



EAST PRESTON PARISH COUNCIL

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MINUTES: of the Proceedings of the Monthly Meeting of East Preston Parish Council held at 19:00 on Monday, 13th April 2026 at East Preston Infant School, Lashmar Road, East Preston

PRESENT: Councillors Christine Bowman, Andrea Chapman, Lisa Duff, Barbara Gale, Helen Hill, John Gunston, Elizabeth Linton (Chairman), Glyn Mathias, Rick McElroy, David Moore, Steve Toney and Steven Wilkinson

ALSO: Simon Cross, Clerk to the Council

Peter Dallimore and Colin Smith and other members of East Preston Cricket Club (all until 19:49)

Carol Longman and Wendy Walker, East Preston in Bloom (both until 18:50)

Neil Ellis, Kevin Hill, Adrian Miller and Tony Page, East Preston Men in Sheds (all until 18:50)

David Cross (until 20:08) and Samantha Cross (until 19:49), East Preston Repair Café

Frances Rainey, East Preston Stoolball Club (until 19:49)

Lance Allsop and Russell Granat, Sea Road Beach Access Limited (both until 20:08)

Members of the Warren Recreation Ground Safety Group (all until 19:49)

Mr P B (until 19:49); Mrs L D (until 20:08); Mrs L H (both until 19:25); Mrs D L (until 20:08)

ABSENT: Councillor Kit Bradshaw

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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 18:32.

234/26 INTRODUCTIONS

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

The following report was circulated in advance of the meeting and covers the next three Minutes:

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235/26 EAST PRESTON IN BLOOM

The meeting received a presentation from Carol Longman and Wendy Walker. Carol explained the organisation had been formed, with advice and financial assistance from the parish council, in order to brighten up and tidy up the village's planting schemes, both formal and informal. Carol listed areas of the village which the organisation has brightened such as in front of and behind East Preston Library, the Village Green, Two Acres and in front of East Preston fire station to name just sum. Having been chair for the four years since the committee's inception, Carol was now standing down. Carol thanked the council for its support to date.

Wendy said that the organisation had decided to run without a formal chair for the time being although she would be chairing any meetings and would act as the organisation's first point of contact. Wendy announced the organisation had just been awarded a further £6,000 National Lottery grant. The organisation was keen to start a community allotment and, if that became a reality, some of the money would be spent on a couple of sheds, some tools and starting to grow vegetables. Wendy stressed the group really wanted to grow vegetables both as an education for young families that might want to get involved in that way and to supply local foodbanks.

Wendy added the group had agreed to take responsibility for the westbound platform at Angmering Station. This was currently maintained by the Friends of Angmering Station but its membership could no longer manage the workload. Angmering in Bloom had agreed to take responsibility for the eastbound platform. Let the friendly rivalry begin.

Finally, Wendy said the group had had business cards printed as it was looking to expand its membership. It was also hoping to include more articles in publications such as *All About East Preston and Kingston* and the parish council newsletter and e-newsletter.

236/26 EAST PRESTON REPAIR CAFÉ

The meeting received a presentation from Samantha Cross. Sam started by thanking the parish council for its help with setting up the Repair Café which, she was pleased to report, was now self-sufficient.

Sam explained the café operated on the second Saturday of most months, at the Infant School, from 10:00 with last entry at 12:30. There were twenty volunteers offering to look at sewing repairs, not alterations, electrical items, clocks and jewellery and more general repairs. There was also a very popular knife-sharpening service available.

The café asked attendees to give a small donation in recognition of the time spent upon their item. At the most recent session, two days before the meeting, over £250 had been received in donations.

Sam thanked John, Helen and Simon for their continuing voluntary support of the café.

If anyone had any ideas for any other service the café could offer, the team would be very happy to hear them. Suggestions already received included an IT Helpdesk, a gardeners' helpdesk and perhaps even Citizens Advice.

237/26 EAST PRESTON MEN IN SHEDS

The meeting received a presentation from Kevin Hill and Adrian Miller.

Kevin explained Men In Sheds had started in Australia as a charity to help men with their mental health by providing a space in which men could meet and chat whilst making things. Although primarily aimed at men, the charity does not exclude women, and the East Preston shed currently included two women.

Kevin thanked the parish council for initiating the East Preston shed. Thanks to advice and a generous donation from the parish council, the shed opened its doors in August 2024. The shed now had a healthy bank balance, sufficient to have been able to drop its membership fee by £20 this year. The shed was open weekday mornings and afternoons and had recently

reached agreement with its landlord, East Preston & Kingston Village Hall Foundation, to open a number of Saturday mornings each year. The organisation was self-sufficient thanks to items made and then sold at village events and commissions arising from those events.

The group undertook voluntary work for organisations such as the parish council and the Friends of St Mary's to name but two. Initially, the group had undertaken private work around the village, but had moved away from that following concerns about the liabilities involved. The group had just agreed to be involved with a project for the MND Association.

All three presentations were applauded by all present.

Cllr Gunston asked the groups' representatives whether they would be willing to help with some tasks around the council's new acquisition, 118-120 Sea Road, tasks such as gardening and decorating. The representatives responded positively.

The chairman thanked the representatives for attending the meeting and for their contributions to the village.

(At the conclusion of this item Mrs Longman, Mrs Walker and Messrs Ellis, Hill, Miller and Page all left the meeting.)

238/26 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology and a reason for absence had been received from Cllr Bradshaw.

2088 The Council **RESOLVED** unanimously to accept the apologies received from Cllr Bradshaw (work commitment).

Apologies were also received from County Cllr Elkins, District Cllrs P Bower, R Bower and Kelly, and Roy Allen, Drew Baker, Frank Gainsbury, Kelvan Gale, Jeff Hills, Mary Jeavons (East Preston Stoolball Club), Jane, Gavin and Calum MacDonald, Sam Morton (*Littlehampton Gazette*), Sean Rebbetts, Andy Reeves (East Preston Cricket Club), Sioned Vos (East Preston & Kingston Preservation Society).

239/26 DECLARATION OF PERSONAL AND/OR PREJUDICIAL/PECUNIARY INTERESTS

Prior to the meeting, Cllr Gale declared a Personal Interest in Item 9a, *Warren Recreation Ground – To consider the council's next actions regarding the playing of cricket.*

240/26 PUBLIC SESSION

Agenda Item 9a – Warren Recreation Ground – To consider the council's next actions regarding the playing of cricket – Mrs Lee said she believed most of the village did not want to see cricket stopped as it had been played in the same place in the village since the 1860s. Mrs Lee felt the cricket club was absolutely marvellous and, apart from during the two World Wars when its players were away fighting, it had played cricket continuously for all that time. The club had played host to international players from as far afield as Australia, South Africa and the West Indies, all of whom had loved playing here. The club had also been the starting point for some county cricket players. Mrs Lee said people should not move next door to a cricket field and then expect cricket to be stopped. That was like moving next door to a railway line and expecting trains to stop running or moving next door to a school and expecting children to stop playing in the playground. Mrs Lee said she believed there were enough villagers who would be willing to help fund improvements to the netting at the ground and offered her own contribution to any fundraising.

241/26 COUNCIL RESPONSES

The chairman thanked Mrs Lee for her comments.

242/26 WARREN RECREATION GROUND - CRICKET

(Mr and Mrs H left the meeting towards the end of this item.)

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

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Also the following report which had been circulated on the morning of the meeting:

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During a long debate, the following points were made.

Safety is paramount and is one of the reasons the Warren Recreation Ground Safety Group (WRGSG) had been formed. At no point had the group said it wanted cricket to stop being played at the recreation ground, but it was important for it to be played safely. With an up-to-date risk assessment from RoSPA and a Cricket Ball Strike Assessment from Labosport, there was no reason why cricket could not be played safely if the recommendations and suggestions within both reports were acted upon by the council and the cricket club.

Concerns about the playing of cricket on such a small ground had been expressed to the council and club for over thirty years.

The abuse of the WRGSG on social media was unacceptable.

In one day, seven balls had landed in the garden of one property, that was neither reasonable nor acceptable.

The WRGSG had over twenty members from more than ten households and was not just comprised of neighbours to the Warren Recreation Ground. Members were not all new to the village, some had lived in their properties for over thirty years and others had lifelong connections to the village. It was therefore not possible for members present at this meeting to respond on behalf of the whole group.

In the coming season, because of the loss of the Second XI and the Junior teams, cricket would be played for about 1% of the year.

In over 160 years, no serious injuries had been reported.

The club agrees the safety netting needs to be improved but that will take fundraising to enable that. The club needed to play cricket to keep the club alive whilst fundraising. Some balance in this matter needed to be found.

Cricket was a core part of the village. A village was not a village without a cricket club. The Warren Recreation Ground was one of the prettiest grounds in the county, a credit to the council and club.

A former resident of a property bordering the recreation ground reported an incident when a ball had bounced on her patio and into the house through open patio doors, landing very close to her very young grandchild. What would have happened if the ball had hit her grandchild? Maybe the ground was of a size suitable only for junior cricket.

There are reports of people having been hit and every incident, whether in East Preston or elsewhere, should be taken as a warning sign. The club and the council should be prepared for that eventuality.

The club had not fundraised to date as this had not been a requirement of its licence with the parish council. If cricket stops, the club will cease to exist and what risk did that pose to the East Preston Village Preschool and East Preston Stoolball Club. The village and the council and the WRGSG needed to give the club support and time.

Quotes received following the Cricket Ball Strike Assessment report suggested around £100,000 was needed for netting to meet every recommendation within that report. If cricket was played only on the centre wicket, that sum did reduce a bit. Following a conference call with a representative of the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB), emergency funding was not as positive a possibility as the club had been led to believe.

The club would look at crowdfunding options and also look at what grants were available nationally. Available grants changed on an almost daily basis.

Were the club's insurers aware of the RoSPA and Labosport reports as there were possible insurance ramifications from both reports?

Reasonable precautions needed to be taken. In English law, this was still as judged by the hypothetical ordinary and reasonable person, the so-called man on the Clapham omnibus.

Had National Lottery funding been sought? Not yet, as the club needed to know where it stood following this meeting before it could start fundraising.

Directly asked whether the WRGSG wanted to stop cricket, the group said it had said in every meeting it had attended it did not want to stop cricket, but wanted to make cricket safer. Members of the WRGSG had even offered to help with any fundraising efforts.

In response to a question about whether meeting all the requirements of the RoSPA and Labosport reports would bring an end to this matter once and for all, Cllr McElroy said nobody could see into the future. Health & Safety legislation applied to the present time. Had reasonable steps been taken at the time of any incident?

If the club and council implemented the recommendations in both the RoSPA and Labosport reports, they would be protecting themselves from further legal challenges. Again, seven balls landing in one garden in one afternoon was not reasonable.

Cllr McElroy declared he was a Trustee of East Preston and Kingston Village Hall Foundation and the committee of that organisation had no opinions in this matter, it was remaining neutral but had said it had not received a fixture card for the past few years. That was a simple action the club could take to ensure neighbours knew when matches were scheduled to be played so they could plan accordingly.

Cllr Gale reported she lived adjacent to the recreation ground and had received a fixture card every year she had lived there.

In response to a question about the legal weight of signs which say vehicles are parked at the owner's risk, Cllr McElroy said such signs were designed to cover the landowner from the responsibility for any incident which may happen within that car-park.

Cllr Gunston thanked everyone present for being reasonable in their comments through the debate. It was clear everyone wanted cricket to continue but with a potential bill of £100,000 for increased safety netting, how could this matter be progressed? The parish council had underwritten a professional mediation exercise but that had not reached any substantial conclusion. Was the WRGSG willing to give the club time to fundraise? Cllr Gunston said he felt East Preston was a great community and there was much evidence everyone present wanted to live together reasonably and to improve the community. Possibly using the council as a conduit, could the club and the WRGSG work together towards a solution?

It was suggested the council needed to come up with a direction acceptable to all.

The cricket club had suggested some mitigation actions it could take to ensure cricket continued in the short-term whilst fundraising took place. These formed part of the supporting paper above. There was at least 50% less cricket due to be played at the recreation ground this season which should mean at least 50% fewer balls landing outside the ground. The dot ball local rule should significantly reduce the risk of balls landing outside the ground.

The WRGSG was unconvinced the dot ball local rule would significantly reduce the risk of balls landing outside the ground.

The Sussex Cricket League had introduced Power Play to liven up cricket, to make it more appealing to a younger audience. This initiative specifically encouraged players to hit sixes.

A member of the cricket club said all members had been made aware of the RoSPA and Labosport reports, but £100,000 of netting was not a quick fix. Having played for the club for a number of years and made lifelong friendships and memories, as the father of a very young son, he hoped the club would be there for his son to have similar experiences.

Cllr Moore said he often attended matches but had never seen any Power Play. He asked how visiting clubs responded when briefed about any local rules. The chairman of the cricket club replied he had already spoken to some other clubs who were very understanding of the club's plight and they would respond to the local rule with integrity. For visiting clubs, the local rule would only apply once a season.

Cllr Hill said she liked the word compromise and hoped some compromises could be found to allow cricket to continue whilst meeting the WRGSG's needs for safety improvements.

Cllr Bowman, partly responding to Cllr Moore's question about how visiting teams responded to local rules said, in her experience as a longstanding follower of cricket around the country, cricketers were usually very dedicated sportspeople who would respect any local rules.

Did the club's insurers accept a dot ball local rule as an acceptable mitigation? Confirmation of this could ease the minds of WRGSG members.

Cllr Gunston apologised for putting anyone on the spot tonight and said he felt a basis for further conversation had been established.

Cllr Linton asked the WRGSG whether the deadline for a response to its solicitors could be extended. The WRGSG said this had already been asked of its solicitors and the answer had been negative. Any further request would again have to be directed to the group's solicitors.

With discussion apparently coming to a natural conclusion...

2089 The council **RESOLVED** to allow cricket to be played on the Warren Recreation Ground with certain restrictions, see below, and whilst funds are raised to extend safety netting at the ground.

2090 The council **RESOLVED** to implement a dot ball local rule for a trial period (duration to be agreed) whilst investigations and fundraising towards increased safety netting take place.

[Clerk's note: Sussex Cricket League will only permit this to apply to the eastern and western boundaries.]

2091 The council **RESOLVED** to close the children's playground for the duration of any cricket matches; this to be implemented by the club from an hour before the match starts.

2092 The council **RESOLVED** to provide a councillor at each match for at least an hour of observation.

2093 The council **RESOLVED** to implement a short conference call on the Monday morning after a match between council, club and safety group – one representative from each group to discuss the impact of the weekend's match and to agree the wording Colin should use in his weekly report.

On Resolution 2092, 9 councillors voted in favour with three abstentions; on the other four resolutions, 10 councillors voted in favour with two abstentions.

(At the conclusion of this item, all remaining members of the public, with the exception of Mrs Denton and Mrs Lee and Messrs Allsop, Cross, Granat and Short, left the meeting.)

(The meeting was adjourned at 19:49 to allow the room to clear, and restarted at 19:52)

243/26 EAST PRESTON COMMUNITY BOARDWALK

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

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At the invitation of the chairman, Russell Granat reminded the council of why the boardwalk had been built and of the Sea Road Beach Access Ltd.'s reasons for wishing to donate the facility to the council. This had culminated in a presentation to council by Mr Allen on 30th March.

Cllr Wilkinson said he had not initially been in favour of the council accepting this offer but now he believed the council should as it would give it some control over the boardwalk.

Cllr Bowman said she was not against the council taking ownership but still questioned why the company had not commissioned a health and safety report before opening the boardwalk to the public. Mr Granat replied organisations such as RoSPA reported against standards and there were no standards in place for a boardwalk. Mr Allen had spoken with RoSPA and found any safety report would be in the form of a risk assessment at which point the company directors had chosen not to pursue that.

Cllr Duff said she was reassured the council's insurers were happy to insure the boardwalk without a safety report.

Cllr Wilkinson added he had been part of the county council's volunteer project team which carried out projects such as boardwalks and bridges around the county. He had spoken to his (paid) team-leader who said the council was still building

boardwalks to a design first approved over a decade ago. He had very recently sent design information for the East Preston Community Boardwalk to his team-leader for his comments.

Cllr McElroy quoted “*Public beach boardwalks in the UK require regular, documented inspections to ensure public safety, focusing on structural integrity (decking, joists, supports), slip resistance, and edge protection. Inspections should be conducted by competent personnel to comply with health and safety duties, often covering routine visual checks, seasonal, and structural assessments.*” (source: Google) He asked whether the company had carried out any documented inspections. David Cross replied he was a volunteer for the boardwalk and a qualified Mechanical Engineer. He had been party to a number of inspections since the boardwalk had been installed; there was an email trail of these inspections.

Cllr Hill said there was likely to be minimal involvement for the council and the boardwalk “brings more to the village than it doesn’t.” The materials used are reportedly guaranteed for fifty years.

Cllr Gunston said he had only heard good things about the community boardwalk. It had been a true community project. The council had money in an earmarked reserve for the boardwalk and that could be used to commission a RoSPA risk assessment. Cllr Gunston added he felt Mr Allen’s presentation to the council on 30th March had only highlighted the differences between the council and the company. Council suggestions to the company had apparently all been dismissed, including health and safety concerns. As there was a huge amount of community support for the project, he personally felt the better way forward would be for a community group to be formed to look after the boardwalk, such as the South Strand Community Toilets group, which had done fantastic work for the South Strand toilet block.

2094 The council **RESOLVED** to accept the offer from Sea Road Beach Access Ltd. to donate the East Preston Community Boardwalk to the council.

Eight councillors voted in favour, two voted against and two abstained.

(Mrs Denton and Mrs Lee and Messrs Allsop, Cross, Granat and Short all left at the conclusion of this item.)

244/26 MINUTES OF THE MONTHLY MEETING HELD ON 2ND MARCH 2026

The draft Minutes were circulated to all councillors on 3rd March asking for suggested amendments by 10th March. None were received.

2095 The Council **RESOLVED** unanimously the Chairman could sign the Minutes as a true record of the meeting held on 2nd March. Cllr Toney duly did so.

245/26 UPDATE ON MATTERS IN THE MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

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

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

246/26 FINANCIAL MATTERS

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

2096 The council **RESOLVED** unanimously to approve the Outstanding Purchase Orders report for 2025/26, value £0.00 (exc. VAT).

2097 The council **RESOLVED** unanimously to approve the Regular Monthly Payments reports for March 2026 totalling £1,240.30 (inc. VAT).

2098 The council **RESOLVED** unanimously to approve the Supplier BACS Invoices Paid reports for March 2026 totalling £477,630.06 (inc. VAT).

2099 The council **RESOLVED** unanimously to approve the List of Sales Receipts & Bank Receipts by Bank report for financial year to date totalling £2,077.47 (inc. VAT) for March 2026 (Year to Date, £597,560.50).

The council NOTED the Bank Reconciliations to 13th March 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.

247/26 REPORTS FROM PARISH COUNCIL COMMITTEES

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

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Personnel – Cllr Duff alerted councillors to the Chairmanship Training, for all councillors, scheduled for 29th June. This was for all councillors not only to enable them to be better chairmen but also to enable them to be more supportive of chairmen.

Cllrs Toney and Wilkinson said they were unable to attend on that night.

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

248/26 REPORTS FROM PARISH COUNCIL WORKING PARTIES

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

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

249/26 DEVOLUTION AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION WORKING PARTY

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

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Cllr Gunston said he would be happy to talk to any councillor on this matter.

250/26 WEST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL

County Cllr Elkins had sent his apologies for this meeting as it would not have been possible to move him up the agenda.

251/26 ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL

District Cllrs P Bower, R Bower and Kelly had all sent their apologies to the meeting.

252/26 SUSSEX POLICE

No report had been received.

253/26 CLERK'S REPORT

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

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Item 7 – Meeting with Dr Beccy Cooper MP – Cllr Linton reported Dr Cooper had agreed to provide a signed bottle of House of Commons champagne for inclusion in the East Preston Festival grand prize draw. Additionally, the winner would be invited for a tour of the Houses of Parliament with Dr Cooper.

254/26 EXTERNAL MEETINGS AND EVENTS

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

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Cllr Bowman advised she would be standing down as the council’s representative to the Village Hall Foundation. She had agreed to become the secretary of the Trustees and therefore could not be the council’s representative too. Cllr Chapman volunteered to take on this role; this would be subject to a vote at the Annual Meeting of the Council on 11th May.

255/26 NEW ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING (11TH MAY 2026)

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

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Details of the Annual Meeting of the Parish would be discussed at the Major Events Committee meeting scheduled for 20th April.

Nothing was suggested.

256/26 118-120 SEA ROAD, EAST PRESTON

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

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Cllrs Bowman, Gunston and Toney and the Clerk had been around the building with a local buildings expert for 90 minutes on the morning of 10th April. They were meeting with Cllr Linton on 14th April to discuss this further.

The meeting ended at 20:19.

Chairman: Date: **11th May 2026**
Cllr Steve Toney

END