helped out at St Mary the Virgin when he could.

#### 12. **East Preston Beach Clean No. 22, 29<sup>th</sup> September**

Another cold and windy Beach Clean, this time attended by thirty members of the public, ranging in age from 2½ into the 80s.

Thanks to Cllrs Toney, Linton, Chapman, Bradshaw, Duff, Gunston and Wilkinson for supporting this event on the day, and to Cllr Moore for helping with some prep ahead of the day.

Thanks also to Melanie and Wanda at SALT Kiosk for subsidising drinks for participants.

Following the usual pattern, next year's Beach Cleans should be on Sundays 6<sup>th</sup> April and 28<sup>th</sup> September.

#### 13. **Social media**

Here are the council's Facebook posts in September which reached more than 500 people.

- Lost: Lashmar Ladies WI postbox topper – 3,900 people
- Found: bicycle – 3,642
- Promotion of revised Littlehampton Community Fridge on Tour Wednesday sessions – 2,942
- Warning of fallen tree on the Village Green, obstructing the Sea Road pavement – 2,408
- Found: dog treat and poo bag case – 1,742
- Post of WSCC notice of temporary closure of Old Worthing Road – 1,648

- Promotion for September Repair Café – 1,303

(posts up to and including 30<sup>th</sup> September)

The number of Followers is currently 1,886, a further increase of nine on the last report.

#### 14. **MailChimp stats**

Since the last papers were issued, the council has sent out the following email to local residents on the council's main e-mailing list:

Parish Council news – 29<sup>th</sup> August – sent to 936 subscribers, opened by 658 (70.4%)

Parish Council news – 5<sup>th</sup> September – sent to 939 subscribers, opened by 670 (71.4%)

Parish Council news – 12<sup>th</sup> September – sent to 938 subscribers, opened by 674 (71.9%)

Parish Council news – 19<sup>th</sup> September – sent to 940 subscribers, opened by 664 (70.6%)

Parish Council news – 27<sup>th</sup> September – sent to 941 subscribers, opened by 666 (70.9%)

#### 15. **Things we have been asked since the last meeting**

“Are there any venues I have not through of for my classes at the Conservative Hall?; I have already contacted fifty local venues.”

“Where can I find a March and an April copy of All About East Preston? I want to do the crossword.” (Alison photocopied the relevant pages from the council's archive.)

“Is it true the [South Strand] community loos will be closed?” (The council has not heard any such rumour and is in close contact with the group which runs the toilets.)

“Is it true you collect small, redundant electrical items?” (Such items can be left with a household's kerbside rubbish.)

#### 16. **Recent bouquets and complaints**

(In addition to anything reported above)

Thanks received, “Better late than never to let you know that the Angmering Horticultural Club have booked Rod Vincent to talk to them in July 2025 about the Asian Hornets. Many thanks for your help.”

In response to the e-newsletter published on 5<sup>th</sup> September, a resident of Golden Avenue emailed, “I've just read the latest Newsletter and thought I'd like to say how brilliant it still is, with so much information, both legal and events. 5☆.”

Last month, a resident of Sea Road asked whether bins around the Village Green could be made fox-proof and I reported ADC was considering this. I monitored the situation and, seemingly overnight, the problem of foxes grabbing waste out of the particular bin to which the resident referred stopped completely. I contacted the resident for confirmation she agreed with this

summation; her reply, “I absolutely agree about the foxes, they must have seen my email! If they become a nuisance again I’ll let you know, thanks for your concern”.

## 17. **Leave**

I might be off from the 15<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup>, and am definitely off on the 24<sup>th</sup>. Adrian is on leave for the week beginning 21<sup>st</sup>. Dawn will be off on the 7<sup>th</sup> and Alison on the 14<sup>th</sup>.

## 18. **October Meetings and Events**

This list may be incomplete and is subject to change.

- 1<sup>st</sup> RNLI Littlehampton visit (14:30, Littlehampton lifeboat station)  
REACH Rustington meet (19:00, Woodlands Centre) (JG only)
- 7<sup>th</sup> Full Council (18:30, East Preston Infant School)
- 9<sup>th</sup> Voluntary Action Arun & Chichester (VAAC) AGM Celebration and Networking Lunch (10:00, Council House, Chichester) (JG only)  
East Preston Festival donations evening (18:30, East Preston & Kingston Village Hall)
- 10<sup>th</sup> Roundstone Level Crossing stakeholders’ follow-up (14:30, online) (ST, EL, JG and SC only)
- 12<sup>th</sup> East Preston Repair Café (10:00, Vicarage Lane)
- 14<sup>th</sup> Disability Action Group (12:00, British Legion) (DR only)  
Planning & Licensing Committee (18:00, East Preston Infant School)  
Personnel Committee (19:00, East Preston Infant School)
- 15<sup>th</sup> Society of Local Council Clerks local monthly meeting (11:00, Littlehampton) (SC and DR only)
- 17<sup>th</sup> Sussex Community Rail Partnership (10:30, Chichester) (SC only)
- 21<sup>st</sup> Community Engagement Committee (19:00, East Preston Infant School)
- 22<sup>nd</sup> WSALC, *The Future Shape of the Planning System* (18:30, online) (CB only (so far))
- 23<sup>rd</sup> Interim Internal Audit (09:30, Council Office) (GM and RMc only)
- 28<sup>th</sup> Planning & Licensing Committee (18:00, East Preston Infant School)
- 29<sup>th</sup> Autumn playscheme (10:00, East Preston Infant School) (AR and AC only)

N.B. where committee meetings fall on the same day, the timings of these meetings may be subject to change.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

1<sup>st</sup> October 2024

**Item 3 – Anti-social behaviour (ADB) matters** – the Clerk reported the tent was no longer on Langmeads Field as of Tuesday, 1<sup>st</sup> October. The occupant was still around, but the Clerk did not know where he was sleeping. He could often be seen in the bus shelter opposite the northern entrance to Angmering Station, and the Clerk had seen him on a bus on the morning of the meeting. In response to a question from Cllr Moore, the Clerk said he did not know whether or not the man had served in the military; if he had, it was possible Cllr Moore would be able to access help for him.

**Item 13 – Social Media** – Cllr Linton said she may be able to find homes for any abandoned bicycles. The Clerk said the council had, in the past, offered such bicycles to the Durrington Cycle Project, but it only accepted certain bicycles, depending upon its workload at any given time.

## 736/24 **EXTERNAL MEETINGS AND EVENTS**



The council NOTED the following reports which had been circulated in advance of the meeting:

## **Other meetings and events**

**Council is asked to note any reports.**

### **Meeting with allotment-holders, 9<sup>th</sup> September**

#### **Council Office**

Simon kindly arranged for me to meet two East Preston allotment-holders who have been active cultivators for over 30 and 10 years respectively. They have an excellent knowledge of who holds most of the plots and are keen to see the site managed. They have a constant battle to keep weeds at bay from uncultivated areas and they suggested we contact Angmering as the allotments there are well controlled.

Subsequently, I have contacted the groups which manage the allotment sites in Angmering and in Worthing and both have sent me similar details of how they operate so we have some ideas of what can be done. The issue will be raised at the next EIWP meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> September to formulate an action plan.

Cllr John Gunston –

9<sup>th</sup> September 2024

**Chairman of the Environmental Initiatives Working Party**

### **Greenleas MacMillan Big Coffee Morning, 25<sup>th</sup> September**

#### **Greenleas, The Darlingtons, Rustington**

Although just over the border into Rustington, the House Manager of Greenleas, Florence John, invited East Preston Parish Council to send representation to this event. Cllr Bradshaw kindly offered to attend.

Unfortunately, on the day I had obviously not provided him with sufficient information on the venue as he was unable to find his way in or to attract any attention to the fact he was outside. Better luck next time.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

26<sup>th</sup> September 2024

The Clerk said he had explained to the house-manager of Greenleas Cllr Bradshaw's predicament and she had invited him to come along to any of their regular coffee mornings at which he could meet residents and chat to them.

#### **737/24 RESPONSE TO EXTERNAL MEETINGS AND EVENTS**

Nothing was added.

#### **738/24 WARREN RECREATION GROUND – ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 9<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER**

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

### **Warren Recreation Ground**

**Council is asked to note the draft Minutes from the Annual General Meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> September.** The draft Minutes can be found at Appendix A below.

The annual return was submitted to the Charity Commission on 11<sup>th</sup> September, the earliest it has been for many years.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

10<sup>th</sup> September 2024

Council NOTED the draft Minutes and suggested no changes.

#### **739/24 FULL COUNCIL MEETINGS**

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

### **Full Council meetings**

**Council is asked to agree to revert to 19:00 as the standard start time for Full Council meetings.** Cllr Toney to lead on this item.

For the past several months, Full Council meetings have been starting at 18:30, this to give council longer to discuss matters relating to the future of the Conservative Hall. As it is highly likely the sale of the venue will complete in early October and not involve the council, there seems to be no reason not to revert to 19:00 start time for Full Council meetings.

There would be two exceptions to this; firstly, meetings with a guest speaker will start at 18:30, and the Annual Full Council meeting will start at 18:00 to enable the Annual Meeting of the Parish to occur on the same evening, starting at 19:00ish.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

30<sup>th</sup> September 2024

**1899** The council **RESOLVED** unanimously to start future Full Council meetings at 19:00m except for those with a guest speaker – those would continue to start at 18:30 – and possibly the Annual Meeting of the Council, 18:00.

#### **740/24 NEW ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING (4<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER)**

Nothing new was suggested.

(Mrs M left the meeting at the conclusion of this item.)

#### **741/24 CONSERVATIVE HALL**

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

### **Future of the Conservative Hall**

**Council is asked to resolve to exclude the press and public from the rest of the meeting.** In line with Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the press and public are to be asked to leave the meeting at this point, allowing the following discussion to be held confidentially.

**Council is asked to consider the next steps related to the future of the Conservative Hall**

As reported above, it is highly likely a sale will be completed in early October and will not involve the parish council.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

30<sup>th</sup> September 2024

Various theories were put forward in response to Cllr Linton’s earlier statement.

An update will be included in the Autumn 2024 Newsletter, explaining the situation from the council’s perspective. Cllr Gunston advised caution as there may yet be reason for the council to negotiate with the Trustees if the current sale fell

through. Cllr Gale said the sale of the Conservative Hall to another party did enable the council to offer greater support to the Village Hall Foundation.

The meeting ended at 19:52.

Chairman: *Councillor Steve Toney* Date: **4<sup>th</sup> November 2024**

END