



Community Survey – The results are in!

Fantastic! Nearly one third of all East Preston households completed and returned their survey forms. An amazing result! Thank you for taking the time to tell us what you think about our village and your views on how it should develop in the future. The draw to select the cash prize winners has been held and the winners notified. Pictured, first-prize winner Bruce Noble who has generously donated his winnings to St Barnabas.



What happens next?

We have a team of volunteers (not Parish Councillors!), supported by Action in Rural Sussex (AiRS), who are working with your comments to produce the 'Community-Led Plan'. This will be an important document which will guide the Parish Council's activities over the next five to ten years. The completed plan will be presented at the Annual Parish Meeting (details below). Please come to the meeting and hear the full survey results.

The volunteer team who are helping produce our Community-Led Plan does not disband once the plan is published, sorry team! It will continue to meet periodically to monitor the Parish Council's progress in implementing the plan. With your support and comments, the plan can be modified as circumstances change.

So, apart from your fantastic response to the survey, what did we learn? Not surprisingly the largest single group of respondents was the 'Over 65s', but what was interesting was how well the other age ranges were represented. Something to remember as we write the Plan.

The majority of respondents supported Arun's proposed 30 houses in East Preston, built over the next 16 years. Although, when asked about one thing you could change in East Preston, a significant number of people also said no to more development.

When we asked if you would like to see more shops or businesses in East Preston you told us that a Fishmonger, Baker and Greengrocer should be encouraged. A Farmers market on the Village Green was also seen as attractive. Would these businesses enhance the village or merely abstract custom from existing businesses?

Village improvement funding

Any change or improvement to East Preston will need funding. While a small majority accepted funding through the Community Charge, the majority of you thought that improvements should be achieved through voluntary or charity activities. Yet a majority did not want to volunteer to help enhance East Preston. The council understands that a lot of residents cannot help, through work, domestic or other commitments but if you really want your village to grow as you want you need to get involved!

If you could change one thing

The wonderful part of the survey was your responses to the question 'If you could change one thing about East Preston, What would it be?' Having read all your comments, some are humorous, some are probably libellous and some complimentary (thank you!) but all help us understand your desires for East Preston. The largest single issue was the Roundstone level crossing (transport, travel), mainly needing a bridge but also suggesting more driver training. Speeding and parking were also included in this category. The development category includes Planning and the desire to restrict over-development and irritants to neighbours like 'Party Houses'. Community and Social include issues such as Police Coverage and dog fouling. All your comments are being analysed and will be a tremendous help as we work with Arun District Council and West Sussex County Council in the future.

Finally, the survey tells us that a majority of us have lived in East Preston for over ten years and 97% feel safe around the village.

Please come to the Annual Parish Meeting (Saturday 26th May, 10am at East Preston Infant School, Lashmar Road) where we will present the full survey results and be available to discuss them with you.

East Preston News Update

We launched our monthly News Update in March. It contains short articles and notes about events and issues in East Preston which by their nature would not be timely in our quarterly Newsletter. A printed copy, published on the last Thursday of each month, is available from the British Legion, the Library, Hedgers Newsagents, the Post Office and the Council Office. Contact us for an email copy or download it from our website.

Annual Report

The year started with the local elections on 5th May, which saw several long-standing councillors retire whilst four new councillors were elected unopposed to join six remaining councillors. This left the council with three vacancies which were filled by co-option in July. Unfortunately, the council was hit by a run of five resignations between October and February, for a variety of reasons. Four of these have since been filled by co-option, but at the time of writing there is still one vacancy. This has all coincided with a period of running without a Chairman or a Vice-Chairman.


The precept – this council's portion of your Council Tax – was kept at £180,000 for the third year running. The final accounts are still being worked upon, but the council identified savings of £8,700 half-way through the year, and following further prudent spending the council has saved a further £7,000.

The decision was taken in October to increase the precept by 4%, partly on the advice of the council's Internal Auditor who expressed concern that the council had not increased the precept for three years and thus its spending power was reduced, and partly because the council wanted to be prepared for any new projects that might arise from the Community-Led Plan survey – more of that on the front page

– and the Localism Act. The council is sometimes criticised for adhering to the national standard of quoting Band D Council Tax figures as 'much of East Preston is not Band D properties.' The latest figures provided by Arun District Council show that a quarter of East Preston properties are in Band D, the biggest percentage of any Council Tax band.

The biggest expenditure of the past year has been the purchase of the new office at 122 Sea Road, and the flat above it. The Council Office opened its doors to the public on 3rd May 2011, to generally very favourable response from the visiting public. Opening hours are 10am to midday, Monday to Thursday but appointments to see councillors or council officers can be made outside those times by prior arrangement. To help with the purchase, the council took out a £125,000 loan over ten years. New tenants settled into the flat at the end of July.

Current East Preston Councillors are - Judith Akhurst, Victor Bowthorpe, Peter Dallimore, Joop Duijf, Carol Ellis, Rob Ellis, Mervyn Howdle, Glyn Mathias, Patrick Radbourne, Michael Taggart, Hazel Tester, Peter Vincent - and can be contacted through the Council Office. Also look out for Council Surgeries every other month.



West Sussex
BROADBAND
Better Connected

West Sussex County Council has government support that better and faster broadband is needed in the county. To register your support with no obligation, thus giving the County Council better information to give to broadband suppliers, please visit the 'Have Your Say' section of the County Council website – www.westsussex.gov.uk.

Year Off for 'Lights On'

Regrettably, the East Preston Christmas 'Lights On' event will not be held this coming December.

The Parish Council has decided to take a year off from holding the event due to awaiting the new streetlighting infrastructure to be put in place). There has also been reduced help in organising the event due to the current economic climate.

However, we are looking at re-launching the Christmas event in December 2013 when hopefully the new lighting infrastructure will be in place, which would mean we would be able to install the whole Christmas Lighting Scheme once again.

The Parish Council is looking at the possibility of setting up a Working Group of volunteers to help organise the event in future years. This would consist of attending Christmas planning meetings around four times a year and helping with the organisation and running of the event at the beginning of December. If you would be interested in being a part of this, please contact the Assistant Clerk at the Parish Office for further details.

East Preston Festival

In October 2011, Ray Leggett stepped down as the chairman of the East Preston Festival Committee and Paul Amoo took over as its fourth Chairman. This coincided with the return of the monthly film nights, now organised by the committee, using the Conservative Hall in Sea Road as the 'cinema'. A grant obtained from West Sussex County Council was instrumental in getting the project off the ground. These nights have proved a tremendous success with only one to go this season, starting again in September 2012.

Using the film profits and monies obtained from other grant applications, the committee will acquire two wooden notice boards during the summer. One will be erected at the North end of the village and the other at the South end.

The Festival Week (1st - 10th June) will coincide with the Queen's Diamond Jubilee week and the joint themes are these celebrations and the Olympics coming to London. A free 32 page re-designed festival programme detailing over 100 community events has been produced and due to the generosity of the Parish Council is being delivered to every household in East Preston.

This year's festival will bring the return of many popular events including Ark Nappy Run / Challenge (2 June), Girl Guides Summer Fayre (2 June), Festival Songs of Praise (3 June) and Open Gardens / Art Trail (6 / 7 June). There will also be many new events.

Two in particular will be a 'Queen's Diamond Jubilee Celebrations' event on the Village Green (4th June),



with free live music by 4 local bands and musicians (including a well-known artist). At this event, there will be various family tug of war competitions and the opportunity to see our version of the Jubilee Baton and the Olympic Torch made by a local resident.

Local eateries around the Village Green will have on sale a specially-priced Jubilee take-away meal or snack. The Festival Carnival Procession will take place on the 9th June incorporating an Olympic Torch run and a Queen's Diamond Jubilee Baton run. Participants will be carrying the flags of West Sussex, England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, the Olympics as well as a selection of world flags. The procession will end at Lashmar Recreation Ground with a funfair and community market event.

Diamond Jubilee Mugs

The Parish will be giving Queen's Diamond Jubilee mugs to all pupils at the East Preston Infant and Junior Schools. If you have a child of Infant or Junior School age but who does not go to either East Preston school, and you would like a mug for that child, please write to the Council Office giving details such as your child's name and address, where they go to school, age, and your contact details.

The council has ordered a small surplus of mugs, and priority will be given to children that are not receiving any Jubilee memorabilia from where they are educated.



“A BEAR HUNT”

In February 2012, the Parish Council in conjunction with the Arun Community Church-Children and Youth, ran the half-term playscheme. The theme for this year's event was based on the popular book, 'We're Going On A Bear Hunt' by Michael Rosen and Helen Oxenbury.

Over the two mornings, a total of 42 children from East Preston and the surrounding area, enjoyed creative activities, such as arts, crafts, music, movement and dance. The refreshments went down well too!

So, if your children missed this year, but would like to be part of this exciting experience next time, look out for information on **Playscheme 2013**, on local notice boards, posters at school, the website and of course the newsletters, and get your booking form in early! There are only 30 spaces available for each session.

Tree works



Residents may have noticed over the last few weeks various tree works being carried out in the village. This work has resulted from a Tree Survey carried out on all trees on land which is managed by the Parish Council – Village Green, Two Acres, Warren Recreation Ground and also trees in the Village Hall car park.

Several residents have commented about the work to the cluster of White Poplar trees in the south west corner of the Village Green and the way they have been so harshly cut back. Over the years many branches have snapped off these trees in high winds. The Survey stated that the ‘previously pollarded trees have now developed new crowns’ and have damaged and hanging branches. The recommendation for these trees was to ‘re-pollard to old pruning points’. Over the years there has been mixed opinion as to whether the White Poplars should be removed completely, but keeping them tidy and pollarded, is in the council’s view, the right action at this time. The cost of planting new trees and leaving this area bare and exposed has not been favoured in the past.

As a result of the Tree Survey, further tree works will be carried out during 2012/13 but this work is deemed less urgent and routine maintenance.

Please contact the office if you would like a large print version of this newsletter.

Local Sports News

Ruby Bluck and Millie Allen are still bowling at East Preston & Kingston Bowls Club having recently celebrated their 90th birthdays. Both joined the club in 1986 and say that playing bowls at the “friendly club” has been a big factor in enjoying a long life and keeping healthy. They were treated to a surprise party by the women’s section of the Club where everyone enjoyed a cup of tea and cakes followed by the cutting of a birthday cake and celebratory drink.

Meanwhile, East Preston Football Club’s under-15s have won the Arun & Chichester Youth Football League U15 Invitation Cup. The team beat Highdown Saints Youth 1-0 to win the title. On Good Friday, the senior team made it a County League Division 2 league and cup double with a 5-1 win over local rivals Littlehampton in the County League Division 2 Cup final.

Responsible use of the Village Green

It is great to see that the Village Green is being used so often these days for any number of different social activities. But just occasionally the council receives complaints about litter left behind after picnics, dog’s mess not removed by dog owners, and high-spirited language causing offence to neighbours.



This photograph of the picnic table was taken on the morning of 29th March.



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