



EAST PRESTON PARISH COUNCIL

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MINUTES: of the Proceedings of the Monthly Meeting of East Preston Parish Council held on Monday, 3rd February 2020 at the East Preston Infant School, Lashmar Road, East Preston at 19:00.

PRESENT: Councillors Christine Bowman, Lisa Duff, Barbara Gale, Pat Gander, John Gunston, Elizabeth Linton, Glyn Mathias, Rick McElroy, David Moore and Steve Toney (Chairman) and Steve Wilkinson

ALSO: Clerk to the Council, Simon Cross

West Sussex County Councillor Roger Elkins (until 19:50)

Arun District Councillor Terry Chapman (until 19:50)

Mr R and Mrs J Akhurst, and Mr C (until 19:50)

ABSENT: Councillor Andrea Chapman and Kit Bradshaw

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The following abbreviations may appear in these Minutes:

ADC – Arun District Council;
BTP – British Transport Police;
CPRE – Campaign for the Protection of Rural England;
JEAAC – Joint Eastern Arun Area Committee;
NHS – National Health Service;
NR – Network Rail;
SLCC – Society of Local Council Clerks;

SSALC – Sussex and Surrey Associations of Local Councils;
SSE – Scottish and Southern Electric
SW – Southern Water;
TfSE – Transport for the South East;
TRO – Traffic Regulation Order;
VHF – East Preston & Kingston Village Hall Foundation;
WSCC – West Sussex County Council.

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The meeting opened at 19:00.

111/20 INTRODUCTIONS

Cllr Toney welcomed those present and led a full round of introductions.

112/20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology and a reason for absence had been received from Cllrs Bradshaw (holiday) and Chapman (medical appointment).

1395 The Council **RESOLVED** unanimously to accept Cllr Bradshaw's apology for the meeting.

1396 The Council **RESOLVED** unanimously to accept Cllr Chapman's apology for the meeting.

An apology had also been received from District Cllrs Ricky Bower and Paul Kelly.

113/20 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No interests were declared.

114/20 PUBLIC SESSION

Agenda Item ?? - ?? – Mrs Akhurst... <insert>

No Agenda Item – Mr C said he believed there had been an increase in the number of break-ins in the village in recent months. In the past Sussex Police used to send an officer to parish council meetings; that no longer seemed to be the case. Was this a council decision not to include Sussex Police at council meetings?

The Clerk replied Sussex Police had decided it was no longer the best use of its officers to send them to council meetings when they could probably be doing more good operationally out and about. That said, Sussex Police had recently taken the decision to allocate named officers to named areas again, and PCSO Neil Billingham had attended the November (???) Full Council meeting and had expressed his willingness to attend again in future if his shift pattern and operations allowed.

Agenda Item 8 – To confirm the Minutes of the meeting of the council held on 6th January 2020 – Mr Akhurst referred to Minute 013/20 wherein another correspondent, not him, was identified by the initials RA. Mr and Mrs Akhurst both asked their names are given in full in future sets of Minutes to avoid any confusion.

115/20 COUNCIL RESPONSES

Agenda Item 8 – To confirm the Minutes of the meeting of the council held on 6th January 2020 – On behalf of the Personnel Committee, Cllr Gander read the following statement.

“Mr Chairman, I would like to make a statement on behalf of the Personnel Committee which met on Monday, 20th January. The committee was disappointed at comments made by members of the public at the Full Council meeting on Monday, 6th January.

“As per Minute 004/20, a statement by a member of the public was included in the Minutes of the 6th January meeting. This statement alluded to an occurrence at the December Full Council meeting in which another member of the public was stopped from asking a question of District Cllr Chapman. As Simon has advised in his Matters Arising report for this meeting, and as I believe District Cllr Chapman advised the 6th January meeting, District and County Councillors attend meeting of this council in order to provide a report on the business of their councils. They do not attend to answer questions from members of the public although they may do so at their own discretion. The wording on our Agendas in this matter is the same or very similar to every one of a random sample of local councils’ Agendas the Clerk looked at following the meeting, and has not changed since September 2007. Some larger councils of the same level as ourselves do not even appear to extend the courtesy of inviting their District and County Councillors. The Personnel Committee is therefore unsure which breach of procedure the member of the public referred to.

“The Personnel Committee would like to remind members of the public they do not have **a right** to ask questions at a council meeting, but may be invited to do so by the council. Public Session at all council meetings is managed at the discretion of the Chairman of that meeting.

“A different member of the public then said he believed the council was overstaffed. As Chairman of the Personnel Committee, I can assure that member of the public the Personnel Committee undertook a thorough review of council staffing eighteen months ago and this council is not overstaffed. The percentage of this council’s budget spent on staffing is still considerably lower than many other councils.

“Respect is a two-way street. The council shows its respect of members of the public by giving them the opportunity to ask questions and make statements at each council meeting within certain guidelines such as not talking for longer than three minutes and talking only on items that are on that meeting’s agenda. These guidelines have been introduced for wholly practical reasons to ensure council business can be discussed and considered at a reasonable time of night. On behalf of the council, the Personnel Committee asks the public to respect these guidelines.”

Mrs Akhurst thanked Cllr Gander for the statement made and said she fully understood. However, she questioned Cllr Gander’s statement there was no legal right for members of the public to ask questions at a council meeting. The Clerk replied that SSALC had advised him thus; individual councils took a decision as to whether or not they included a Public

Session on their meeting agendas. This council had long ago taken the decision to include a public session on its agendas. Mrs Akhurst said she would look back at the legislation from 1894 in which Parish Councils had been set up.

Cllr McElroy said he had independently researched this matter and agreed there was no legal right for members of the public to ask questions at a council meeting. He reminded those present this was a council meeting to which members of the public could attend not a public meeting. As such they were only able to speak at the Chairman's discretion.

116/20 WEST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL

County Cllr Elkins opened by advising the meeting a new Director for Children and Young People had been appointed; Lucy Butler, currently of Oxfordshire County Council, would take up this appointment in May.

The county council was finalising its budgets for the coming financial year. At the moment, it was looking likely to impose a 3.9% increase on its part of the council tax. 2% of the increase was ring-fenced for adult social care.

Cllr Elkins mentioned a continuing review of schools and school places across the county. Locally, it had been announced the Clapham & Patching C of E Primary School would be closing at the end of the summer term. Understandably, parents and governors were concerned about this and were looking at alternatives such as merging with another school in some way. The school had a good reputation, particularly for Special Education Needs department, but numbers were too low to be sustainable. Many pupils were from outside the school's catchment area. There was some likelihood the Special Education Needs would be incorporated into Angmering School. In response to a question from Cllr Bowman, Cllr Elkins reported the county council reviewed its schools requirements regularly and this addressed the need for more schools in some areas whilst closing schools in other areas. District Cllr Chapman added the *Infrastructure Provision & Implementation* section of the Arun Local Plan included useful information about schools provision.

With reference to Agenda Item 12b on this meeting Agenda, *To agree the council hosts a public meeting for major stakeholders to discuss the Roundstone Level Crossing with members of the public*, Cllr Elkins said he would welcome a multi-agency meeting to discuss the situation at the Roundstone Level Crossing, he wondered whether a public meeting was the most effective way forward. He felt a focus group with the stakeholders and a select number of local residents would cover the same amount of ideas to be considered whilst ascertaining what was possible and what was not, either legally or financially.

Referring to Agenda Item 11c, the report of the Community Engagement Committee meeting held on 27th January, Cllr Elkins said 20mph zones were never implemented on through roads. Any such scheme had to "manage itself", often through the use of street furniture to ensure the natural driving speed was little more than 20mph. Cllr Elkins said Rob Torrance could provide more information if necessary.

Referring to Item 5 of the Clerk's Report, Cllr Elkins said he would check on the comment about the number of WSCC Traffic Officers reducing from six to three. He understood, part of their existing workloads would be handed on to other officers allowing the Traffic Officers to focus more on Traffic Regulation Orders so the impact on that work area should be minimal.

Chairman of the Community Engagement Committee, Cllr Linton, said she understood Cllr Elkins's concerns about a public meeting about the Roundstone Level Crossing, but she felt WSCC had been very dismissive of this council's Traffic Management Survey of the Roundstone Level Crossing, saying the report would not be considered until after the A259 had been dualled. Five years later, there was still little sign of work starting on that project and the problems at the Roundstone Level Crossing had worsened. Cllr Linton did not want another meeting at which WSCC said no consideration could be given to the problems at the Roundstone Level Crossing until after the dualling had completed. Cllr Elkins assured Cllr Linton that would not be the case but he did want to concentrate on what was achievable.

Cllr McElroy expressed concern about introducing a new age range into Angmering School if some Clapham and Patching pupils landed there. District Cllr Chapman said there were already children of all ages in the Lavinia Norfolk (Special Education Needs) Centre.

117/20 WEST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL

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

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Council did not feel it necessary to respond to the consultation on the draft Soft Sand Review.

118/20 ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL

(Throughout this Minute, Cllr Chapman refers to District Cllr T Chapman not Parish Cllr A Chapman.)

District Cllr Chapman started by saying the public consultation exercise into revised Public Spaces Protection Orders which would leave East Preston uncovered by such an order had been stopped by him and his colleagues, Cllrs Bower and Kelly. East Preston Parish Council was one of only a few which had submitted a response to the public consultation. The revised orders had come about at a time when Sussex Police resources were stretched, but more recently these resources had expanded again somewhat removing the need for the reduced coverage proposed by the revised Public Spaces Protection Order. He was unable to predict the outcome of this matter.

Referring to Item 2 of the Clerk's Report, *Police matters*, Cllr Chapman said there were still problems at both East Preston and Rustington Youth Clubs. The ADC anti-social behaviour team was working "flat out" to tackle a really hardcore group of youths he believed were being manipulated for financial gain. He hoped a meeting of the Youth Club committee would take place soon and he hoped to be included in that meeting.

The ADC 2020/21 budget papers had not yet been published, so he was unable to give any more detail on that. He had noted this council's noting of the situation regarding councillors not taking part in budget discussions whilst in Council Tax arrears, and reported one ADC councillor was still in arrears.

Cllr Chapman said he held an open mind on the cabinet vs committee debate, having worked under both systems. He was not convinced by Mrs Akhurst's comment the committee system would engage a higher number of councillors overall as he was unsure all District Councillors were fully aware of how much of their time could be spent in committee meetings, many of which took place in the evening. If councillors did not attend committee meetings, how democratic could those meetings be? He advised committee decisions could not be called-in if there were questions as to the validity of those decisions and nobody had yet been able to estimate how much a return to the committee system would cost annually. In response to a question from Cllr Moore, Cllr Chapman said he did not think the return to a committee system was being driven by the press.

As all three District Councillors for East Preston & Kingston were Planning trained, they were all eligible to sit on the Development Control Committee and were all eligible to attend the Planning Briefings that took place in advance of Development Control Committee meetings. Cllr Chapman felt this meant there was greater synergy between the District and Parish Councils.

Cllr Chapman ended by saying the National Planning Policy Framework was undergoing a review which may lead to a review of certain Supplementary Planning Guides. Cllr Chapman was hopeful one of these would be about the adaptability of new housing stocks, ensuring properties were suitable for sale to anyone regardless of their mobility or disabilities.

(County Cllr Elkins, District Cllr Chapman and Mr C left at the conclusion of this item.)

119/20 ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL – ASSETS OF COMMUNITY VALUE – THE TUDOR TAVERN

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

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No further action was identified at this time.

120/20 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 6TH JANUARY 2020

The draft Minutes were circulated to all councillors on 9th January, asking for comments by 16th January. No amendments were suggested.

1397 The Council **RESOLVED** the Chairman could sign the Minutes as a true record of the meeting held on 6th January.

This action was completed by Cllr Toney.

121/20 UPDATE ON MATTERS IN THE MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Council NOTED the following report, which had been circulated in advance of the meeting, without comment:

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Nothing was added.

122/20 FINANCIAL MATTERS

The Accounts for January 2020 had been distributed to Members in advance of the meeting.

- 1398** The council **RESOLVED** to approve the Outstanding Purchase Orders report for 2019/20, value £4,340.55 (excl. VAT).
- 1399** The council **RESOLVED** to approve the Supplier Non BACS Invoices Paid report for late payments December 2019, totalling £192.24 (incl. VAT) and for January 2020, totalling £526.97 (incl. VAT).
- 1400** The council **RESOLVED** to approve the Supplier BACS Invoices Paid report for January 2020 totalling £20,605.41 (incl. VAT).
- 1401** The council **RESOLVED** to approve the List of Sales Receipts & Bank Receipts by Bank report, showing £311,653.82 (incl. VAT) for the financial year ending 31st March 2020.

The council NOTED the paper Bank Reconciliations to 14th January 2020.

The council NOTED the year-to-date Budget Summary Report for 2019/20.

The Chairman thanked the council's Book-keeper, Mrs Khoo, for the above reports.

123/20 REPORTS FROM PARISH COUNCIL COMMITTEES

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

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Additionally:

Amenities Committee – Cllr McElroy said the Sea Road toilet block would be officially re-opened before the end of the month. He also advised the meeting his company was not involved in tendering for any CCTV work on behalf of the council.

Finance & General Purposes Committee – Cllr McElroy stated the committee's next meeting was scheduled for Monday, 17th February.

Major Events Committee – Cllr Linton advised booking was open for this year's Food & Drink Festival. Should anyone know of a business which might be interested, please could they be put in touch with the Council Office.

The council's second Funday Sunday event would officially go on sale once the Winter 2020 Newsletter was out for delivery. This was taking place on 3rd May and would have a V.E. Day theme.

Personnel Committee – Cllr Gander agreed she and the Clerk would write a process for councillors to follow when undertaking their Basic Disclosure and Barring Service check.

There were no updates from the other three committees.

124/20 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE – HAPPY TO CHAT BENCHES

Cllr Linton spoke in support of the following report which had been circulated in advance of the meeting:

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Cllr Linton added the benches targetted all sectors of society and would go some small way to tackling some social isolation in the village.

1402 The council **RESOLVED** unanimously to release up to £200 from this year's Contingency budget line to buy plaques to turn two benches in the northern shops into Happy to Chat benches.

125/20 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE – ROUNDSTONE LEVEL CROSSING

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

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Cllrs Gander and Linton and the Clerk all said they understood County Cllr Elkins's concerns about a public meeting but they felt the public needed the chance to air their grievances directly to the representatives of the organisations listed in the supporting paper and they also needed to hear for themselves the responses from those organisations.

The Clerk reassured Mrs Akhurst Angmering and Kingston Parish Councils would be invited to attend the meeting.

1403 The council **RESOLVED** unanimously to arrange a public meeting for major stakeholder organisations to meet with members of the public concerned about the Roundstone Level Crossing.

The council further agreed such a meeting should only go ahead if each of the organisations listed agreed to attend.

126/20 REPORTS FROM PARISH COUNCIL WORKING PARTIES

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Cllr Mathias said the Leases Working Party had not yet met to discuss the lease to the East Preston & Kingston Village Hall Foundation. Members of the Leases Working Party were scheduled to have their annual meeting with representatives of East Preston & Kingston Bowls Club later in the month. Council was reminded this was part of the twice-yearly meetings cycle although it had been agreed last year only one meeting a year was necessary currently.

127/20 CLERK'S REPORT

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

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Item 8 – Social Media – in response to a question, the Clerk confirmed at least one new chef had been employed by The Seahorse Café.

Cllr Toney thanked the Clerk for his report.

128/20 EXTERNAL MEETINGS AND EVENTS

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

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Cllr Linton added new building was underway at Angmering School which would eventually see pupil capacity rise by 90.

129/20 RESPONSE TO EXTERNAL MEETINGS AND EVENTS

No comments were made.

130/20 NEW ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING (2ND MARCH 2020)

The Clerk said the council had received further correspondence concerning the playing of cricket on the Warren Recreation Ground and this would be considered at the next meeting.

The meeting concluded at 20:11.

Chairman: Date: **2nd March 2020**
Councillor Steve Toney

END