



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 Tuesday, 13th May 2025 at East Preston Infant School, Lashmar Road, East Preston at 19:00
- PRESENT:** Councillors John Gunston, Elizabeth Linton, Glyn Mathias, Rick McElroy (Chairman) and Steve Toney
- ALSO:** Clerk to the Council, Simon Cross
Roy Allen, Sea Road Beach Access Limited
- ABSENT:** Councillor Steven Wilkinson

The following abbreviations may appear in these Minutes:

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

WSCC – West Sussex County Council.

The meeting opened at 19:05.

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

On 2nd May, the Clerk had asked members of the committee to let him know whether they wished to stand for Chairman and/or Vice-Chairman of the committee. Cllrs McElroy and Gunston had replied they were willing to stand for Chairman and Vice-Chairman respectively.

The committee AGREED Cllr Toney could act as second teller alongside the Clerk.

369/25 APPOINTMENT OF A COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN FOR THE YEAR 2025/26

The Clerk confirmed there were no other candidates.

Cllr McElroy was appointed unopposed.

Cllr Toney confirmed all five councillors present had voted.

370/25 APPOINTMENT OF A COMMITTEE VICE-CHAIRMAN FOR THE YEAR 2025/26

The Clerk confirmed there were no other candidates.

Cllr Gunston was appointed unopposed.

Cllr Toney confirmed all five councillors present had voted.

371/25 APOLOGIES AND REASONS FOR ABSENCE

Apologies and a reason for absence were received and accepted from Cllr Wilkinson (alternative commitment).

372/25 PERSONAL AND/OR PREJUDICIAL/PECUNIARY INTERESTS

Cllr Gunston	Grant Aid 2025/26 – East Preston Repair Café and East Preston Yarnbombers	Personal; Cllr Gunston created East Preston Repair Café and Mrs Gunston was an East Preston Yarnbomber
Cllr McElroy	Various matters – East Preston & Kingston Village Hall Foundation	Personal; Mrs McElroy was the Chairman of East Preston & Kingston Village Hall Foundation

373/25 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The committee AGREED Mr Allen could speak at the appropriate Agenda Item.

374/25 ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE COMMITTEE'S TERMS OF REFERENCE

The following paper was circulated in advance of the meeting:

Terms of Reference

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

The current Terms of Reference can be found at Appendix A below. These were adopted by the committee on 16th May 2022, and were last reviewed, without changes, on 14th May 2024 (Minute 353/24).

My only proposed change would be to move paragraph 5.13 to the Personnel Committee. This is highlighted in red in the Appendix.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

7th May 2025

The current Terms of Reference were circulated with the Supporting Papers for the meeting.

The committee AGREED unanimously the change proposed by the Clerk. The new Terms of Reference would be version 15.

375/25 GRANT AID 2025/26

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

Grant Aid 2025/26

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

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

Organisation – charity no	Amount requested? (£)	Outcome
Sea Road Beach Access Limited n/a	£712 “For East Preston Community Boardwalk for: planting of environmental area and insurance”	£712
4SIGHT Vision Support 1075447	£520 “to support 8 [...] clients for a period of 12 months”	£390 (to support 6 clients)
Air Ambulance Charity Kent Surrey Sussex 1021367	£500 “Contribution to operating costs of HEMS (Helicopter Emergency Medical Service)”	£500
Arun Counselling Centre 293053	£300 “towards counselling for clients in East Preston only”	£300
East Preston in Bloom n/a	£650 “to enhance and regenerate the current green public spaces owned by East Preston Parish Council”	£650
East Preston Junior School Family Support n/a	£500 “To support families of EPJS with food support as needed.”	£500
East Preston Repair Café n/a	£500 “6 months hall hire + annual insurance”	£500 *
East Preston Yarnbombers n/a	£150 “purchase public liability insurance”	£150 *
Family Support Work (FSW) 285337	£350 “funding to provide outreach for vulnerable families and their children through after-school clubs”	£350
Friends of Angmering Station n/a	£217 “display on Angmering Station of “Rail 200” Poster Competition entries	£217
Friends of East Preston Infant School 1108710	£2250 “music sessions to the pupils of East Preston Infant School – many of whom live in East Preston – to give them a broader and exciting curriculum experience”	£750 (to support one year group)
Friends of Oak Grove College, Durrington 271168	£300 “towards library books and supporting materials for Oak Grove College. Every child in East Preston who cannot attain mainstream attends this SEND school, and the transport buses are a familiar sight on term days! Over the past 3 years we have turned the conference room into a wonderful library space where formerly we only had a locked bookcase shoehorned into a corner of the training kitchen! There is plenty of empty shelving waiting to be filled and books are sourced specifically for inclusion and diversity and graphics for the non-readers.”	£300
Home-Start Arun, Worthing and Adur	£1,500	£1,000

1132416	"To continue our vital services for families in East Preston who are facing difficult time, we need to update all our outdated computers to ensure we work efficiently and store data securely"	
Waves Music Therapy 1194782	£600 "A 12-week music therapy project offering meaningful, creative engagement for local young adults with profound disabilities"	£600

The council budgeted **£10,000** for Section 137 Grant Aid donations this financial year.

The total value of the above requests is **£11,549**. Arguably, the request from the Sports & Social Club could be considered a Greener Buildings Fund application, which still holds £27,000+.

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

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

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

6th May 2025

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

The committee considered the request from Sea Road Beach Access Limited first, whilst Mr Allen was present. Mr Allen answered questions about the proposed and existing planting and the extent of the insurance cover. The committee AGREED to award the full £712 requested. One councillor voted against this request.

(Mr Allen left the meeting at this point.)

The committee AGREED unanimously the grant request from East Preston Sports & Social Club should indeed be considered as a Greener Building Fund application, see below.

The committee then considered the rest of the requests received and AGREED donations as per the Outcome column above. The committee would like to receive a talk from 4SIGHT at some future date. There was quite a bit of discussion about the request from the Friends of East Preston Infant School and in the end the committee AGREED to fund music lessons for one of the school's three year groups; this would come with a caveat the council was provided evidence of the music lessons before any money was handed over. The committee felt it could not justify the fully £1,500 requested by Home-Start Arun, Worthing and Adur, but AGREED to a donation of £1,000.

The donations totalled £6919.00, leaving £3,081.00 in the Section 137 budget line for 2025/26.

* Cllr Gunston declared a Personal Interest in these two applications, see Minute 372/25 above, and did not vote on either of them.

376/25 SECTION 137 GRANT – EAST PRESTON SPORTS AND SOCIAL CLUB – GREENER BUILDINGS FUND

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

Greener Buildings Fund – East Preston Sports and Social Club

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

Organisation – charity no	Amount requested? (£)	Councillor notes:
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East Preston Sports & Social Club n/a	£2,500 “rainwater harvesting system to improve the club’s environmental footprint”	
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Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

9th May 2024

The request was for more than 50% of the costs of the works, but policy was the Greener Buildings Fund should contribute no more than 50% of the costs of a project.

The committee AGREED to grant £2,000 towards the project to implement a rainwater harvesting system at the club. As before, the money would be held by the council until relevant receipts had been seen by the council and cleared by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the committee.

377/25 SECTION 144 GRANT – EAST PRESTON FESTIVAL COMMITTEE

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

Section 144 Grant Aid – East Preston Festival Committee

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

Organisation – CIC no	Amount requested? (£)	Councillor notes:
East Preston Festival Committee 16126792	£2,100 “Festival Public Liability insurance for 2025/26 and children’s entertainment at the 2025 Community Fete.”	

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

Members will note the Festival Committee is now a registered Community Interest Company.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

6th May 2025

The committee appreciated the Festival Committee had become a Community Interest Company. The committee AGREED unanimously to award the full £2,100 to the Festival Committee.

378/25 SECTION 137 GRANT AID – DR BECCY COOPER MP

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

Grant Aid 2026/27 – Dr Beccy Cooper MP

Committee is asked to consider an offer from the office of Dr Beccy Cooper MP ahead of next year’s Grant Aid round.

On 11th March, Clare Walsh, Constituency Support Officer in Dr Beccy Cooper’s office, contacted me asking for a link to the Grant Aid application form. Without having a problem with her request, I asked how widely she was planning on circulating the form. Clare explained, “I was planning on putting it out across all of Beccy’s socials”. I dissuaded Clare, saying we really did not have the resources to consider a hundred applications from

across the constituency and said the committee could consider now whether this is an offer it feels it wants to take up next year.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

6th May 2025

The committee AGREED unanimously the council was simply not equipped to cope with the potential number of applications which might arise from such publicity. The Clerk would thank Ms Walsh for the offer and explain why we would not take her up on it.

379/25 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 working party met on 24th April to consider the surveyor's report completed for the council. The working party agreed it would like to meet the club face-to-face again and agreed I should offer to have a pre-meet with just the club's secretary. The council fears further legal negotiations could be costly to both sides. I emailed the secretary that afternoon and have spoken to him today. The club has a committee meeting this evening, so I hope to have an update by the time of this committee meeting.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

7th May 2025

The Clerk reported the club committee had met and the secretary had advised him the club had sought advice and was not prepared to meet without the council putting an offer forward first. Alternatively, the club suggested the matter be left in the hands of the two organisations' surveyors. The committee RESTATED it was simply trying to save both sides the money of legal costs. The committee AGREED unanimously, the council should write formally to the club asking for a meeting between the club's secretary and the Clerk to the Council to establish how far apart the thinking of both sides now was, without the need for the additional expense of surveyors. The council has a responsibility to maximise its income where possible to reduce the burden upon the taxpayer.

380/25 TERRORISM (PROTECTION OF PREMISES) BILL

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

Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill

Committee is asked to consider setting up an ear-marked reserve for future expenditure to meet the requirements of the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill.

The Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill, also known as Martyn's Law, is currently progressing through parliament. Cllr McElroy has already agreed to be the council's lead on this matter and has already warned the Bill could bring with it a requirement for some major expenditure, especially at a venue such as East Preston & Kingston Village Hall Foundation. In light of that, the council may wish to prepare to help village venues with the costs of installing whatever additional barriers etc. may be required.

Committee may decide now is the time to close the Conservative Hall ear-marked reserve, currently £100,000, and to set up a Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill ear-marked reserve of a similar amount. Purely a suggestion.

Cllr McElroy provided some background to the proposed Bill and explained how expensive some protective kit can be. Cllr Gunston accepted the need for an ear marked reserve for this purpose but felt the whole £100,00 from the Conservative Hall ear marked reserve was excessive. He found it impossible to imagine any government would insist on community venues implementing such expensive measures. He would prefer an ear marked reserve of £20-£30,000.

The committee AGREED to move £100,000 from the Conservative Hall ear marked reserve to the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill ear marked reserve and to close the Conservative Hall ear marked reserve. Cllr Gunston voted against the sum of £100,000 not the principle of setting up such an ear marked reserve and Cllr Toney abstained.

381/25 BOOM COMMUNITY BANK

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

Boom Community Bank

Committee is asked to receive a report from Boom Community Bank.

On 4th December 2023, “The Council **RESOLVED** unanimously to open a Corporate Savings Account with West Sussex and Surrey Credit Union Limited trading as Boom Community Bank” (Minute 1026/23, Resolution 1804). The council deposited £36,000 on an understanding of approximately £6 per household.

On 10th April, the council received the following report from our main Boom Community Bank contact, Graham Mayes, Operations Lead, Business Growth & Development:

Hi Simon,

Having pulled the latest figures from the system, I don't have a great news story this year, I'm afraid. we've unfortunately seen a reduction in member accounts, funds on loan, and savings held by members in East Preston. Membership numbers have declined, mainly due to the withdrawal of savings or the settlement of loans.

East Preston Members:

- 38 members, including 1 corporate membership held by the Parish Council
- Total loans outstanding: £9,948
- Total savings held by East Preston members: £20,312 (excluding the Council's shareholding)

Broadly, Boom's overall loan book reduced in size by 24% over 2023–2024. This reflects the wider macroeconomic challenges many are facing. While the majority of our loans continue to be approved for individuals with low credit scores, we remain committed to responsible lending. We only approve loans where affordability can be clearly demonstrated.

Unfortunately, in the current climate, many loan applicants (from all areas) are dealing with issues such as rent or utility arrears and often lack sufficient disposable income to support borrowing. Despite these challenges, the credit union maintains healthy financial ratios, and we continue to focus on supporting our members' financial needs while safeguarding the long-term stability of the credit union. Our Chairman and CEO/Treasurer provide more detail on the recent challenges in their reports to the AGM. If you're interested, you can view the full document pack linked below.

<https://www.boomcb.org.uk/media/wfpm5ej2/document-pack-5.pdf>

We remain committed to working with community partners like yourself to reach those who could benefit from our support. In particular, we're seeing a growing need for debt consolidation loans, which help members reduce their monthly outgoings and overall interest burden—an area we're

planning to promote more actively. Over the coming weeks, we'll be visiting East Preston and surrounding areas to distribute leaflets through letterboxes. I'll keep you updated and will drop off the latest literature. Our ongoing online advertising will naturally be reaching East Preston residents. Hopefully, with some renewed effort, we can begin to turn around the numbers

All the best,
Graham

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

6th May 2025

The committee AGREED no further action was required at this time.

382/25 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. At the last meeting, committee agreed Cllr Gunston could continue to work closely with Adrian on this matter.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

7th May 2025

Cllr Gunston said the reports provided had improved following the committee's last meeting and now the council has a full year of Rialtus accounting software behind it. Cllr Gunston had met again with Adrian and the cashbook report would no longer cover the whole year but would be in the format of a monthly update report. This would be easier to handle. Committee members were happy with the progress made and did not feel anything was missing from the council's financial reporting.

383/25 COUNCIL PROJECTS

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

Council projects

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

As discussed last meeting, members are aware of the healthy state of the council's finances.

Since the last meeting, the sale of the Conservative Hall to a business has completed, leaving an ear-marked reserve of £100,000, see Agenda Item 12 above.

Please see Minute 145/25 for suggestions made at the committee's last meeting.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

7th May 2025

As the meeting had already lasted nearly ninety minutes, Cllr Gunston said he would meet with Cllr Wilkinson to clarify the solar panels proposal and any further discussion was deferred until the committee's next meeting.

384/25 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 17TH FEBRUARY 2025

The draft Minutes had been circulated to all councillors on 19th February asking for suggested amendments by 26th February. None had been received.

The committee AGREED unanimously the Minutes could be signed as a true record of the meeting held on 17th February and Cllr McElroy duly signed the Minutes.

385/25 MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

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

Updates from previous meetings

Minute 1036/23 – Conservative Hall Working Party – committee will remember it agreed to pay the Trustees' legal costs in any transfer of the Conservative Hall to the parish council. In March 2024, the council duly gave our solicitor a total of £864 for this purpose. On 9th April, after some chasing on my part, the council received confirmation the Trustees' legal firm confirmed to our solicitor it would not be claiming any of the above money. Our solicitor had initially quoted £1,495 plus VAT for any work he undertook in this matter. His email continued, "Whilst we did not progress with the actual legal work in relation to the review of the title documentation, I have incurred legal fees in relation to the work undertaken in trying to get to that point! In order to keep matters simple, I would propose making a charge to you of 3 hours chargeable time charged at £270.00 plus VAT per hour. This would equate to £810.00 but I will discount this to reflect the amount I hold on account in relation to the undertaking that has now been discharged." Instead of £270 per hour, he charged a discounted rate of £240 which, including VAT, miraculously totalled £864.

Minute 1037/23 – Greener Buildings Fund – East Preston Sports and Social Club – on 24th February, Tim Teasel, Chairman of East Preston Sports and Social Club (East Preston Football Club) asked whether the council would start to provide finance for drafting Planning documents and the planning fee on the installation of the new floodlights, following its agreement to grant up to £10,000 from the Greener Buildings Fund for this project. As the committee had only recently met, I asked just the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the committee for their view on whether or not an invoice for planning work could be funded. Both agreed it could and £1,784 (incl. VAT) was transferred to the club. Ordinarily, this sum, excl. VAT, would have been paid to the club for it to settle its own bill, but Adrian did not realise this and paid the contractor direct. We shall reclaim the VAT so no financial impact will be felt.

Minute 143/25 – Devolution – the council has created a Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation Working Party with Cllr Gunston as chairman.

Minute 148/25 – East Preston Youth Centre – the council did express interest to the agent and several councillors visited the building on 3rd March, ahead of that evening's monthly Full Council meeting. At the meeting later that evening, council agreed it was simply not in a position to submit a bid for the building (Minute 203/25, Resolution 1954).

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

7th May 2025

The committee AGREED to waive the need for three quotes for new computers for officers in light of the lack of time available for officers to chase quotations and the fact the Clerk was proposing a well-established local company be used, one the council already used frequently. The Clerk had received a second quote, from a new but specialised company, and this was comparable to the one he was proposing be accepted. The committee AGREED the quotation could be accepted and progressed.

386/25 ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING (18TH AUGUST)

Nothing new was suggested.

The Meeting closed at 20:30.

Vice-Chairman: *Cllr John Gunston* Date: **18th August 2025**

(END)