



EAST PRESTON PARISH COUNCIL

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- MINUTES:** of the Proceedings of the Monthly Meeting of East Preston Parish Council held at 18:30 on Monday, 2nd February 2026 at East Preston Infant School, Lashmar Road, East Preston
- PRESENT:** Councillors Christine Bowman, Lisa Duff, Barbara Gale, Helen Hill, John Gunston, Elizabeth Linton (from 18:40), Rick McElroy, David Moore and Steve Toney (Chairman) and Steven Wilkinson
- ALSO:** Simon Cross, Clerk to the Council
- Cllr Philippa Bower, Arun District Council (until 19:14)
- Vince Mewett, Home-start Arun, Worthing & Adur (until 18:54)
- Three members of the public
- ABSENT:** Councillors Kit Bradshaw, Andrea Chapman and Glyn Mathias
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The following abbreviations may appear in these Minutes:

ADC – Arun District Council;
AoSERA – Angmering-on-Sea Estate Residents' Association
NHS – National Health Service;
NR – Network Rail;
PCSO – Police Community Support Officer;
SLCC – Society of Local Council Clerks;

TRO – Traffic Regulation Order;
VHF – East Preston & Kingston Village Hall Foundation;
WRA – Willowhayne Residents' Association;
WSCC – West Sussex County Council;
WSALC – West Sussex Association of Local Councils

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The meeting opened at 18:31.

067/26 INTRODUCTIONS

Cllr Toney welcomed everyone to the meeting, explained the meeting protocol and safety information and led a round of introductions.

068/26 HOME-START ARUN, WORTHING AND ADUR

(Cllr Linton arrived during this item.)

The meeting received a presentation from Vince Mewett, Chair of Trustees of Home-Start Arun, Worthing and Adur (charity no. 1132416).

Home-Start Arun, Worthing and Adur was part of a national federation of Home-Start charities working to support families with children under 5 years of age. One in five children have mental health issues and, in the past ten years, there has been a big increase in the number of children with obesity. The negative impacts of social media are already recognised. In the charity's area, 18,000 children were living in relative poverty, 27% of children in the area. Despite this, a recent grant application had failed because the funding body believed West Sussex was an affluent area. In more rural areas, isolation could be a big problem for young families.

The charity aimed to give all children a "positive early years experience" and Vince described a couple of case studies.

The charity struggled to raise the £200,000 it needed each year. Its name was not terribly indicative of its aim and it was a less appealing charity than the bigger hitters.

Vince explained how volunteers work with families with young children, spending a few hours a week in the house, helping out or just looking after the children whilst a parent maybe did something as simple as take a shower. There was no minimum number of hours a volunteer could offer, but they would have to undergo approximately twelve hours of training before working directly with families. The average period spent with a family was between six and eight months as the charity was careful the family did not become dependent upon the volunteer.

The charity had experienced some difficulties when supporting families whose first language was not English. However, the language of needing and providing help was pretty universal.

In conclusion, Vince thanked the parish council for its grants over the years, the most recent of which had helped to upgrade office computing equipment. He asked anyone interested in volunteering first to visit the charity's website.

(Mr Mewett left at the conclusion of this item.)

069/26 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology and a reason for absence had been received from Cllrs Bradshaw, Chapman and Mathias.

2071 The Council **RESOLVED** unanimously to accept the apologies received from Cllrs Bradshaw (holiday), Chapman (ill) and Mathias (family matter).

Apologies were also received from County Cllr Elkins, Districts Cllr R Bower and Kelly, and Sue Morley.

070/26 DECLARATION OF PERSONAL AND/OR PREJUDICIAL/PECUNIARY INTERESTS

None were declared.

071/26 PUBLIC SESSION

No Agenda Item – Mr G said he sought council's reinforcement of representations he had made to Stagecoach South in relation to a number of bus-stops in the village not displaying timetables. Last August, Mr G had overheard a member of the public, a long-prominent member of the community, lamenting this lack. Now there were only two buses per hour through the village (in each direction), waiting times at bus-stops were more critical than when the wait should have been no longer than twelve minutes. Contacting Stagecoach South, Mr G received an immediate and initially positive response that timetables would be attached to the village's remaining bus-stops "in the coming weeks." Mr G followed this up with further emails in October, November and December, each of which had gone unanswered. He had researched other parts of the Stagecoach South network and had found, for example, all eight bus-stops in Grand Avenue, Worthing, had timetables attached.

Mr G advised he had also learnt, by chance, it was no longer possible to buy a through-ticket from East Preston to, for example, Brighton. When the village was served by the 700, it was possible to get on in East Preston and travel to Brighton for the cost of a single ticket. Since the 700 was withdrawn from the village and replaced by the 11, it was necessary to buy a ticket to Worthing and a second ticket from Worthing to Brighton. This had not been publicised by Stagecoach during the public consultation and would not affect many of the local bus passengers as they were blessed with bus passes. Mr G said this placed an unfair financial burden upon people who needed to travel to or from the village for work.

Mr G added he felt the 11, although less frequent, was a more reliable service than the 700 had been, as it had time built into its timetable to catch up with itself if running late.

(Mr Galloway left at the conclusion of this item.)

072/26 COUNCIL RESPONSES

Councillors agreed with Mr G's comments about timetables and the reliability of the 11 compared to the 700.

2072 The council **AGREED** unanimously to write to Stagecoach South in support of Mr G.'s comments.

073/26 ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL

District Cllrs R Bower and Kelly had both sent their apologies to the meeting.

District Cllr Philippa Bower said it had been a quiet month and she had only attended a meeting of the ADC Environment Committee. The meeting had reviewed graveyard regulations as a result of which she had learnt one only purchased a grave for 30 years, after which a council can add someone on top of your remains.

The council's Tree Policy had been criticised so officers were committed to inspect more regularly and report their findings better.

In response to a question from Cllr Gale, Cllr Bower said she believed new domestic bins would arrive in East Preston in April. Cllr Bower said she was quite hopeful the new bins would work well.

Cllr Gunston advised Cllr Bower slow progress was being made with a lease between ADC and EPPC for the allotments site at Roundstone Drive.

In response to a question from Cllr Linton, Cllr Bower said she did not believe ADC would be providing replacement dog bins for those it had removed from the greensward. ADC could afford only a finite number of bins and replacing the bins on the greensward, even to provide a fairer number of bins along the coast, did not seem to be a priority for ADC at this time. Cllr Linton reluctantly said she would not raise this matter again.

(Cllr Bower left the meeting at the conclusion of this item.)

074/26 MINUTES OF THE MONTHLY MEETING HELD ON 5TH JANUARY 2026

The draft Minutes were circulated to all councillors on 7th January asking for suggested amendments by 14th January. None were received.

2073 The Council **RESOLVED** unanimously the Chairman could sign the Minutes as a true record of the meeting held on 5th January. Cllr Toney duly did so.

075/26 UPDATE ON MATTERS IN THE MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

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

Monthly Update Report

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Minute 933/24 – Chairman's Charity for 2025**
- 3. Minute 012/26 – Finance & General Purposes Committee – budget and precept for 2026/27**

4. **Minute 013/26 – Finance & General Purposes Committee – Roundstone Drive allotments**
5. **Minute 017/26 – West Sussex County Council – East Preston Infant School**
6. **Minute 019/26 – Arun District Council – Public Spaces Protection Order**
7. **Minute 026/26 – Devolution and Local Government Working Party**

1. **Introduction**

This is the report covering items discussed during Full Council meetings up to and including the meeting held on 5th January 2026.

2. **Minute 933/24 – Chairman’s Charity for 2025**

On 26th January, the council received a Thank You letter from Air Ambulance Charity Kent Surrey and Sussex (KSS) within which was the following certificate:



This was an increase on the sum raised for the Chairman’s Charity in 2024.

3. **Minute 012/26 – Finance & General Purposes Committee – budget and precept for 2026/27**

On 13th January, I informed Joshua Helyer and Duncan Miller at ADC Finance of this council’s decision regarding the precept for ADC to collect for us in the coming financial year.

4. **Minute 013/26 – Finance & General Purposes Committee – Roundstone Drive allotments**

At the time of writing, no response yet from ADC to the questions this council posed it on 23rd December. A chasing email has been sent.

5. Minute 017/26 – West Sussex County Council – East Preston Infant School

On the morning after the meeting, I emailed a council response to the public consultation to Sarah Bideleux, WSCC Team Manager, Admissions South/West. Sarah replied, “Thank you for your email and response. I will ensure this feedback is included in the consultation. Please let me know if you have any further queries.”

I also forwarded the response to Claire New, Headteacher at East Preston Infant School. Claire replied, “That’s brilliant – well done!”

6. Minute 019/26 – Arun District Council – Public Spaces Protection Order

On the morning after the meeting, I emailed Dax O’Connor, ADC Community Safety Manager, to advise him the council had no comment to make about the public consultation. He thanked me.

7. Minute 026/26 – Devolution and Local Government Working Party

As agreed, Cllr Gunston drafted a response on behalf of the council and circulated it to all councillors. After several favourable comments, Cllr Gunston submitted the council’s response on 10th January, just ahead of the deadline. I have an electronic copy should anyone wish to see it.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

26th January 2026

The Clerk had nothing to add to the above report but was willing to answer questions. None were asked.

076/26 FINANCIAL MATTERS

The Accounts for January 2026 had been distributed to Members in advance of the meeting.

- 2074** The council **RESOLVED** unanimously to approve the Outstanding Purchase Orders report for 2025/26, value £3,413.21 (exc. VAT).
- 2075** The council **RESOLVED** unanimously to approve the Regular Monthly Payments reports for January 2026 totalling £1,065.25 (inc. VAT).
- 2076** The council **RESOLVED** unanimously to approve the Supplier BACS Invoices Paid reports for January 2026 totalling £11,863.29 (inc. VAT).
- 2077** The council **RESOLVED** unanimously to approve the List of Sales Receipts & Bank Receipts by Bank report for financial year to date totalling £252,933.67 (inc. VAT) for January 2026 (Year to Date, £581,260.95).

The council NOTED the Bank Reconciliations to 14th January 2026.

The council NOTED the Budget Summary for 2025/26 to date including earmarked reserves.

Cllr Toney thanked the council’s bookkeeper, Adrian Vyse, for preparing the above reports.

077/26 REPORTS FROM PARISH COUNCIL COMMITTEES

The council NOTED the following reports which had been circulated in advance of the meeting:

Committees

Since the last Full Council meeting the following committees have met: Community Engagement, Major Events and Personnel. By the time of this meeting, the draft Minutes from the Community Engagement and Major Events Committee meetings have been circulated to all councillors and those from the Personnel have only been circulated to members of that committee.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

26th January 2026

Amenities Committee

Cllr Wilkinson is chairman of this committee.

The committee did not meet in January.

Children’s Playground - As recommended on the 2025 ROSPA inspection report, work to replace the ten remaining wooden floor panels on the multi-play units has been carried out. The work took place whilst the playground remained partly closed to allow the grass seed a chance to germinate.

Warren Recreation Ground – The council’s grounds contractor has almost completed the grounds work at the south eastern corner. The area has been cleared, levelled and shrubs have been planted to provide colour throughout the year. The mulch topping will be added when the delivery has arrived.

Northern Shops – On the 12th January a vehicle drove into the two bollards located on the central grass verge. Both bollards were uprooted but not damaged. The incident was reported to West Sussex police and the council’s insurers. Due to safety concerns the bollards were reinstated quickly. The cost of this work fell under the insurer’s excess amount required therefore no claim has been sought. To get the bollards reinstated quickly, Simon used his authority to spend this money without reference to council.



Photograph courtesy of Alison Roberts

Worthing Road bus shelter – WSCC voluntary service has come back with a couple of designs for a replacement bus shelter opposite Hares. These will be considered at the committee’s February meeting.

Sea Road toilets – Minor repair work has been completed at the Sea Road toilets. The concrete along the underneath of the thresholds of the unisex toilet doors had crumbled away. The contractor has strengthening and replaced the concrete. The contractor has also re-laid and levelled a section of the block paving. Where the fig tree and its roots had been removed, the ground had settled and caused the block paving to sink.

Church Planter - The committee has purchased new composite sleepers to replace the old wooden sleeper planter outside St Mary’s Church. The planter had badly deteriorated and on numerous occasions the flower planting contractor had carried out urgent repairs. The contractor will install the new composite planter when the spring planting takes place.

The committee’s next meeting remains scheduled for 9th February 2026.

Dawn Reid – **Assistant Clerk to the Council**

26th January 2026

Audit & Governance Committee

Cllr Mathias is chairman of this committee.

The committee did not meet in January.

The committee’s next meeting is scheduled for 9th March.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

22nd January 2026

Community Engagement Committee

Cllr Linton is the chairman of this committee.

The committee met on 19th January.

Some updates:

East Preston Festival – the first council event of the Festival will be *Come and Meet Your Local Councillors* on Saturday, 6th June running between 10:00 and 12:00 at the Council Office. The second event will be *Putter Madness* mini-golf event on the Village Green between 16:00 and 19:00. Please put both dates in your diaries.

Beach Cleans 2026 – KEPT (Keep East Preston Tidy) has agreed to run future beach cleans with some support from the parish council. Cllrs Duff, Linton and Toney have all agreed to be present at the clean on Sunday, 29th March.

Playschemes – the committee is looking to host a family-friendly event during October half-term, not in the traditional sense of parish council playschemes. More details as and when the committee has a further idea of the format.

2026 East Preston Calendar – the committee agreed the 2026 calendar had been a big success with less than a handful of copies left unsold.

Warm Welcome Space 2026 – average attendance at the sessions held so far has been: 21.

Youth Provision – Cllrs Chapman and Duff and the Clerk have been to meetings with Angmering and Rustington Parish Councils looking at what is available for local youth and what local youth would like. This council has an action to liaise with the publisher of *All About* magazines about a youth-targeted version.

Centre for Ageing Better – at the other end of the age range, the committee considered the Age-friendly Town and Parish Guide produced by the Centre for Ageing Better in conjunction with the National Association of Local Councils and the Society of Local Council Clerks. The committee agreed the document contained many good ideas, several of which were already available in East Preston. The committee agreed to spend an informal afternoon going through the guide listing what was already available in the village, what could work in the village and what would probably not work in the village.

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The last four calendars sold, in a rush, on 21st January.

The committee's next meeting will be on 23rd March.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

21st January 2026

Finance & General Purposes Committee

Cllr McElroy is the chairman of this committee.

The committee did not meet in January.

The committee's next meeting is scheduled for 16th February.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

22nd January 2026

Major Events Committee

Cllr Linton is Chairman of the committee.

The committee met extraordinarily on 6th January to have a wider conversation about the East Preston Christmas Celebrations event without the pressures of other items on the agenda.

East Preston Christmas Celebrations, 21st November – the committee considered various options for how to rejuvenate this event, including the possibility of not holding an event at all. It was decided to hold an event centred wholly on the Village Hall car-park, hopefully including a covered area in the car-park. The Miller Barn would be used for craft stalls, the Warren Room as a seating area with the chance to have photographs taken with Father Christmas the car-park being used for food and drink stalls. Alison is investigating costs which will be considered further at the committee's next meeting.

Autumn bingo, October 2026 – with a decision made there would be a Christmas Celebrations event on 21st November, the committee agreed to a date of either 4th or 11th October for this event, as those dates are roughly half-way between the Food & Drink Festival and the Christmas event.

On 21st January, Cllrs Linton and Moore and I met with Ritchie Leccia and Nick Ward from the East Preston & Kingston branch of the Royal British Legion. The meeting was to get a better grip on what parts of any Remembrance Sunday event fall to which organisation. Backed by documents from central RBL, Ritchie and Nick explained branches cannot pay for or arrange any elements of any road closures related to a parade. For a parade to take place, the council would need to arrange and pay for the road closures, any related signage, barriers, documents and marshals. These elements would all be covered by the council's insurance. Assuming the council is prepared to do this, the council's officers can address these elements sooner rather than later. The Legion branch would remain responsible for everything else: the church service, the ordering and laying of wreaths, any invites or any event at the Legion club and so on. Regarding the costs of hiring barriers from Littlehampton Town Council, Nick offered to talk to the ADC Armed Forces Champion to see whether a cost-free alternative was available.

The Legion representatives also mentioned 30th June will mark the 110th anniversary of "The Day that Sussex Died", in the attack on the Boar's Head as a prelude to the Battle of the Somme which started on 1st July. The Legion branch is hoping to mark this anniversary in some way.

The committee's next meeting is scheduled for 16th February.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

22nd January 2026

Personnel Committee

Cllr Duff is Chairman of this committee.

The committee met on 12th January.

Matters discussed include:

2027 Local Elections – as far as we know, there will be no change to the timetable for town and parish council elections. Consequently, the committee would like to know how people are currently feeling about standing for re-election in 2027.

The council always maintains a list of people who have expressed a current interest in becoming a parish councillor.

Work experience – the committee agreed to an application from a local student to undertake a week's work experience with the council at the beginning of June. Committee chairmen are asked to consider spending a couple of hours with the student to explain what their committees do. The student is interested in politics so if anyone thinks of a short-term project she could undertake that week, please let Lisa or me know.

Committee meetings – with effect from 12th May, i.e. the day after the Annual Council Meeting, most committee meetings will return to the Council Office. This will save the council a small amount of money. All Amenities Committee meetings and some Planning & Licensing Committee meetings will remain in the school, as those are the ones most likely to attract members of the public.

Contracts of employment – Cllrs Duff and Gunston have started work on bringing the council's contracts of employment up to date, to reflect current employment legislation.

WhatsApp – Councillors and officers are reminded not to use WhatsApp for council business, beyond sorting site visits, informing officers of faults needing attention, that sort of thing. This

reminder follows an Information Commissioner's Office ruling a council's WhatsApp conversations must be handed over in a Freedom of Information request.

The committee's next meeting is scheduled for 20th April.

Cllr Lisa Duff – **Chairman of the Personnel Committee**

16th January 2026

Planning & Licensing Committee

The committee did not need to meet in January.

The committee's next meeting is scheduled for 9th February.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

20th January 2026

Community Engagement – Cllr Linton asked councillors to add the dates of the Festival events into their diaries now as a good attendance from councillors at both events would be much appreciated.

The Clerk added the Winter 2026 Newsletter was almost complete but there was space for another couple of short articles if any councillor had anything in mind. Cllr Bowman offered to write an article about dogs on the public highway.

Planning & Licensing – Cllr Bowman reminded councillors the meeting on Monday, 9th February had been brought forward to 17:30 as there were a number of applications to consider.

There were no updates from the council's other committees.

078/26 REPORTS FROM PARISH COUNCIL WORKING PARTIES

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

Working Parties

None of the council's working parties met in January.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

26th January 2026

20mph Working Party

Cllr Wilkinson is the chairman of this working party.

At the December Full Council meeting, it was agreed the council would canvass the public on implementing a village-wide 20mph zone and an article has been drafted for the Winter 2026 newsletter.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

26th January 2026

Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation **(Devo WP)**

Cllr Gunston is chairman of this working party which is currently dormant.

The working party did meet as part of the whole council on 5th January.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

26th January 2026

Flat and Frontage Working Party (FFWP)

Cllr Wilkinson is chairman-elect of this working party.

No updates from this working party explicitly.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

26th January 2026

Leases Working Party (LWP)

Cllr Wilkinson is the chairman of this working party.

In the middle of the month, our surveyor contacted me asking if the council had had any direct contact from East Preston & Kingston Bowls Club. Learning the council had not, he undertook to chase.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

26th January 2026

Additionally:

Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation – Cllr Gunston confirmed the council had responded to the recent government consultation and therefore the working party was once again dormant.

Flat & Frontage – Cllr Wilkinson advised he had seen the agent's report on the December inspection of the flat above the Council Office. Although the format of the report was perhaps slightly askew, the content showed there was no reason for concern with the current tenant. Cllr Linton asked to see the report.

There were no updates from the council's other working parties.

079/26 WARREN RECREATION GROUND – MEDIATION EXERCISE

The council NOTED the following reports which had been circulated in advance of the meeting:

Warren Recreation Ground mediation exercise

Council is asked to agree to a temporary substitution in the council's representation in this exercise.

In October, the council agreed to the council sponsoring a mediation exercise also involving East Preston Cricket Club and Warren Recreation Ground Safety Group. Each organisation is represented by three members.

The council agreed its reps would be Cllr Toney as Chairman of the Council, Cllr Wilkinson as Chairman of the Amenities Committee which is responsible for the Warren Recreation Ground, and me as the council's proper officer.

Cllr Toney will now be travelling to New Zealand on a family matter and will be away for most of February into the start of March. This means he could miss some future mediation sessions. I have discussed this with the mediator and the head of the company for whom he works, and both have said a substitute can attend in place of Cllr Toney, providing the correct paperwork has been completed. As Vice-Chairman of the Council, Cllr Linton is willing to attend as temporary substitute and will complete the paperwork once this meeting has agreed to her substitution. As necessary, Cllr Toney would resume his role upon his return.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

26th January 2026

Cllr Toney said he would be unavailable for a month from 10th February. He handed over to the Clerk who repeated the information in his supporting paper above.

2078 The council **RESOLVED** unanimously to a temporary substitution of Cllr Linton for Cllr Toney as a representative of the council in this mediation exercise.

Following this resolution, Cllr Linton was required to sign the Dispute Resolution Agency *Agreement to Mediate* document and would meet with the council's existing representatives to be brought up to speed on the exercise. Cllr Linton would also have an introductory conversation with the mediator.

080/26 WEST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL

The following report had been circulated ahead of the meeting:

West Sussex County Council

County Cllr Roger Elkins has sent his apologies for this meeting. He has provided the following report.

Report For 2nd Feb 2026

Update on Draft Budget Proposals

I attended the meeting of the Performance and Finance Scrutiny Meeting where the Draft Budget Proposals were presented. The Draft Budget will now go to the Cabinet on the 3rd Feb and the final step will be to go to the meeting of the Full Council for approval on Friday 20 February. You can watch these meetings take place live via the webcast on our WSCC website, or watch the recording afterwards in the archive.

We've been able to successfully balance the budget for the coming year. This is despite the added pressure of the government reducing our funding by £30m over the next 3 years and redistributing elsewhere in the country as part of its fairer funding settlement.

It's therefore more essential than ever that our limited resources are carefully aligned with the priorities in Our Council Plan to ensure we provide effective services which offer maximum value for our residents."

The county council is expected to spend £2.3 billion on day-to-day services in 2026-27. This includes a net revenue increase of £34.7m compared to the previous year to meet increasing demand pressures and costs, particularly in social care and home to school transport.

A balanced budget is being presented for the year ahead and we're currently projecting a budget of over £2.3billion for 2026/27.

The budget plans a proposed increase in Council Tax of 4.99%. Not increasing Council Tax by the full 4.99% would mean the County Council would lose out on funding the Government assumes is available to us to deal with pressures.

Our Council Plan will also be extended to take us up to 2028 to coincide with Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) across Sussex. There is also an additional priority to reflect the importance of devolution and LGR

West Sussex Elections

West Sussex County Council requested that Ministers consider the deferral of county council elections in 2026 as part of its submission to the Government on its proposals for the creation of unitary government in the county.

There were several reasons presented to Government in support of this request including the cost of holding elections now planned in 2026, 2027 (unitary elections) and 2028 Mayoral elections which would present council taxpayers with a £9m bill, across the whole of Sussex.

Taking these factors into account, the council believes it would be more prudent for one set of elections to be held in 2027 which would mean postponing the county council elections currently scheduled for 2026 and bringing forward the Mayoral election planned for 2028.

This is a request made by West Sussex County Council but it was for ministers to make the final decision, this has now been confirmed and elections will be postponed,

The Government has requested representations from councils wishing to defer elections by 15 January 2026 with a decision made afterwards.

See also: [Future of local government in Sussex](#) A bold new plan demonstrates how West Sussex County Council and partners are delivering on our priorities of keeping children and young people safe and helping them achieve their potential.

Key West Sussex Plan For Children and Young People

The new [Children and Young People's Plan for 2026 to 2029](#) outlines five key priorities designed to make West Sussex a place where children feel supported and able to thrive:

1. Keeping children and young people safe from harm
Tackling exploitation, knife crime, and online dangers while creating safe spaces in communities.
2. Providing early support for families in need
Expanding Family Hubs, parenting support, and holiday activities for low-income families.
3. Reducing inequalities
Improving school readiness, supporting young carers and LGBT+ youth, and ensuring fair opportunities for all.
4. Improving mental health and wellbeing
Faster access to mental health services and more support while waiting for treatment.
5. Supporting children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)
Quicker assessments, more inclusive schools, and stronger family support.

The plan will continue to build on key successes achieved during the four-year period covered by the previous plan. These include:

- 10% reduction in the number of domestic abuse re-referrals made with children in the family over the past two years (Q1 2023/24 compared to Q4 2024/25)

- A 35% decrease in the number of children and young people involved in road traffic collisions
- Working with children and young people to create new online content to help young people to feel and stay safe
- Increased the percentage of education, health and care plans (EHCPs) issued within 20 weeks
- Improved online safety training and support to parents, including online and in-person events

Update on Clean Up Response To Debris Washed Ashore From Containers

- Teams involved in the clean-up of waste from the West Sussex shoreline are responding as more containers and debris come ashore.
- Ambipar have recovered a significant amount of debris from the container washed ashore at Elmer in Bognor Regis. AR Banks remain on site to recover the container sections across the region. To date, it has not yet been possible to recover most of the container at Elmer because of the weather and water conditions and this work is ongoing.
- A further container that landed at Selsey has been partially recovered by AR Banks teams, who will return to site to recover the remainder over the coming days as weather and sea conditions permit.
- There is no confirmation yet on which ships the new containers came from.
- Teams involved are also responding to further waste materials coming ashore right across the West Sussex coastline, from the West Witterings to Shoreham.
- We would like to remind members of the public that any containers and their contents that have been washed ashore may well be unsafe both for people and animals. We therefore strongly advise you not to go near them and help by also keeping children and pets clear.
- [Find further information on the clean-up and guidance on staying safe along the coastline.](#)
- Anyone spotting waste washed ashore in West Sussex can contact Ambipar directly on 01202 653 558 or email marine.response@ambipar.com.
- We understand more containers have been sighted afloat around the West Sussex coastline and we are working with partner agencies who are tracking these.

Ofsted update on progress of Children's Services

Children and young people in West Sussex are receiving the support they need to thrive, stay safe, and reach their full potential, thanks to the county council's 'stronger' and 'more effective assessments', according to government inspectors.

West Sussex County Council has welcomed the positive findings from Ofsted's recent focused visit, which has highlighted the quality of services for children in need of help and protection.

Commenting on Ofsted's findings, Councillor Jacquie Russell, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Learning, said: "We are delighted that Ofsted has recognised the significant progress we've made to improve services for children and families in West Sussex. This reflects the dedication and hard work of our staff and partners."

Inspectors praised the council for:

- Improved quality and timeliness of child protection strategy discussions, ensuring quicker and more effective safeguarding decisions.
- Stronger, more effective assessments for children, leading to better-targeted support.
- Better support for 16 and 17-year-olds at risk of homelessness, now much more attuned to their needs.
- Early identification of need, including for unborn children, and building respectful, trusting relationships with families.
- Innovative use of specialist practitioners alongside social workers.
- High staff retention and positive cultural change, leaving the service well-placed to consolidate improvements.

The report highlights the significant improvements made by the council in recent years.

Cllr Roger Elkins

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

2nd February 2026

081/26 SUSSEX POLICE

No report had been received. The Clerk reminded those present PCSO Raj would be outside the library on the morning after the meeting, weather permitting.

082/26 CLERK'S REPORT

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

Clerk's Report

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Police matters**
- 3. Anti-social behaviour matters**
- 4. Freedom of Information / Data Protection requests**
- 5. Meeting with East Preston Sports Clubs, 12th January**
- 6. Society of Local Council Clerks Sussex Branch, quarterly meeting, 16th January**
- 7. East Preston Film Club, 21st January**
- 8. ADC Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) Briefing, 22nd January**
- 9. ADC *Building community cohesion and resilience - together*, 23rd January**
- 10. Social media**
- 11. MailChimp stats**
- 12. A selection of things we have been asked since the last meeting**
- 13. Recent bouquets and complaints**
- 14. Comments in response to the annual photographic round-up of the old year**
- 15. Leave**
- 16. February meetings and events**

1. Introduction

This is the report mainly covering January 2026 and matters which may not arise elsewhere on the agenda.

2. Police matters

On Monday, 12th January, the council was informed two of its safety bollards at the northern shops had been knocked over and driven over. CCTV footage from a local shop showed the driver had been an elderly male who appeared unaware of the damage he had caused either to the

bollards or to his car. He was seen to go shopping and soon return to his car and drive off. Crucially though, the CCTV footage also provided his numberplate.

Dawn reported this to Sussex Police and initiated an insurance claim. The work to reinstate the bollards fell below our insurance excess so the claim was cancelled and the bollards reinstated. Sussex Police's roads department has not been very quick to respond. Believing the driver was lucky he only hit something inanimate, I approached the police through a different route, showing the same photographs Dawn had provided. My contact agreed the driver needed a friendly visit from police officers.

Meanwhile, PCSO Raj has arranged to be available outside the library for an hour on the morning of Tuesday, 3rd February.

3. **Anti-social behaviour (ASB) matters**

No developments in anti-social behaviour matters in the village previously reported to ADC anti-social behaviour team.

4. **Freedom of Information (FoI) / Data Protection requests**

The council has received no further requests.

5. **Meeting with East Preston Sports Clubs, 12th January**

This was the second of the council's meetings with, initially, its outdoors sports clubs.

The meeting was chaired by Cllr Linton with support from Cllrs Toney and Moore. Angmering-on-Sea Lawn Tennis Club, East Preston and Kingston Bowls Club, East Preston Cricket Club, East Preston Football Club and East Preston Stoolball Club were all represented.

The meeting was also attended by Jackie Sumner and Ailsa Burkimsher from Voluntary Action Arun and Chichester. Councillors will remember, part of Jackie's presentation to council in September 2025 was a desire to work more closely with more sports clubs. They explained how VAAC works and how VAAC can help local sports clubs, and promoted the idea of a "federation" of local sports club working together for the greater good. A lively discussion followed.

All present would like to have a further meeting of the village sports clubs and agreed with Cllr Linton's proposal to aim for a meeting in four months.

One attendee who had not been at the first meeting emailed the day after, "I thought last night was a very good idea bringing our sports clubs together and helping to support them - well done!"

6. **Society of Local Council Clerks Sussex Branch, quarterly meeting, 16th January**

I attended this meeting which was held at Lewes Town Hall. The only other Arun council represented was Bognor Regis Town Hall, represented by its new Deputy Clerk, 25-year-old Max Hirst. 25!

The meeting received a presentation from our insurance brokers, Gallagher & Co., mainly on asset transfer from larger local authorities which are facing dissolution. ADC seems to be behind the curve on this, councils in other areas already in discussions with their higher authorities. Unrelated to asset transfer, one useful suggestion was councils should have the reinstatement value of their assets reviewed regularly, between every three and five years, and this is something the Finance & General Purposes Committee will now discuss later in the month.

During a more general discussion about asset transfer, some comments were made about how district councils are seeing the transfer as a chance to make money. BRTC Max previously worked for a unitary authority in Wiltshire and said, in his experience, district councils are about making money whereas unitary authorities are about making savings; therefore, if a local council can wait, it will likely be given a second chance to receive an asset once the unitary authority has settled into being.

This council's increase in budget in 2026/27 has taken it outside the protection of the Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS). I asked those present from larger councils whether there was an alternative scheme for protecting money held in bank accounts. The advice given was to spread funds across multiple financial institutions, rather than keeping them all in one place. Time permitting, I think this is something that needs to be mentioned to Dr Beccy Cooper MP at our next meeting with her as this means a lot of public money becomes unprotected just because a local council has ambitions.

Two days before the meeting, the government had announced its new UK Town of Culture 2028 scheme. One town will win £3m to enable it to put on a programme of cultural events in 2028. Although there is a small town category for towns with a population of under 10,000 people, the meeting did not think villages would be eligible.

After the meeting, most attendees stayed for a networking lunch at ASK, across the road from the Town Hall.

7. East Preston Film Club, 21st January

At the beginning of this second Film Club film show, John Gunston, acting as a member of the team that makes up East Preston Film Club, publicly thanked the council for the grant which enabled the Film Club to start showing films.

8. ADC Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) Briefing, 22nd January

I attended this evening presentation with Cllrs Gunston and Wilkinson. Angmering PC was the closest other council represented. Please find Cllr Gunston's report at Agenda Item 17b below.

9. ADC Building community cohesion and resilience - together, 23rd January

I attended this lunchtime workshop at the Civic Centre. Although aimed at clerks, one parish councillor did attend from the west of the district. Other councils represented included Aldwick PC, Angmering PC, Bognor Regis TC, Findon PC, Littlehampton TC, Pagham PC, WSCC and a range of representatives from ADC. Several other councils had accepted the invite but did not attend.

Throughout the event we were asked to work in groups to talk about what we felt were the behavioural concerns across the district and in our own communities, and then to start looking at what changes can be made, primarily through the use of community power. One very good point made was we all talk about our "community" but any one community comprises many smaller communities and sometimes it can be easy to ostracise a small community when addressing the whole community. Or indeed vice versa: the safeguarding officer at ADC mentioned it had recently devised an event to tackle domestic violence within the Eastern European community but when a small number of those outside that specific community learnt of this, there was some complaining a similar event had not been designed for all. The keyboard warriors took to their keyboards but were mostly shouted down by more understanding contributors rather as had happened in East Preston with the campaign against the June Sutherland Chapel. Pretty much everyone in the room had experienced the negative face of social media more than they would like.

My Angmering counterpart, Katie Herr, gave a short presentation on the Angmering Community Network which has been borne out of the parish council's Angmering Revealed events. Rather like

this council's past Business Breakfasts, the Angmering Community Network is a loose assemblage of village organisations, recently expanded to include businesses, meeting quarterly to share knowledge and support.

The Safer Arun Partnership, led by ADC, carries out regular street audits, mainly in town centres, looking to see where a collection of small improvements could result in a larger overall improvement. The Partnership will provide councils with a copy of the form used on the audits and maybe Community Engagement could look at this in conjunction with our former councillor walkabout initiative.

A community safety fund is soon to be launched, with grants of up to £2,500 available.

Overall, this felt like the beginnings of a very good piece of work by ADC, perhaps a shame it has come so close to its demise.

As an aside, I learnt at this meeting the Oving Scarecrows competition arose during the Second World War from the village's proximity to Tangmere Airfield. The villagers created lots of scarecrows to make pilots think there were lots of people about. Apparently.

10. **Social Media**

Just the one council Facebook post to reach more than 500 people in the past month.

- MailChimp repost of end-of-year photographic round-up – 516

(posts up to and including 25th January)

The number of Followers is currently 1,975, an increase of 11 on the last report.

11. **MailChimp stats**

Since the last papers were issued, the council has sent out the following email to local residents on the council's main e-mailing list:

Parish Council news – 31st December – sent to 960 subscribers, opened by 715 (74.5%)

Parish Council news – 8th January – sent to 962, opened by 733 (76.2%)

Parish Council news – 15th January – sent to 960, opened by 714 (74.4%)

Parish Council news – 22nd January – sent to 960, opened by 709 (73.9%)

12. **Things we have been asked since the last meeting**

“Does the Warren Recreation Ground own the land at the bottom of my garden in Surrey?” (Highly unlikely. Caller had been informed such by The Woodland Trust after a protected tree fell on to his listed wall from a piece of land he believed The Woodland Trust owned. Whoever he spoke to there said the land was owned by the Warren Recreation Ground. Perhaps we should claim it and sell it!)

13. **Recent bouquets and complaints**

(In addition to anything reported above)

“This is just to thank you and your staff for all that you've done for the village this year and to wish you a very happy, healthy and peaceful New Year.”

From the Festival Committee, following the inclusion in an e-newsletter of an ad for some IT support, “Thanks Simon, someone got in touch yesterday so we're all sorted 🍷”

From the secretary of the Disability Action Group of East Preston after Dawn and I had suggested it might like to pay a couple of visits per year to the Baytree Community Lunch Club, “Thanks for the suggestion Simon, that's a brilliant idea!”

From a new attendee at this year’s Warm Welcome Space: “It’s lovely to be in the warm space, thank you all for making it possible.”

In response to my response to a question about the temporary graphics chosen for The Podgie Spaniel, a resident emailed, “Thank-you so much for your thoughtful reply to my email.”

From a member of Dr Beccy Cooper MP’s office staff, upon her retirement, “Many thanks for all of your help whilst I have been working for Beccy, it has been very much appreciated.”

14. Comments in response to the annual photographic round-up of the old year

For the fifth year running, on 31st December, the council published a photographic round-up of the year, village photos taken from a number of sources. This year’s was the largest issue to date.

Some comments received in response:

“Lovely pictures. A very happy new year to you and the team.”

“Thank you all for all you do for our lovely village. I very much enjoyed looking back over the year through the gorgeous collection of photos.”

“Thank you so much for the brilliant compilation of photos, summing up a year in East Preston. Wonderful. My friend in the USA loved them last year, so I know he’ll enjoy these too. Thanks also, for all you do for us.”

“Thank you for a lovely gallery of photos of EP through 2025.”

“Wow, this really captures the best of the village – some really stunning photos. What a great advert for EP. Thank you! Have you thought about making them into a slide show for YouTube?”

14. Leave

I may have a couple of days off at the beginning of the month. Alison is off for the week beginning 16th February. No other leave has yet been booked.

15. February Meetings and Events

This list may be incomplete and is subject to change.

- 2nd Full Council (19:00, East Preston Infant School)
- 3rd Arun District Association of Local Councils (19:00, online) (ST only)
- 9th Planning & Licensing Committee (18:00, East Preston Infant School) (cancelled)
Amenities Committee (19:00, East Preston Infant School)
- 10th ADC Community Infrastructure Levy briefing (18:00, online) (SC only)
- 14th East Preston Repair Café (10:00, East Preston Infant School)
- 16th Finance & General Purposes Committee (18:00, East Preston Infant School)

Major Events Committee (19:00, East Preston Infant School)

23rd Planning & Licensing Committee (18:00, East Preston Infant School)

N.B. where committee meetings fall on the same day, the timings of these meetings may be subject to change.

Simon Cross – **Clerk to the Council**

26th January 2026

Cllr Linton apologised to the Clerk for having no questions about his report.

083/26 EXTERNAL MEETINGS AND EVENTS

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

Other meetings and events – Part 1

Council is asked to note the following reports.

East Preston & Kingston Village Hall Foundation meeting, 21st January

East Preston & Kingston Village Hall

The meeting ran to schedule and all matters arising from the previous meeting were covered and discussed.

A few other points were raised:

1. With effect from April 2026 the Hirers can no longer pay by cheque as cheques will no longer be processed. All Hirers have the relevant banking information.
2. A lovely lady very kindly donated £100.00 to the EPKVH due to the care and assistance given to her by Toni and Karen when she fell playing table tennis and had to wait nearly 12 hours for an ambulance; an ambulance finally arrived at about 02.30 the following day. This delay is being addressed by the Committee and a letter will be written to the Ambulance Service.
3. The external ramps from the Miller Barn and the Warren Room will commence installation over the Spring Period.
4. Terms and Conditions were reviewed and Liability Insurances by Hirers are required to be updated and evidence shown that this Insurance has been reviewed.
5. A decision was made to install a new boiler during the summer months.
6. Bay Tree would like to buy a new Fridge/Freezer for the Village Hall.

Next Meeting will take place on 1st April 2026 @ 10.00.

Cllr Christine Bowman –
**East Preston Parish Council official representative to East
Preston & Kingston Village Hall Foundation**

26th January 2026

Arun Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) **briefing, 22nd January**

online

Cllr Wilkinson and I and our clerk Simon attended this presentation to introduce a consultation on Arun's Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP). This long term plan, required by the Department for Transport, will identify priorities for key routes giving the greatest benefit to the community. It will also provide the evidence for external funding.

The aim is to provide people with alternative means of travel to help combat health, climate and air quality challenges. Having developed the scope for the plan the next stage is to gather evidence before determining the types of improvements required. The consultation will start on 26th January and run for 6 weeks.

We will urge parishioners and local walking and cycling groups to take part in the consultation.

More information can be found at <https://ethos.govocal.com/en-GB/projects/arun-lcwip/2>

Simon has a recording of the briefing and a pack of slides should anyone wished to see them.

Cllr John Gunston

25th January 2026

Cllr Bowman had nothing to add to her report. Cllr Gunston and the Clerk said they had both completed the LCWIP survey as individuals and agreed it was not a survey suitable for a group response.

084/26 RESPONSE TO EXTERNAL MEETINGS AND EVENTS

Nothing was added.

085/26 NEW ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING (2ND MARCH 2026)

Nothing was suggested. Owing to the absence of Cllr Toney, Cllr Linton would chair the meeting.

(The two remaining members of the public left the meeting at the conclusion of this item.)

086/26 118-120 SEA ROAD, EAST PRESTON

The Clerk reported the vendor had provided Southern Water account details and the council's solicitor had initiated a final search using that information. The Clerk had asked the solicitor whether there had been anything in the previous searches which could be grounds for a renegotiation of the purchase price, but the solicitor had not yet replied.

The meeting ended at 19:28.

Chairman: Cllr Elizabeth Linton Date: 2nd March 2026

END