



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, 18th August 2025 at East Preston Infant School, Lashmar Road, East Preston at 18:00

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

ALSO: Clerk to the Council, Simon Cross

ABSENT: Councillor Rick McElroy

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 18:00.

In the absence of the committee chairman, Cllr McElroy, the vice-chairman, Cllr Gunston, assumed the chair.

630/25 APOLOGIES AND REASONS FOR ABSENCE

A retrospective apology and reason for absence were received from Cllr McElroy (short-notice work commitment).

631/25 PERSONAL AND/OR PREJUDICIAL/PECUNIARY INTERESTS

Simon Cross – Clerk to the Council	To agree a proposal from the Personnel Committee to increase the salaries of all members of staff	Personal
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632/25 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

No members of the public were present.

633/25 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 request for the current financial year.

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

The donations agreed at the meeting held on 13th May totalled £6919.00, leaving £3,081.00 in the Section 137 budget line for 2025/26.

On 21st July, the council was contacted by a resident of Somerset Road with a request concerning specialist therapy for her daughter. After some discussion, I suggested the organisation providing the therapy submit a Grant Aid application to be considered at this meeting.

Organisation – charity no	Amount requested? (£)	Electronic docs available upon request
The Stables at Cissbury n/a	“Anything would be greatly appreciated” “changing lives through horses, alternative provision”	

Committee members are advised to call in at the Council Office in advance of the meeting to read the application forms for themselves. The application form is very much about the daughter of the resident of Somerset Road. I have explained the council would not be able to make a grant to an individual.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

11th August 2025

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

The committee discussed the request and calculated the hourly-rate for the sessions was £17. The committee discussed whether to award £1,000 or the cost of 50 hours of therapy, £850. The committee AGREED unanimously to award £1,000, leaving £2,081.00 in the Section 137 budget line for 2025/26.

For the committee’s information, the Clerk reported he had been contacted that day by Mary Jeavons, Churchwarden at St Mary the Virgin, asking whether the parish council might be able to contribute towards the planting of a new border for the memorial garden in the churchyard as the box hedge around it had been blighted by Box Hedge Caterpillar. The Clerk had replied the church could apply for a grant and had sent Mary the appropriate paperwork to be considered at a future meeting.

634/25 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.

No real update. Following agreement from Full Council, on 8th July, I instructed Mark Deacon of Spratt & Son to act on council’s behalf in negotiations. He replied, “I do though understand the tenant’s surveyor is away until last week of July, then I am on leave first two weeks of August, so we might not logistically be able to meet up until mid/late August.”

Relations with the club aware from this one particular matter remain amiable.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

12th August 2025

The Clerk reported the two surveyors were only likely to be meeting around about now and he had had no updates so far.

635/25 RISK REGISTER – PUBLIC WORKS LOAN

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

Government loan

Committee is asked to consider risk associated with a public works loan and to update the council's Risk Register accordingly.

As part of our application for a public works loan of £250,000, we were asked to show we had considered the risks associated with such a loan, for example, inability to make a payment (I suppose). I was able to say this committee would consider this on behalf of the council at this meeting.

From this meeting, I will need at least one new entry to add to the council's Risk Register.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

12th August 2025

The committee AGREED to add a risk to the risk register to cover any inability to make a twice-yearly payment against any public works loan given towards the costs of purchasing 118-120 Sea Road. The Clerk would find a suitable wording to reflect the council's careful budgeting and precepting which should not leave the council exposed to this risk.

On the morning after the meeting, the Clerk and Cllr Gunston agreed this wording for the risk register:

Council is unable to make a twice-yearly repayment of its 2025 Public Works Loan	Low risk	Council will ensure its annual budget and precept makes separate provision for twice-yearly repayments of this loan. Should the council find itself unable to make repayments, it would have the option to sell the building.
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This will appear as risk 27 from issue 24 of the risk register onwards.

636/25 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.

At the last meeting, Cllrs Gunston and Wilkinson agreed to meet to discuss a proposal to install solar panels on the roof of the Council Office. Subsequently, the council has agreed to buy 118-120 Sea Road, so the scope of any solar panels project will adjust according to the scale of that project.

Any other big ticket projects are probably on hold for the time being, if only from a human resources perspective.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

12th August 2025

Cllr Wilkinson reported the Amenities Committee had parked its project to replace the outdoor gym equipment at the Warren Recreation Ground, at least in the short term. He added the project to enhance the south-western corner of the Village Green could also be parked if necessary.

Cllr Gunston said the solar panels idea had been parked in the short-term as a project covering the existing Council Office and the building next door would be more cost-effective than the two buildings separately.

Cllr Gunston said, in theory, there was no reason for the council to park any of its existing projects. All could be included in budget discussions.

Cllr Wilkinson questioned the status of the offer to help the Village Hall Foundation with solar panels, and it was AGREED that was definitely on hold pending the purchase of the additional premises. Cllr Mathias suggested the council could loan some money to the Village Hall Foundation if it needed to proceed with a similar project sooner rather than later, any savings could be used to pay back this loan.

637/25 PERSONNEL COMMITTEE – STAFF PAY INCREASE

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

Personnel Committee: staff pay

Committee is asked to consider a proposal from the Personnel Committee to increase the salaries of all members of staff by one scale point.

Cllr Gunston has been working out the figures and it may be this will not be ready for discussion at this meeting, but I have added it to the Agenda just in case he is ready.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

12th August 2025

The Clerk declared a Personal Interest in this item and offered to leave the room. The committee AGREED it was not necessary for him to leave.

Cllr Gunston explained the Personnel Committee had agreed it was appropriate for all six members of staff to have a pay increase above the nationally-agreed annual pay award of approximately 3%. A single step increment on the Local Government Services scale equated to approximately 5%, i.e. an additional 2%. Cllrs Duff and Gunston had calculated this would add just over £1,800 to the council's pay bill plus associated oncosts.

The committee AGREED to recommend this to Full Council in recognition of the "good job" done by all members of staff.

638/25 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 13TH MAY 2025

The draft Minutes had been circulated to all councillors on 14th May asking for suggested amendments by 21st May. None had been received.

The committee AGREED unanimously the Minutes could be signed as a true record of the meeting held on 13th May and Cllr Gunston duly signed the Minutes.

639/25 MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

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

Updates from previous meetings

Minute 853/24 – Council Office computer hardware – new PCs were purchased for Alison, Dawn and me and were installed on 29th July. Fairly smoothly.

Minute 375/25 – Grant Aid 2025/26 – thanks from recipients has already been seen by Full Council at its meeting on 2nd June (Minute 443/25).

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

12th August 2025

Minute 853/24 – Council Office computer hardware – the Clerk reported the council had contracted with a recycling company to come and collect redundant computer hardware. The company used had been recommended by a recycling contact at West Sussex County Council. Owing to the age and lack of residual value in the hardware collected, it had been necessary for the company to charge the council £295. The council received a Waste Transfer Note and a Data Destruction Certificate.

Cllr Wilkinson asked about what computing company might be used for when the council expanded into the next door building. This led to an initial conversation about the need to review staffing levels in light of the expansion and the existing overwork of the council's officers. This matter will be considered further at the Personnel Committee meeting in October but, in the meantime, at least this committee was aware.

There was also a discussion about the costs of the project which was pretty high-level as the extent of the works needed has not yet been identified. Cllr Toney has met with a damp expert, Cllr Gunston was due to meet a windows contractor on the day after the meeting, and Cllr Bowman was due to meet with a lettings expert soon.

640/25 ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING (17TH NOVEMBER)

Nothing new was suggested.

The Meeting closed at 18:38.

Chairman: Cllr Rick McElroy

Date: 17th November 2025

(END)