



# 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](mailto:clerk@eastpreston-pc.gov.uk)

## **FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES:** of the Meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on Monday, 17<sup>th</sup> February 2025 at East Preston Infant School, Lashmar Road, East Preston at 18:00

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

Councillors Andrea Chapman and Lisa Duff (both from 18:48)

**ALSO:** Clerk to the Council, Simon Cross

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The following abbreviations may appear in these Minutes:

ADC – Arun District Council;  
NALC – National Association of Local Councils

WSCC – West Sussex County Council.

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The meeting opened at 18:00.

### **137/25 APOLOGIES AND REASONS FOR ABSENCE**

All committee members were present.

### **138/25 PERSONAL AND/OR PREJUDICIAL/PECUNIARY INTERESTS**

Cllr McElroy declared a Personal Interest in any matters which might refer to East Preston & Kingston Village Hall Foundation, of which his wife is the chairman.

### **139/25 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

No members of the public attended the meeting.

### **140/25 LEASES WORKING PARTY – EAST PRESTON & KINGSTON BOWLS CLUB**

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

## **Leases Working Party – East Preston & Kingston Bowls Club**

**Committee is asked to receive an update on the renewal of the lease to East Preston & Kingston Bowls Club.**

The only update is I have arranged a valuation visit for Wednesday, 26<sup>th</sup> February. A representative of the club will be present and the valuation will be carried out by Mark Deacon of Spratt & Co..

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

10<sup>th</sup> February 2025

The Clerk added he had received answers to the questions the committee had asked him to ask of the club at its November meeting. This information had been electronically circulated to all committee members on 21<sup>st</sup> November.

Number of active members: 144 full paying members

Active member annual subscription: £180 subscription

Number of social members: 23 social members

Social member annual subscription: £30 social membership

Are any increases to subs planned for the coming financial year?: No (the subs were voted on by members last week at the AGM)

**141/25 KINGSTON PARISH COUNCIL – JUDICIAL REVIEW**

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

**Kingston Parish Council – judicial review**

**Committee is asked to consider giving some money to Kingston Parish Council now towards the costs of its judicial review.**

At its meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> December, the council agreed to grant Kingston Parish Council “£1,000 from reserves to the costs of a judicial review” relating to Planning Permission for a development of 47 residential dwellings on land north-east of Kingston Lane (**K/27/24/PL**) (Minute 926/24, Resolution 1919).

The council agreed only to pay the money once Kingston Parish Council provided proof the money had been spent in this way.

In December, Kingston Parish Council came back to us advising it had already paid two invoices:

1. Invoice from Cornerstone Barristers for advice on merits of grounds for judicial review £3000 plus VAT
2. Invoice from Sharpe Pritchard £4,876.45 re progressing the application for Judicial Review to the Administrative Court plus VAT (fees includes £2000 for Barrister input)

Both of these payments are recorded in minutes of this Council's Finance Committee 21 November

I have copies of both invoices if anyone would like to see them. The reason for advising us of this is KPC would appreciate our £1,000 sooner rather than later.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

10<sup>th</sup> February 2025

Committee knew Kingston Parish Council's request for a Judicial Review had been thrown out, with a further £10,000 costs being awarded against Kingston Parish Council.

After some discussion about whether this council should donate anything to Kingston Parish Council's failed campaign, the majority of the committee AGREED to donate £3,000, this covered by the Full Council resolution mentioned in the paper above. The committee AGREED to donate up to a further £2,000 if Kingston Parish Council came back later saying it still needed extra help in settling the debts from this campaign. The Clerk reported he understood Kingston Parish Council had agreed almost to double its precept to help, its precept being considerably lower than East Preston's.

#### **142/25 FINANCIAL YEAR-END EAR-MARKED RESERVES**

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

### **End-of-year ear-marked reserves**

**On behalf of the council, committee is asked to consider moving sums at year-end into new or existing ear-marked reserves as follows:**

- ▽ Traffic consultancy for Roundstone Level Crossing (£4,500)
- ▽ new computers (£2,611)
- ▽ beach access (£1,000)
- ▽ Kingston Parish Council judicial review (£1,000) and
- ▽ new cycle repair station (£3,500).

In the past, the Crime Prevention (£12,500) budget sum has been transferred to the EP Youth Provision ear-marked reserve. As that already has £30,000 in it, I would not propose adding any more to the ear-marked reserve.

Adrian has been through the council's budgets and has proposed these sums be put into ear-marked reserves rather than the general reserve come the year-end. Some sums will have reduced by any sums we may have spent against those budget lines this year.

Furthermore, we are proposing the following ear-marked reserves be closed at the end of the financial year and any amounts in them be returned to the general reserve:

- ▽ WRG tennis and playground works (£0)
- ▽ Village Map (£0)
- ▽ Roundstone Drive planters (£480)
- ▽ Warren Rec planters (£490) and
- ▽ Election Expenses (£100).

All sums quoted above are subject to slight changes before the end of the year.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

10<sup>th</sup> February 2025

Removing the Kingston Parish Council suggestion, the committee AGREED unanimously to the proposal above.

#### **143/25 DEVOLUTION**

Cllr Gunston had asked for the subject of devolution to be added to the Agenda for this meeting. He referred to a letter published by NALC and circulated to all councillors on 7<sup>th</sup> January. Within the letter, NALC mentioned “resetting relations between central and local government and rewiring relationships with principal authorities”, “[parish] councils and county associations should be on the front foot and engage with principal authorities to ensure your voice and ambitions are heard, particularly in any local proposals for local government reorganisation” and its revamped website to which councils and councillors could sign up. The council was already registered with the NALC revamped website.

Cllr Gunston asked the committee whether members felt the council should try to be involved in discussions from the start and, if so, how should the council go about that. Cllr Gunston said, in his experience, this was one of the more

active councils about and therefore it had a good idea of what additional work, if any, a local council could take on and what the impact would be upon matters such as staffing and precept. Would a local council still be able to raise its own precept or would it have to submit a budget to a principal authority in future and have money awarded to it? These were some of the questions he felt the council should be discussing.

Generally, the committee AGREED this council should nominate itself to be included in discussions about the way forward and should do so through County Cllr Elkins rather than through the district council. Rather as the council has sometimes been a pilot partner for projects with larger authorities, the council could put itself forward now on the understanding it reserved the right to remove itself from discussions if it felt it had no purpose in being involved. Cllr Wilkinson neatly summed this up as the council being on the “inside looking out rather than outside looking in.”

This would be referred to the next Full Council meeting.

#### **144/25 FINANCIAL REPORTS**

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

### **Financial reporting to Full Council**

**Committee is asked to consider the financial reports presented to Full Council and whether we are receiving the correct information in the correct format.**

Cllr Gunston to lead on this item. Cllr Gunston has had some conversations with Adrian on this matter. Adrian is unable to attend this meeting as he is on leave, and sends his apologies.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

10<sup>th</sup> February 2025

Cllr Gunston referred specifically to the *Summary Income & Expenditure by Budget Heading – Committee Report* produced by Adrian for each Full Council meeting. A version of this report was also produced for each Amenities Committee meeting, primarily because of the greater number of financial transactions that committee had compared to other committees. Cllr Gunston had spoken to Adrian and they had agreed the same report could probably be produced containing useful information. The committee AGREED Cllr Gunston could liaise further with Adrian on the format of this report.

Two councillors had mentioned some of the reports were now produced in a landscape format rather than portrait and that had made them more difficult to read on their devices. The only report produced landscape was the BACS payments processed report and that had always been produced landscape. The Clerk realised this was possibly simply a scanning problem and he would discuss this further with Adrian.

#### **145/25 BIG-MONEY PROJECTS**

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

### **Council projects**

**Committee is asked to begin consideration, in earnest, of any new or ongoing council projects.**

Members are aware of the ebulliently healthy state of the council's finances. We had hoped we would be able to adopt the Conservative Hall, repairs to which would have been our responsibility and which may have helped to reduce the council's reserves. However, in late January, a Trustee said it was hoped the sale to another party would be completed by the end of that month.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

10<sup>th</sup> February 2025

Cllr McElroy reminded the meeting the Amenities Committee was already looking at spending some money on some wellbeing projects such as new outdoor gym equipment and the bicycle repair station for the Warren Recreation Ground.

Cllr Wilkinson suggested the council could look at provision of solar panels on the roof of the Council Office and also work with the East Preston & Kingston Village Hall Foundation on the replacement of its ageing concrete roof and similarly include solar panels in such a project. This would work alongside the council's green ambitions. Cllr Gunston said there were some local suppliers which might be interested in quoting for this work. The Clerk said there might be Planning Permission considerations for placing solar panels on the Village Hall building, in particular, owing to it being adjacent to a Grade II Listed building, 54 (and 56) Sea Road. The Village Hall itself is also on the ADC local list of buildings of character. The committee AGREED unanimously Cllr Bowman should raise the idea of a joint project (for the Village Hall part of Cllr Wilkinson's suggestion) at the next Village Hall committee meeting, scheduled for 19<sup>th</sup> February.

Cllr Gunston proposed the following ideas for further discussion: purchase of the ADC allotments site between Roundstone Drive and Crescent; purchase of a property to rent to a local family at a reasonable rent; purchase of the ADC land in Lashmar Road, home to East Preston Football Club. Cllr Gunston said there had to be doubt, at this time, as to the future ownership of land currently owned by ADC after devolution. The Clerk said the presumption was all ADC land would transfer upwards to WSCC, but nothing was certain.

The conversation ended with no other actions identified. Cllr McElroy had excused himself from any discussion on matters involving the East Preston & Kingston Village Hall Foundation.

#### **146/25 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 9<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2024**

The draft Minutes had been circulated to all councillors on 16<sup>th</sup> December asking for suggested amendments by 23<sup>rd</sup> December. None had been received.

The committee AGREED unanimously the Minutes could be signed as a true record of the meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> December and Cllr McElroy duly signed the Minutes.

#### **147/25 MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

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

### **Updates from previous meetings**

There are no updates which have not already been reported elsewhere such as Full Council's agreement to the proposed budget and precept for 2025/26 and the donation towards the refurbished skatepark at Lashmar Rec..

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

10<sup>th</sup> February 2025

Nothing was added.

(Cllrs Chapman and Duff joined the meeting at this point.)

#### **148/25 EAST PRESTON YOUTH CENTRE**

The Clerk explained he had asked Cllrs Chapman and Duff to join the meeting at this point as they were, respectively, Chairman and Secretary of the East Preston Youth Club management committee.

Earlier in the day, the Clerk had received a call from a representative of estate agents Justice & Co. who had been asked to contact the council by a WSCC officer regarding the marketing of the East Preston Youth Centre, the building which sat between East Preston Infant and Junior Schools. The building was being marketed for rent only, "offers in excess of £25,000 per annum."

The committee liked the idea of perhaps taking on the building as a Community Hub from which could run before- and after-school clubs, a preschool, the Repair Café, some of the meetings that had previously been held in the Conservative Hall and a youth club. Cllrs Chapman and Duff and the Clerk reminded the council the headteachers at East Preston Infant and Junior Schools were likely to campaign against any move to host a Youth Club in the building, following security concerns raised prior to the pandemic.

The annual rental sum was concerning, but Cllr Duff mooted a collaboration with a service provider could make that sum far more manageable.

The committee AGREED unanimously, the Clerk should advise the agent of the council's interest.

**149/25 ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING (13<sup>TH</sup> MAY)**

Nothing new was suggested.

*The Meeting closed at 18:57.*

Chairman: **Cllr Rick McElroy**

Date: **13<sup>th</sup> May 2025**

(END)