

EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

**30TH JUNE 2025
at 19:00**

SUPPORTING PAPERS

Agenda Item 6

118-120 Sea Road, East Preston

Council is asked to consider matters related to the proposed purchase of 118-120 Sea Road, East Preston, BN16 1NN.

As previously discussed at the Extraordinary Meeting held on 16th June, the property known as 118-120 Sea Road is currently on the market comprising ground floor office space and two-storey living accommodation above. This property adjoins the existing council premises at 122 (office) and 124 (flat) Sea Road. The property is on the market for £450,000.

The council's Flat & Frontage Working Party thinks this is an ideal and possibly once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for the council to buy extended premises.

The ground floor could, amongst other uses, become a meeting venue for village groups and could also provide office accommodation for those groups too. The meeting venue would be big enough to hold most, if not all, council committee meetings, which would reduce the amount of money the council currently spends on room hire.

The current government's devolution and local government reorganisation agenda could well mean this council's workload could increase in the next few years, possibly requiring additional staff.

The council could host organisations which could be beneficial to the village, e.g. Citizens Advice sessions again. There is an outside chance we may even be able to get a bank to visit again.

All of the above could herald the beginning of the council sitting at the centre of a community hub. The council could oversee the creation of more new groups in the village just as it has East Preston Men in Sheds, East Preston in Bloom and East Preston Repair Café in recent years, all groups which add great value to the village.

Although not currently self-contained, the flat (120) could easily be made self-contained, enabling it to become additional income for the council/village and remain a rental property at a time when rental properties are hard to find.

Buying the property would provide another community asset for the village and would likely only appreciate in value.

Council needs to agree a purchase price.

There is a proposal to take about £200,000 from the council's current reserves which would reduce those more to the recommended level of a year's running costs. The remainder of the agreed purchase price would need to come from a loan.

Council can apply for a public works loan. To do so, the council needs to garner the support of the West Sussex Association of Local Councils. To that end, I have had a conversation with Trevor Leggo, CEO, and he believes the proposal is very sensible and he will happily support it. Trevor said we would need to gauge a degree of public support for the proposal although he accepted time was a constraint in this instance. In the e-newsletter published on 25th June, we explained the project to members of the public and asked them to complete a short questionnaire showing their support or otherwise for the proposal.

Based on current figures, we expect the loan, when offset by income from the additional rental property and other likely income, will mean an increase of no more than £5.72 on a Band D property. East Preston precept for a Band D property is currently £98.43 (and has been since April 2020) so £5.72 is just under 6%.

Informally, on Carnival Parade day, Cllr Linton mentioned the proposal to Dr Beccy Cooper MP, who was also supportive of the idea.

Council to agree to apply for an annuity public works loan of £250,000 – repayable over 10 years at a cost of £32,000 per year.

Council to agree to release other funds required to complete the purchase of this property. This may involve the payment of some penalty fees should we need to withdraw any funds from some of our longer-term accounts. Adrian is currently working out the financial implications and I will have more information on this at the time of the meeting (circulated in advance if possible).

Council to agree to appoint a solicitor to work on its behalf on this proposed purchase.

This supporting paper may be updated as more information becomes available, but any updated version will be issued no later than midday on 30th June.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

25th June 2025

