



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, 17th November 2025 at East Preston Infant School, Lashmar Road, East Preston at 18:00

PRESENT: Councillors John Gunston, Elizabeth Linton, Glyn Mathias, Rick McElroy (Chairman) (from 18:09), Steve Toney and Steven Wilkinson

ALSO: Clerk to the Council, Simon Cross

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 initially.

891/25 APOLOGIES AND REASONS FOR ABSENCE

All committee members were present.

892/25 PERSONAL AND/OR PREJUDICIAL/PECUNIARY INTERESTS

Cllr Gunston and Simon Cross	Grant Aid 2025/26 – East Preston Film Club	Personal – both are members of the team leading the East Preston Film Club
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893/25 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

No members of the public were present.

894/25 ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE BUDGETS 2026/27

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

Budgets 2026/27

Committee is asked to consider Administration and Finance budgets for 2026/27.

The committee oversees the above two budgets. Adrian and I have made a first pass at these two budgets for the coming year.

I admit I am not fully conversant with reports produced by Rialtus, but the Administration budget for 2026/27, so far, proposes expenditure of £226,595 against income of £411,719; that includes a precept figure of £287,219 (no increase on 2025/26, to be discussed.) Removing that precept figure leaves expenditure of £226,595 against income of £124,500. To complicate this further, £90,100 is a bank bond maturing. The rest of the income can be broken down into bank interest and rental income from two flats. Net expenditure under this proposal would be £102,095, a decrease of £27,725 or 21%.

The Finance budget for 2026/27, so far, proposes expenditure of £79,850 against income of £30. Net expenditure here would be £79,820, an increase of £37,340 or 87.5%. £32,150 of that will be loan repayments and a further <£5,000 will be insurance for 118-120 Sea Road. If you remove that £37,150, the expenditure increase drops to £190 or less than 0.5%.

I apologise if any of this information is not presented clearly. Adrian will be in the office on Monday morning if anyone would like to drop in and chat through any of this.

Draft budget sheets are included in the email with this pack.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

11th November 2025

Cllrs Gunston and Linton had both had conversations with Adrian about the proposed budgets.

The committee looked at the Administration budget first. The meeting AGREED unanimously provision needed to be made for utilities and cleaning of 118 Sea Road and AGREED unanimously the simplest way to do this for the first full year of ownership was to duplicate the costs of 122 Sea Road. Cllr Gunston expressed concern there appeared to be no legal fees to cover the purchase of 118 Sea Road. The Clerk would review this with Adrian.

(Cllr McElroy joined the meeting at this point.)

The committee then looked at the Finance budget. There was a question about the £1,000 for the East Preston Community Boardwalk in the budget. Cllr Wilkinson reminded the meeting a former director of Sea Road Beach Access Limited had asked the council to consider taking responsibility for the maintenance of the boardwalk. It was not known how the current line-up of directors felt about this, and the council had discussed the matter no further but there was still the possibility the boardwalk might be a council responsibility within the year, and therefore the £1,000 should stay. The meeting AGREED.

There was also a question over the Crime Prevention budget line. The Clerk explained this budget line was how the council had always managed its youth provision budget, no other more obvious council duty being available to it. Although there was currently no youth provision in the village, the council was part of an Angmering Parish Council initiative to look at some sort of shared provision also including Rustington Parish Council – this initiative was very much in its infancy but may require funding in the coming year. He also said there was the scope for some youth provision in the extended Council Office once it was up and running. He was not thinking a youth club but maybe a homework club for up to 12 attendees. The meeting AGREED unanimously to leave the Crime Prevention budget line as proposed.

All committee budgets would come to this committee at its meeting on 8th December for agreement and shaping into a budget for the January Full Council meeting.

895/25 GRANT AID 2025/26

(Cllr McElroy assumed chairmanship here and thanked Cllr Gunston for having led the meeting to this point.)

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 18th August, committee donated a further £1,000, leaving £2,081 in the budget line.

Organisation – charity no	Amount requested? (£)	Electronic docs available upon request
CCPS n/a	tbc	
East Preston Film Club n/a	£275 + £56 = £331 “Pay for first film shown by East Preston Film Club” and “for the insurance”	No
KEPT 1071737	£250 “Funding for litter picking equipment in order to encourage volunteers to improve/maintain local environment.”	No
St Mary the Virgin 1180544	<£1,000 “To revamp the memorial garden as the box hedge caterpillar has destroyed the Hedge around it”	No

I received an initial email from the chair of CCPS, which began, “I represent a small local charity providing respite care in the summer holidays for children with complex additional needs - some of whom live in East Preston.” I replied with an application form and asking whether there was a website but have heard nothing further.

Committee members are advised to call in at the Council Office in advance of the meeting to read the application forms for themselves.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

11th November 2025

The Clerk had heard from the Chairman of CCPS again saying he would wait until the new financial year to make an application.

Cllr Gunston and the Clerk declared a personal interest in the application from East Preston Film Club and Cllr Gunston did not vote. Cllr Gunston explained the club hoped to be self-funding very quickly but was starting with no money and needed to fund its first film and buy insurance. Any money raised by East Preston Film Society was being used by Paul Amoo for other community projects. Cllr Gunston confirmed the club was basically getting use of the June Sutherland Chapel free-of-charge, although it would be making an annual contribution to the costs of the utilities at the venue. The committee AGREED unanimously to donate £331 to East Preston Film Club. All expressed their belief the village benefitted from having a Film Club and wished it well.

The Clerk explained KEPT had recently been taken over as its originator, John Wintle, had left the village. The committee AGREED unanimously to purchase kit up to the value of £250. Contrary to the application form, the Clerk confirmed KEPT did not have a bank account.

The Clerk reported the amount of donations received quoted in the application from St Mary the Virgin church had increased from £310 to £850. It was difficult to work out how much money was still needed. The committee AGREED unanimously to donate £250 to this project.

The total of this meeting’s donations added up to £831, leaving £1,250 in the budget line for the current year.

896/25 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. Mark Deacon continues to negotiate on the council's behalf. His most recent update has already been reported to Full Council (Minute 846/25).

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

11th November 2025

The Clerk said there was nothing further to add at this time.

897/25 120 AND 124 SEA ROAD – RENTAL PROPOSITION

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

120 and 124 Sea Road

Committee is asked to consider a public suggestion the flats above the Council Office and 118 Sea Road be rented out through Arun District Council to address the housing shortage.

Just for clarification, the flat above the existing Council Office is no. 124 Sea Road and the flat in the building being purchased is no. 120 Sea Road.

This suggestion came from a resident of Orchard Road at the Full Council meeting held on 1st September (Minute 673/25). In a statement read to the meeting, the resident said, "The flat above the Council Office and the one next door you plan on purchasing should be rented to Arun District Council to reduce a small part of the housing list in this area. If the ADC don't want to rent it from you, Rustington Hall would as you are supposed to be helping the local community."

In response, Cllr McElroy referred to a recent judgement by the government's Regulator of Social Housing which was, "Our judgement is that there are very serious failings in the landlord delivering the outcomes of the consumer standards. The landlord must make fundamental changes so that improved outcomes are delivered." Cllr Bowman said the flat at 120 Sea Road was some way off being available to rent. The meeting agreed to discuss this matter in due course.

Councillors will be aware, via a recent ADC press release, ADC is developing a comprehensive improvement plan to address all the regulator's findings.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

11th November 2025

The committee remained concerned about ADC's current failings within its housing offerings. The committee was also concerned about local government reorganisation and how that might impact upon the management of any properties rented out through ADC. The committee wanted to retain control as much as possible over its properties.

After some discussion, the committee AGREED unanimously to revisit this proposition after five years, by which time any incoming unitary authority will, presumably, be settled in and stable.

898/25 MAJOR EVENTS COMMITTEE: TERRORISM (PROTECTION OF PREMISES) BILL

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

Major Events – ear-marked reserve

Committee is asked to consider a recommendation from the Major Events Committee to halve the ear-marked reserve for The Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill.

At its last meeting, the Major Events Committee began considering a budget of the coming financial year. As part of that discussion, the committee agreed to recommend the ear-marked reserve for expenditure to comply with The Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill should be reduced from £100,000 to £50,000 (Minute 826/25). The committee felt the latest press releases about this law have been along the lines of not wanting measures to be unaffordable.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

11th November 2025

Cllr Linton said the information available to the council had changed since it had set up an earmarked reserve of £100,000 for addressing this matter. The information was less extreme in what it was implying and the committee felt £50,000 would now be sufficient for any works required to ensure village buildings were secure. Cllr Gunston questioned whether £50,000 was not still too much, proposing £25,000. Government advice was now saying the major expense would be in the time spent on projects in this line, any changes necessary needing to remain reasonable. He felt this implied improved documentation rather than physical barriers.

Cllr McElroy, as the council's lead on this topic, said it was still very much in the air as the hospitality industry would like kick back against any government proposals it deemed excessive. The detail of the legislation was still evolving and, he warned, could turn on a sixpence if necessary.

The committee AGREED unanimously to trim the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill earmarked reserve to £25,000.

899/25 REVIEW OF EARMARKED RESERVES

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

Council's ear-marked reserves

Committee is asked to review the council's ear-marked reserves.

With the council purchasing 118-120 Sea Road, it will need to consider whether some projects could be deferred.

Adrian's report to the November Full Council meeting looked like this:

27/10/2025
11:29

East Preston Parish Council Earmarked Reserves

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Account	Opening Balance	Net Transfers	Closing Balance
320 EMR - Greener Buildings Projec	27,277.22	-3,300.00	23,977.22
321 EMR- Parish Shopfront Improvem	21,105.00		21,105.00
322 EMR - End of Term Party	1,650.00		1,650.00
323 EMR- EP Youth Provision	30,000.00		30,000.00

324	EMR - Defib Fund	3,500.00		3,500.00
325	EMR - WRG Enhancements	3,974.00		3,974.00
326	EMR - Traffic Calming Measures	8,992.45		8,992.45
327	EMR - Neighbourhood Plan Review	7,688.00		7,688.00
328	EMR - Public Conveniences - Ma	3,703.78		3,703.78
331	EMR - Terrorism(Prot. of Prem)	100,000.00		100,000.00
336	EMR - Office Air Con renewal	12,000.00		12,000.00
337	EMR - Public Toilets Improve	7,000.00		7,000.00
338	EMR - New Christmas Lighting	4,000.00		4,000.00
339	EMR - Roundstone Xing Traf Con	4,500.00	-2,266.65	2,233.35
340	EMR - New Office Computers	2,611.00	-2,611.00	0.00
341	EMR - Beach Access	1,000.00		1,000.00
342	EMR - Kingston PC Judicial Rev	1,000.00		1,000.00
343	EMR - New Cycle Repair Station	3,500.00	-2,316.83	1,183.17
344	EMR - Outdoor Gym Equipment	40,000.00		40,000.00
345	EMR - VG car park bollards	2,500.00	-2,500.00	0.00
		286,001.45	-12,994.48	273,006.97

For example, committee could consider closing the Greener Buildings Project, although there is still £8,700 in it promised to the football club, or it could consider redirecting the EP Youth Provision money towards supporting the conversion of 118 Sea Road to a more community-centred facility that could then be used for some youth provision. I believe the Amenities Committee has already agreed to defer the replacement of Outdoor Gym Equipment but, at this time, does the ear-marked reserve need to be closed or can it stay as it is? These are just a few ideas of what you could discuss.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

11th November 2025

Cllr Gunston said he wanted to review the council's earmarked reserves as both good practice and because the council needed to be sure it had sufficient money in its general reserves to meet at least six months' worth of running costs. He led a discussion around the following earmarked reserves.

Greener Buildings Project – currently at £23,977.22. The committee AGREED unanimously to reduce this simply to the £8,700 promised to the Football Club but yet unclaimed.

EP Youth Provision – as mentioned earlier, the council was in initial talks with Angmering and Rustington Parish Councils, but no expenditure had yet been agreed. Cllr Mathias confirmed there was still some money in the East Preston Youth Club's accounts anyway. The committee AGREED unanimously to reduce this earmarked reserve to £10,000.

Outdoor gym equipment – the Amenities Committee is considering repurposing this earmarked reserve as for improvements to the south-western corner of the Village Green.

Kingston PC – Judicial Review – the meeting AGREED unanimously this earmarked reserve was no longer required.

900/25 **COUNCIL PLAN**

Cllr Wilkinson reported it was a struggle getting some committee chairmen to provide him with the information he needed. He questioned whether the council really needed a council plan. After some discussion, the committee AGREED there was value in a council plan, particularly as a showcase for the work the council had done recently and planned to do in the future. The committee AGREED committee chairmen should meet once a year to review the content of the council plan and once that became a regular commitment, committee chairmen would probably find it easier to keep the plan up-to-date. The committee also AGREED unanimously to postpone further work on the current review until the new council year, May 2026, partly to let the council formulate a better idea for how it wanted to use 118 Sea Road.

901/25 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 18TH AUGUST 2025

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

The committee AGREED unanimously the Minutes could be signed as a true record of the meeting held on 18th August and Cllr Gunston duly signed the Minutes.

902/25 MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

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

Updates from previous meetings

Minute 376/25 – Section 137 grant – East Preston Sports and Social Club – Greener Buildings Fund – at its May meeting, the committee agreed to a grant of £2,000 towards the costs of the club implementing a rainwater harvesting system. The money was to be held by the council until the club could provide relevant receipts. On 21st October, the chairman of the club, Tim Teasel, asked whether the council would be happy to divert the grant towards the replacement of the club's boilers which had failed beyond repair.

I contacted all committee members and the responses were mixed and would have needed to be discussed at this meeting. However, on 30th October, Tim provided the following update, "Just to let you know we have a benefactor who has offered to pay for our boilers which is great news. Therefore we won't need to change the grant now. Sorry to mess you about."

Minute 633/25 – Grant Aid 2025/26 – thanks have been received from the team at The Stables at Cissbury, "I truly can't thank you enough for all your support. You have no idea how much this truly means. I am completely overwhelmed by the council's generosity and it personally means so much to me. Thank you for everything again."

Minute 637/25 – staff pay increase – Full Council agreed to this (1st September, Minute 690/25, Resolution 2021) and it has been implemented. All staff are appreciative of the increase and the thought behind it.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

11th November 2025

Nothing was added

903/25 ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETINGS (8TH DECEMBER AND 16TH FEBRUARY)

The Clerk had already reminded committee members the meeting was mainly to finalise a budget and precept proposal to put before Full Council in January.

The Meeting closed at 18:58.

Chairman: **Cllr Rick McElroy**

Date: **8th December 2025**

(END)