



EAST PRESTON PARISH COUNCIL

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FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

MINUTES: of the Meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on Monday, 16th September 2024 at East Preston Infant School, Lashmar Road, East Preston at 18:30

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

ALSO: Clerk to the Council, Simon Cross

Councillor David Moore (from 19:56 until 20:10)

Roy Allen, Sea Road Beach Access Limited (until 19:26)

Nicola Adams and Toni McElroy, East Preston & Kingston Village Hall Foundation (both from 19:28 until 19:55)

ABSENT: Councillor Elizabeth Linton

The following abbreviations may appear in these Minutes:

ADC – Arun District Council;

WSCC – West Sussex County Council.

The meeting opened at 18:31.

Cllr Moore attended as a member of the Leases Working Party.

682/24 APOLOGIES AND REASONS FOR ABSENCE

An apology and a reason for absence had been received and accepted from Cllr Linton (away).

683/24 PERSONAL AND/OR PREJUDICIAL/PECUNIARY INTERESTS

Cllr McElroy	East Preston & Kingston Village Hall Foundation	Personal; Cllr McElroy is married to the Chairman of the Village Hall Foundation committee
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684/24 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

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

685/24 GRANT AID 2024/25 – SEA ROAD BEACH ACCESS LIMITED

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

Grant Aid – Sea Road Beach Access Limited

Committee is asked to continue consideration of the following Grant Aid request for the current financial year.

Organisation – charity no	Amount requested? (£)	Councillor notes:
Sea Road Beach Access Limited n/a	£10,000 “To pay for the remaining materials for the boardwalk at the end of Sea Road.”	

Please note the sum requested has increased from £3,000 to £10,000. Any committee decision to make a grant in response to this proposal will need to be agreed by Full Council at its meeting on 7th October.

At the committee’s last meeting, consideration of the original request was deferred to allow further investigation into whether or not a council could donate to a limited company. Cllr Wilkinson looked at the organisations to which the council had already donated this year, and more than half were limited companies, but those were also registered charities.

Roy Allen has said he will attend the meeting.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

10th September 2024

Mr Allen attended as a Director of Sea Road Beach Access Limited. He advised the meeting over £20,000 had now been raised towards the project, leaving a shortfall of just under £10,000. That shortfall figure included a contingency of £2,000.

Cllr Gunston and Mr Allen debated the merits of Sea Road Beach Access Limited becoming a Community Interest Company, Mr Allen feeling it was not right for Sea Road Beach Access Limited to be a Community Interest Company as, effectively, once the boardwalk was installed, the company would have no assets to pass on should it fold. Mr Allen said the company could sell the boardwalk to the council for £1 once installed, but the committee did not feel in a position to have such a conversation. Mr Allen stated categorically the company would remain limited by guaranteed and would not become a Community Interest Company.

Council still supported the idea of improved beach access for all but there were reservations. Cllr Gunston explained the council’s three main concerns and listed these as the set-up of the company, the untried nature of the design and the choice of materials. Mr Allen responded to the latter saying high-density polyethylene (HDPE) was guaranteed for twenty years with a projected life expectancy of fifty years, and the council already used it for all its new public seats and planters. HDPE was also used for similar projects elsewhere in the county, although Cllr Wilkinson said he had seen HDPE break on occasion. Mr Allen said he had been responsible for untried solutions throughout his career as an electrical engineer and on far larger projects than this. The boardwalk was designed with a 40mm edge, sufficient to stop wheeled vehicles falling off the side.

The Clerk suggested the committee could recommend to Full Council a pledge of finance conditional on a Health & Safety report being completed on the trial section and any recommendations from that being implemented. Although councillors liked this proposal, Mr Allen said there was no longer going to be a trial section installed ahead of the rest.

Cllr McElroy said there was the additional concern about liability for the boardwalk if the company folded. Mr Allen said donations did not imply any liability; Cllr McElroy agreed personal donations did not, but the council was a public

body and donations might be seen differently. Other councillors agreed the village would likely look to the parish council to get involved if the limited company folded.

Mr Allen said he had had a structural engineer look at his proposals and confirm they would work. Mr Allen felt any requirement for a safety sign-off was unworkable because the boardwalk would already be in place by the time of any assessment inspection. Mr Allen said he felt the council was risk-averse, which was not a criticism.

The following two proposals were put to the meeting: 1. the council donates £10,000 to the project; 2. the council pledges financial support as long as a RoSPA report is commissioned by Sea Road Beach Access Limited and all recommendations acted upon. Committee members each voted for one of the two proposals, resulting in a split vote.

The committee AGREED to recommend to Full Council it pledged financial support for the Sea Road Beach Access Limited beach access project as long as a RoSPA report is commissioned by Sea Road Beach Access Limited and all recommendations acted upon.

Such financial support should not be seen as implying any council liability in the project.

(Mr Allen left the meeting at the conclusion of this item.)

686/24 EAST PRESTON & KINGSTON VILLAGE HALL FOUNDATION

(Mrs Adams and Mrs McElroy joined the meeting at the start of this item.)

The following paper was circulated in advance of the meeting:

East Preston & Kingston Village Hall Foundation

Committee is asked to consider the Foundation's request for help implementing the recommendations of its latest Fire Risk Assessment.

The assessment was carried out by Richard Gamble-Frost of G.F. Fire Solutions on 29th July.

Chairman of the Village Hall Foundation, Mrs Toni McElroy, attended the Full Council meeting on 2nd September and advised an initial quotation for the works required to make the building compliant again was £29,000.

In addition to financial assistance, the **council is also asked to give the Foundation permission to implement two permanent ramps**: on the north side of the building to provide safer exit from the Warren Room, and on the west side of the building to provide safer exit from the Miller Barn.

At the committee's last meeting, Cllrs Toney and Wilkinson volunteered to assist the Foundation in these matters.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

10th September 2024

Cllr McElroy declared a Personal Interest in this matter, as recorded in Minute 683/24 above and said he would not take part in any vote on this item.

As Chairman of the East Preston & Kingston Village Hall Foundation, Mrs McElroy explained the Foundation had recently undertaken a full Fire Risk Assessment and was committed to working it way through the eighteen recommendations to be found in the Action Plan part of the report. Cllr Bowman, as official council representative to the Foundation, had already helped the Foundation committee better understand how best to respond to the recommendations.

Mrs McElroy advised the recommendations were in response to new regulations implemented following the investigations into the 2017 Grenfell Tower fire.

The committee discussed various points from the report. The committee had already agreed Cllrs Toney and Wilkinson would be available to work with the Foundation committee alongside Cllr Bowman.

The committee AGREED all works listed in the report needed to be carried out and therefore the council gave its permission for the exits from the Warren Room and Miller Barn to encroach further onto the Warren Recreation Ground if that was necessary. East Preston Cricket Club would also need to agree as the boundary of the land leased to the club abutted the western elevation of the Miller Barn. At a later date, the Foundation would ask the council to consider creating a more rigid pathway from the rear of the Warren Room through the children's playground.

Mrs McElroy said the Foundation would also appreciate some financial support. Although the Foundation had sufficient money in the bank, it did not want to deplete its reserves to the tune of approximately £30,000. In light of the current uncertainty over the immediate future of the Conservative Hall which may leave the Village Hall as the sole social venue in the centre of the village.

The committee AGREED to recommend to Full Council an initial grant of £10,000 to the Village Hall Foundation for the purposes of completing actions on the Action Plan in the Fire Risk Assessment dated 29th July 2024.

Mrs McElroy and Mrs Adams thanked the committee for its support and cooperation.

(Mrs Adams and Mrs McElroy left the meeting at the conclusion of this item.)

687/24 LEASES WORKING PARTY – EAST PRESTON & KINGSTON BOWLS CLUB

(As a member of the Leases Working Party, Cllr Moore joined the meeting at the start of this item.)

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

Leases Working Party

The Leases Working Party is asked to consider the latest correspondence from the solicitors of East Preston & Kingston Bowls Club.

The council's most recent offer to the club was "to propose an annual rental of £1,000, increasing by £25 annually."

In mid-July, Council received a letter from Henschleys Solicitors acting on behalf of the Bowls Club. I had organised a meeting of the Leases Working Party for 29th July, but too few working party members were able to attend on the day.

The letter proposed the following Heads of Terms for a new lease:

- New term: 60 years commencing 04 May 2025.
- Lease to be demised within the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954.
- Rent: The club's surveyor has calculated that the present rent (one shilling = 5p per annum) brought up to date by applying the Retail Price Index, equates to a rent of £1.30 per annum. The club's surveyor calculates that a reasonable rent to offer would be between £50.00 and £100.00 per annum fixed for the duration of the new term. The tenant offers a midpoint rent at £75.00 per annum. The market rent for the property is of course restricted by reason of the restrictions and other stipulations set out in the present lease.
- Otherwise, similar terms and conditions to apply as per the existing lease.

Using the Bank of England inflation calculator, one shilling in 1965 comes out at £0.82.

Prior to the club setting up at new premises in Sea Lane in 1965, the annual rental had actually risen as high as £3 per year. The rate of one shilling had been set in recognition of

the work the club needed to do to set up at the new venue, work presumably long-completed. Using the £3 rate in 1985, the Bank of England inflation calculator says that would be £49.21. Scaling up the £1.30 mentioned above would bring the £3 up to £78 today.

My understanding of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954 is the term of the contract can only be changed from the term of the outgoing contract if agreed by both parties. Previous discussions suggested the club had no problem with a 25-year lease.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

10th September 2024

The Clerk had also circulated a copy of the council's Land and Buildings Strategy ahead of the meeting.

The feeling was the council's suggested rental of £1,000 was still less than the equivalent paid by Angmering-on-Sea Lawn Tennis Club and would not preclude the council from providing ad-hoc financial assistance to the club as it had in the past when necessary.

Committee AGREED it should aim for a lease of 25 years in line with the tennis club and the Land and Buildings Strategy. This had previously seemed understood by the bowls club, although the Clerk said the club possibly had a right to a further sixty-years term according to the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954.

Referring to clause 4.1 of the Land and Buildings Strategy, the committee AGREED the council should undertake a professional Red Book Valuation as part of its negotiations. The Clerk would contact the same company which provided the Red Book Valuation for the Conservative Hall.

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

688/24 INSURANCE

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

Committee is asked to consider whether to commit to a further three-year agreement with Hiscox Insurance Limited.

In response to the Pre-Renewal Questionnaire mentioned at the last meeting, our insurance broker responded with the following:

Long Term Agreement Option

In order to ensure rate stability, East Preston Parish Council & East Preston Parish Council acting as corporate Trustee of the Warren Recreation Ground may choose to set up a 3 year binding Long Term Agreement (LTA) with Hiscox Insurance Company Limited, at an LTA premium of £4,862.48. This means East Preston Parish Council & East Preston Parish Council acting as corporate Trustee of the Warren Recreation Ground will commit to keep their policy with Hiscox Insurance Company Limited for the period of the LTA, which will expire 3 years from the original inception date.

In return Hiscox Insurance Company Limited agrees not to increase the annual insurance premium, except for the following reasons:

- When there are changes to the material facts concerning your policy.
- Policy changes where the sums insured for assets covered against loss or damage are increased or decreased.
- The annual inflationary increase (index linking) applied to the sums insured for the assets covered against loss or damage.

- The imposition by the Government of a higher rate of Insurance Premium Tax (IPT).

Any changes to terms or conditions other than those stated, for example, the imposition by the Insurer

of a higher rate resultant from the claims ratio exceeding the percentage detailed in the LTA endorsement wording shown in the schedule enclosed, **releases** East Preston Parish Council & East Preston Parish Council acting as corporate Trustee of the Warren Recreation Ground from the Long Term Agreement and as your broker we will seek alternative quotations from the market on your behalf.

We have often bought into such insurance arrangements in the past, including with Hiscox. Does the council wish to enter into such an arrangement again?

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

10th September 2024

The committee AGREED to sign-up to a further three-year agreement with Hiscox Insurance. This would cover the period 1st October 2024 to 30th September 2027.

689/24 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 19TH AUGUST 2024

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

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

690/24 MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

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

Updates from previous meetings

Minute 608/24 – Greener Buildings Fund – 1st East Preston Scout Group – the Assistant Group Scout Leader, Cheryl Stevens, has informed me Mr Wintle has confirmed the group’s preferred quotation was still valid and the group hoped to confirm its order shortly.

Minute 610/24 – Grant Aid 2024/25 – Citizens Advice Bureau – Jill Younger-Sword, Bookkeeper for Arun & Chichester Citizens Advice emailed, “Many thanks to East Preston Parish Council and yourself for the grant donation.”

Minute 611/24 – Lashmar Recreation Ground – a couple of days after the meeting, I reverted to my ADC Parks contact, “My committee deferred making a decision on funding as it would like to see a proposed design so it can see what it would actually be contributing towards. Do you have anything I can share with them?” No reply to date.

Minute 615/24 – Council Office – intruder alarm system – only two Passive Infrared Sensors were replaced as there are only two in the building not three.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

10th September 2024

Minute 608/24 – Greener Buildings Fund – 1st East Preston Scout Group – Cllr Toney confirmed the quotation for the solar electricity scheme at the Marjorie Bridger hall was £13,908 and was VAT zero-rated. Therefore, based upon a grant of 50% of the costs up to a maximum of £8,000, the council’s donation to the group would be £6,954. This would be paid upon receipt of an invoice following completion of the work.

Minute 611/24 – Lashmar Recreation Ground – the Clerk had heard nothing further from his ADC contact.

691/24 ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING (18TH NOVEMBER)

Nothing new was suggested.

The Meeting closed at 20:12.

Chairman: *Cllr Rick McElroy* Date: **18th November 2024**

(END)