



EAST PRESTON PARISH COUNCIL

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ANNUAL PARISH MEETING - EAST PRESTON

13th May 2024

The Annual Parish Meeting at East Preston duly convened and held this day at East Preston Infant School.

Present:

Parish Councillors Kit Bradshaw, Andrea Chapman, Lisa Duff, Barbara Gale, John Gunston, Elizabeth Linton, Glyn Mathias, Rick McElroy, David Moore, Steve Toney (in the Chair) and Steve Wilkinson

County Cllr Roger Elkins

District Cllrs Philippa Bower and Paul Kelly

Roy Allen, Linda Denton, Kelvan Gale, Pauline and Malcolm McLelland, Sue Morley, Jennifer Wallace

John Phipps, Royal National Lifeboat Institution (Littlehampton)

Clerk to the Council: Simon Cross

Assistant Clerk to the Council: Dawn Reid

Apologies:

Parish Councillors Christine Bowman and Helen Hill, District Cllr Ricky Bower

The Chairman of the Council, Councillor Steve Toney, opened the meeting at 19:18, and thanked and welcomed those attending.

APM2024/01 - To confirm the Minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting held on 15th May 2023

The Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 15th May 2023 were agreed to be a true record. The meeting agreed these could be signed by Cllr Toney.

These Minutes had previously been noted by the Parish Council at its meeting held on 5th June 2023, Parish Council Minute 459/23.

APM2024/02 - To receive the Annual Report of the East Preston Parish Council

An abbreviated version of Cllr Toney's report had been published in the Spring 2024 Newsletter and made available to all attendees before the start of the meeting. All present had read the report, which read:

Working for the Local Community

“I would like to start by thanking every single resident, businessperson and visitor who has made a positive contribution to the village during the past council year. Not a day goes by when something in the village does not make me feel proud to live here. There are too many voluntary organizations beavering away in the village for it to be fair for me to mention any one organization, but you will be aware of many of the groups around and will have your own favourites. If you subscribe to the council’s e-newsletter service or Facebook page, you will see how we help not-for-profit groups to publicize their activities when we can. In more practical terms, councillors, with help from community volunteers, staff the weekly Littlehampton Community Fridge on Tour sessions in the village.

“The council year started with local elections in May. I am pleased to say 12 of the 13 councillors in post at that time agreed to continue being councillors. Patricia Gander stood down and was replaced by Helen Hill. Now a year into the role, we hope Helen is enjoying herself and finding being a councillor rewarding. Officer-wise, our longest-standing member of staff, Tracy Khoo, left the council in July after close to twenty years and is now living happily in Suffolk. In Tracy’s place we have welcomed Adrian Vyse to look after the council’s finances.

“The past year has been another successful one for the council’s events – another successful Food & Drink Festival, two successful half-day playschemes for local children, a *Funday Sunday* for the young-at-heart, two beach cleans and a successful Christmas Celebrations event. We also worked with the East Preston Festival Committee to host an enjoyable Big Coronation Lunch on the Village Green, marking the Coronation of King Charles III.

“We marked the King’s Coronation in other ways too. All primary school children in the village were given a Coronation coin in a presentation box and a Field Maple was planted to complement the one planted for Queen Elizabeth II’s Platinum Jubilee.

“At the end of May, the council was finally able to launch a bus service to the southern end of the village, extending the Littlehampton to Rustington no. 12 service into East Preston. Although appreciated by those who do use it, too few people use it currently and the council has decided to stop funding the service at the end of August. If a cost-effective alternative can be found, the council will consider it accordingly.

“As Trustee of the Warren Recreation Ground, the council improved security by installing large gates at the vehicle entrance from the car-park on to the recreation ground itself, and by installing three new lights in the car-park. Additionally, in conjunction with East Preston Cricket Club, the council maintained the recreation ground and will work with East Preston in Bloom to improve various aspects of the recreation ground. The council also installed an outdoor chess table, thanks to the generosity of East Preston Film Society.

“Increasing the council’s Community Engagement work, from late in 2023, the council is now attending the St Mary the Virgin Church Welcome Café once a quarter and joining the Field House monthly coffee morning once every six months. The council welcomes these opportunities to meet local residents – if your group would like a visit from a couple of councillors, please get in touch.

“In September, the council installed four new planters on the island opposite the Council Office. Although they have not been successful in tackling inconsiderate parking on and beside the island, the planters have been well-received by members of the public. Recycled plastic noticeboards have been installed to replace the council’s five wooden noticeboards. These are indistinguishable from the real thing and two of the old ones have been adopted by local organizations.

“Although initially supported by West Sussex County Council, the council’s proposal for a 20mph Zone had to be scaled back and a revised proposal submitted. We have recently learnt this has been rejected by WSCC and we are looking at alternative proposals. New parking restrictions have been implemented in Sea Road adjacent to the northern shops and at the junction of North Lane and Lashmar Road. The council has shown its support for some parking restrictions at the Vicarage Lane entrance to Langmeads Field.

“In the annual Loo of the Year Awards, the Sea Road toilet block received the Platinum Plus award, the top award for this size of toilet.

“Boom Community Bank makes low-cost loans available to local residents who may not be able to secure a loan anywhere else, and in December the council agreed to deposit £36,000 to support its work. Alongside such loans, the bank works with its customers to become responsible savers. The collaboration has seen an increase in the number of East Preston households banking with Boom, and we hope this will be of value and continue.

“Starting on New Year’s Day, for the second year running, the council supported Warm Welcome Spaces to which local residents could go for a hot lunch and some company on cold Mondays. In addition to sessions at the British Legion, we also supported sessions at St Mary the Virgin Church. During the three months of the scheme, over 330 lunches were served to people from over 40 households in the village. Those attending the sessions were very appreciative. Our thanks to Arun District Council for a grant to help with this initiative.

“For the fourth year running, the council did not put up its portion of your Council Tax. During the council year, councillors and officers have received specific finance training, more general refresher training, Data Protection training as well as attending various seminars to keep their knowledge up-to-date.

“In the middle of the year, the council was approached by the Trustees of the Conservative Hall asking the council to consider adopting the hall in order to keep it in community use for the foreseeable future. The council is keeping residents informed through the newsletter and its e-newsletter service. A survey has shown good support for such an adoption.

“The council has responded to many Planning Applications over the past year plus a few Licensing Applications, considering near neighbours’ feelings where possible.

“Once again, the council’s Annual Governance and Accountability Return was signed off by the External Auditor with nothing requiring any attention.

“I thank all councillors and all of the council’s officers for making this job a relatively easy one. I also thank our County and District Councillors for their involvement throughout the year.

“Above everything, thank you to any of you who regularly show your faith in and support for the council. We hope to continue to improve the village where we can. Thank you.”

Cllr Toney added, “A big thank you to all the Parish Councillors and Parish Officers for their tireless work throughout the year.”

APM2024/03 - To receive a report from the Arun District councillors representing East Preston

District Councillor Philippa Bower started by giving her husband, Cllr Ricky Bower’s apologies for meeting. Cllr Bower reported a new Chief Executive had been appointed for the district council, Dawn Hudd, and she would be starting sometime in the next three months.

Cllr Bower advised she sat on two ADC committees, the first of which was the Environment Committee. This had recently agreed to a proposal to give all residents a small bin or caddy, to enable a weekly food waste collection. Alongside this, all households would be given a 180l refused bin which would only be collected fortnightly. This would encourage greater recycling rates although recycling collection would remain fortnightly too. ADC was also due to take on the brown bin garden collection service, starting in 2026. In response to a question, Cllr Bower reported she had experimented with the proposed food caddy and it was relatively vermin-proof.

ADC had implemented parking meters in all its car-parks, in some cases simply to monitor usage of the car-parks at no cost to drivers. However, the scheme was not especially popular and was deemed to have exacerbated road safety problems in at least one part of the district.

Cllr Bower also sat on the Audit & Governance Committee, the main interest of which was keeping track of the council’s finances.

District Cllr Kelly said he had nothing to add.

Cllr Gunston thanked Cllr Kelly for having represented this council in its desire to have the overgrown allotments at the Roundstone Drive site tidied. Subsequently though, despite Cllr Kelly and the Clerk trying to get a response from the ADC officer responsible for the site, no further information or responses had been forthcoming, and Cllr Gunston was now aware of residents keen to set up a community allotment at the site. The Clerk added he was aware of two separate residents who had contacted ADC about leasing an allotment plot but both had been stonewalled. Cllr Kelly said he would escalate within ADC.

APM2024/04 - To receive a report from the West Sussex County councillor representing East Preston

County Cllr Elkins thanked East Preston Parish Council for all it did for the village. He said some other local councils struggled to be active and it was great to see how dedicated all councillors were, backed up by a great team of officers. Cllr Elkins said he had attended some great events in the village, and there were great for the village.

By way of explanation, Cllr Elkins said the annual budget for the county council (WSCC) was £2bn. He then broke that figure down into some of the more interesting departments, such as education (£960m) and potholes (£83m).

Using central government funding aimed at encouraging people to use buses, WSCC had spent £1.2m on new bus information signs, some of which were already visible in East Preston.

A sustained campaign of road repairs should see more progress with better weather expected. That said, heavy rainfall over the winter had hampered this campaign. WSCC had set up a Task & Finish group to investigate flooding matters in the county. This was likely to take a year to produce its findings.

The county council remained financially secure, and had made no reductions in services; for example, the library service offering had remained unchanged for several years now whilst other county councils had reduced opening hours or the number of libraries in their portfolio.

The population of the county was now about 880,000 with 37,000 businesses operating. WSCC was concerned about the increase in the number of residents in the 50-64 age range, an increase of 15% in recent years. This would likely have a future impact on adult social services.

Referring to the meeting scheduled for 10th July concerning the Roundstone Level Crossing, Cllr Linton asked Cllr Elkins for assurance West Sussex County Council Highways would be able to attend, and would not ask for the meeting to be deferred with only two weeks' notice as it had done in March. The importance of WSCC Highways as a stakeholder in this meeting could not be underestimated and all other vital stakeholders had committed to attend the meeting. Cllr Elkins was surprised the Clerk had heard nothing further from Highways beyond an initial response to the invitation saying someone would get back to him. Cllr Elkins said experts within the Highways department were often booked for meetings a whole year ahead. Cllr Linton said if that was the case, then a simple notification of that would suffice, and the council could work out a different plan.

Referring both to the ADC situation with allotments and the WSCC situation with the Roundstone Level Crossing, Cllr McElroy said it felt as if councillors at both organisations were being led by officers rather than the other way around. District Cllr Bower said she felt district councillors were too respectful of ADC officers.

Wanting to end on a lighter note, the Clerk asked Cllr Elkins for any comments about the parish council playscheme he had attended on 9th April. Cllr Elkins said the playscheme had been very enjoyable, all attendees were engaged and he had enjoyed helping them with their kites during the event.

APM2024/05 - To consider any written resolutions received by the council no later than 10th May 2024

The Clerk to the Council confirmed no resolutions had been received.

APM2024/06 – Public question time

There were no questions nor comments.

With nobody wishing to say anything further, Cllr Toney closed the meeting at 20:37.

Chairman: **Cllr Steve Toney** Date: 12th May 2025

Please note these Minutes were noted at the Full Council meeting held on 13th May 2024, Minute 364/24