



East Preston Voluntary Service

In the middle of March, before the Corona Crisis brought us officially into lockdown, two of the council's committees got together for an informal meeting to consider how the council could best help residents who, during the pandemic, would be less able to help themselves as much as they usually would.

At that meeting the East Preston Voluntary Service was born. Its first task was the delivery across the village of a leaflet advertising we were and are here to help. With the much-appreciated assistance of a team of about forty volunteers – residents, councillors and staff – the council had leafleted, at a conservative estimate, 95% of households by the end of 24th March, the first day of lockdown. This achievement should not be underestimated.

With the council thinking on its feet as to how best to run a Voluntary Service, by the end of March, 95 households had come forward to register as needing help. Several other households thanked the council for having made contact and said whilst they did not need help at the moment, they may in the future. The number of households registering for help has grown to about 160, a slower increase than we expected which we put down to local residents taking good care of themselves over the intervening months.

On the other side, we have had similar numbers of

volunteers come forward offering help with shopping, dog walking, collecting prescriptions, befriending or whatever was needed. In fact, it has not been possible to find appropriate tasks for all volunteers.

As each household registered with the council, so the council matched it with a volunteer, a team of councillors acting as service coordinators liaising initially between household and volunteer. The council has continued to develop the service in line with Government Guidelines and is continuing to monitor the scheme.

Some volunteers visit their service users more than once a week, have regular contact and will continue their contact once the lockdown has ended, something only possible because of the loveliness of the volunteers. Other volunteers have been helping on an "as and when" basis and some have fitted in their volunteering whilst continuing to work.

The most heartfelt thank you possible to our steady band of volunteers all of whom help make East Preston such a wonderful, friendly place in which to live. Long may it last.

Easing of Lockdown

In light of the government's gradual easing of lockdown, the council is currently thinking about the future of the East Preston Voluntary Service. Although final decisions have yet to be made, it is likely the service will cease to exist in its current format from the 31st August.

Please rest assured the council is still here to try and help the village's residents most in need. If you have been a user of the service, we will be in touch during August.

How Can We Help The Village?

As we emerge from the Corona virus lockdown we are looking for suggestions from parishioners as to how we may be able to help the village recover from the economic and emotional shocks of the last four or so months. We are eager to harness all the talent and goodwill of the inhabitants of East Preston to help ensure the village bounces back as quickly as possible. The Parish Council would like to hear from you so please email clerk@eastpreston-pc.gov.uk or telephone 01903 770050.

Food & Drink Festival

Like most organisations, we have reluctantly had to take the decision to cancel the popular East Preston Food and Drink Festival this year. This would have been held on Saturday, 29th August.

However, we are hoping to host a virtual East Preston Food and Drink Festival for the Facebook and Instagram users out there. Some of the businesses that would have been here on the day will run online demos and deals for you on the same day.

Please follow: www.facebook.com



[/epfdf](https://www.facebook.com/epfdf)



[/ep_food_drink_festival](https://www.instagram.com/ep_food_drink_festival)

Chairman's Annual Report for 2019-20



Here is the council's Annual Report for the past financial year. This was presented to the Annual Parish Meeting which was held on 22nd June via Zoom.

"As I start to write this report, it is 1st April. Nearly three months later, it is no April Fool's joke the world is still in the grip of COVID-19, the Coronavirus. I am very proud at the way in which this council and the

village as a whole has risen to the challenge of looking after our less able neighbours during this crisis.

"As it became clear a lockdown was very likely, this council's Community Engagement Committee took the seed of an idea and transformed that, almost overnight, into the East Preston Voluntary Service. All councillors and council officers have either worked as service coordinators within the service or have been volunteers or, where neither of those have been possible, have supported the initiative from afar. The service coordinators in particular have worked especially hard to ensure local residents, unable to help themselves as much as they usually would, have not been left out in the cold. As time passed, we became aware of West Sussex County Council setting up its Community Hub, and we asked our volunteers whether or not they would be happy to have their details passed on to the county council as we fully believed its Community Hub service would replace our own East Preston Voluntary Service. However, the reverse was true and some calls to the Community Hub service were referred to our own service, and we helped wherever we could. In addition to the predicted tasks of shopping and prescription collecting, volunteers have also mown lawns, helped find a collecting laundry service, talked to a few lonely people, collecting people's rent money and paid their rent for them and other diverse activities.

"But what of the first eleven and a half months of the council's year?

"The 2019-2020 council year started with the Local Elections at the beginning of May. All twelve of the sitting councillors stood for re-election together with one other member of the public. As there are thirteen spaces on the council, there was no need for people to come out and vote, nor was there a need for the massive co-option exercise which had been necessary in 2015. This allowed the council a degree of continuity not seen on some other local councils. Cllr Gunston was the one new member and I hope he will agree that he has fitted in well. I was very pleased and proud to have been re-elected Chairman of the Council with the ever-reliable Cllr Elizabeth Linton as Vice-Chairman.

"In August, Cllr Danny Shah resigned from the council for personal reasons. After a co-option exercise, Cllr Kit Bradshaw took up office in November, bringing the council back up to full strength.

"The biggest project to conclude during the year was the refurbishment of the Sea Road toilet block. We believe the toilet block was originally built in the late 1940s. It had long been little better than functional, but for the past few years the council has been working towards refurbishing the toilets, not just upgrading the existing Ladies and Gents but making half of the block into the best possible Hoist-

Assisted Toilet possible in the space available, whilst using the other half of the block to create two spacious unisex cubicles. Our thanks to the local businesses that helped bring the project to fruition and all the individuals and organisations who helped with the funding of the project.

"Staying with toilets and one of the matters raised at last year's Annual Parish Meeting, the council's lease on the South Strand Toilet Block expired on 31st March 2019 and we chose not to renew the lease on an asset which is outside this council's boundary. However, the council has agreed to provide some financial support for the new, independent South Strand Community Toilets group, in recognition of the value the toilet block provides to residents of and visitors to East Preston.

"Events-wise, the council added another Food & Drink Festival and another Christmas Celebrations to its tally. New in the past year was Funday Sunday, an initiative aimed at bringing together some local residents who might otherwise be home alone all day Sunday. Home alone doesn't just mean home alone on your own, it can also mean home alone with your partner, not seeing anyone else for the whole day. Our first Funday Sunday was held in October on a Sunday afternoon in the Village Hall. About 25 local residents attended and spent the afternoon dancing to live music supplied by Vintage Candy. When they weren't dancing, guests enjoyed a full afternoon tea and lively conversation. We hope to be able to run at least one Funday Sunday this year, but this will depend upon government advice on social distancing.

"As part of East Preston Festival, the council ran a successful Come and Meet Your Local Councillors event. Attendance was back up on 2018 although the weather was unremarkable. As the event coincided with the Alzheimers Society's Cupcake Day, the council offered refreshments in exchange for a voluntary donation. Thanks to Cllr Chapman's delicious cupcakes, we were able to donate £50 to the Alzheimers Society. It is sad this year's Festival will not be able to go ahead because of the pandemic, but the council will offer whatever help it can to ensure next year's Festival is one of the best ever.

"Financially, the council has been careful with your money whilst still working to improve life in the village. In their most recent assessments, the council's independent internal and external auditors both raised no major concerns about the management of the council.

"The council is always approachable and willing to consider ideas you have for ways in which life in the village can be improved. Please submit suggestions in writing (letter or email) so the correct committee can consider them or our officers can report on previous discussions on the same matter. We look forward to hearing your ideas and hopefully implementing some of them to make the village even lovelier.

"I would like to finish by thanking my fellow councillors for their hard work throughout the year and their support of me, and also by thanking the council's officers who really do work tirelessly for the village."

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "S. P. Toney". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Steve Toney
Chairman, East Preston Parish Council

Doug Medhurst & Chris Roberts

We were sad to learn of the deaths in late June of two former Chairmen of the Council, Doug Medhurst and Chris Roberts. Doug and Chris served together on the council for much of the 1980s and 1990s, with Doug being Chairman between 1991 and 1995. Chris returned to the council for four years from May 2007, serving as Chairman for the last two of those years.

For many, many years, Doug and Chris were very familiar figures around the village with very few aspects of village life untouched by one or other of them over the past fifty or so years. Doug, more often known as Mr East Preston, led the creation of the East Preston Festival and served as its first Chairman for over twenty years; Chris was a member of the Festival Committee for many years, most visibly ensuring the Carnival Parade travelled around the village without any hitches. Both were also very active in charitable organisations outside the village.

Doug and Chris will be missed by many villagers and our thoughts are with both their families at this time.



Doug Medhurst



Chris Roberts

To read more about both gentlemen, please see the September issue of *All About East Preston*.

Correspondence Corner

Manners - on two legs or four

I thank EM for his or her letter in the last newsletter. I would like to go further and ask dog owners not to let their dogs off the lead except for in established recreation areas. In the southern shopping area, unsupervised dogs are messing on the pavement outside businesses, meaning not only is dog mess left uncleared, it is also left for members of the public to tread in unwittingly, resulting in dog's mess being walked into local shops and eating places - very unhygienic. Whether or not you think this is violating your dog's rights, it is just simple common decency. Thank you. ES

More cake, anyone?

This year the council had hoped to organise a picnic for the village's preschool children with the help of Lorraine, Rachel and Kate at East Preston Village Preschool and Carol at Happy Days. The date selected had been Tuesday, 7th July.

Like other active councils, because of the pandemic, sadly this council has had to cancel several events planned for this year and the Preschool Picnic was one such event.

To ease the disappointment of those children who have been attending preschools again, the council provided cakes to be enjoyed on the 7th July. These were in the official East Preston colours of blue and yellow.

Thanks Denise.

Pictured on the right is a selection of 'Thank You' cards made by the children. Thank you, children.



Village Life

August

- 3rd Full Council (7pm)
- 10th Planning & Licensing Committee (6pm)
Amenities Committee (7pm)
- 17th Major Events Committee (6pm)
- 24th Planning & Licensing Committee (6pm)
- 29th East Preston Virtual Food & Drink Festival (midday)

September

- 7th Full Council (7pm)
- 10th Come And Meet Your Local Councillors (10:30am - 12:30pm, Council Office)
- 14th Planning & Licensing Committee (6pm)
Amenities Committee (7pm)
- 21st Finance & General Purposes Committee (10am)
Warren Recreation Ground AGM (7pm)
- 27th East Preston Beach Clean No. 15 (11am, bottom of Sea Road)
- 28th Planning & Licensing Committee (6pm)
Community Engagement Committee (7pm)

October

- 5th Full Council (7pm)
- 12th Planning & Licensing Committee (6pm)
Personnel Committee (7pm)
- 18th *Funday Sunday* (2pm)
- 26th Planning & Licensing Committee (6pm)
Major Events Committee (7pm)

At the time of writing, council meetings have to be held online. However, for all meetings, please consult the Noticeboards and website a few days before the meeting for the Agenda and venue.

Please note the above list may be subject to change.

Always 'Happy to Chat'

The council recently designated two benches in the Northern shopping area as 'Happy To Chat' benches. This is part of a national initiative to tackle mental health issues by setting up a space where local residents can sit and chat to others without feeling any stigma. Although the idea was agreed before the pandemic struck, recent months have highlighted how there are people living alone in the village who really do not speak to anyone from one week to the next.

Please look out for these benches and if you see someone sitting there alone, please take a few moments out of your day to stop and chat. You may not be able to see the positive impact you are having but you will be having one.

Here are the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Council, Cllrs Steve Toney and Elizabeth Linton having a socially-distanced chat on the benches.



Thanks to....

everyone and anyone who has helped keep the village's spirits up over the past few months. From teddy bears in windows to painted rocks to hand-written messages of hope to the book exchanges, the range of creativity shown has been great and welcomed across the village.

.....
everyone who has helped to keep the village tidy over the past few months too. The easing of lockdown saw a possibly unprecedented number of visitors coming into the village but not all of them were good at taking home their litter, leaving it around all the village's public open spaces.

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



Contact point: Parish Clerk - Simon Cross, Assistant Clerk - Dawn Reid
Council Office, 122 Sea Road, East Preston BN16 1NN
Telephone: (01903) 770050 E-mail: clerk@eastpreston-pc.gov.uk
Website: <http://eastpreston-pc.gov.uk/>

Arun District Council (01903) 737500 West Sussex County Council (01243) 777100

Designed by Arun District Council, Civic Centre, Maltravers Road, Littlehampton BN17 5LF

A greener future - Wildflowers and Traffic

The stunning wildflower meadows and traffic are two of the topics raised by parishioners recently. These made me think of the Zero 2030 community led climate conference in Worthing that I attended with a fellow councillor in March. We discussed some of the issues associated with both of these - highlighting the need for more sustainable methods of travel and the restoration of ecosystems.

If you have been lucky enough to enjoy some exercise during lockdown you may have become used to being closer to nature and especially in April seeing noticeably less traffic on the roads. Who knew that there were so many people in East Preston with bicycles enjoying the fresh air and a healthier lifestyle? To try and maintain these benefits in the longer term is now on the Parish Council agenda.

After the hottest May on record the Parish Council is increasingly aware of the effects of climate change and has taken a number of measures to try and address some of the issues associated with ecosystems and traffic. Encouraging tree planting, adopting a native species planting scheme, beach cleans and support for 'Keep East Preston Tidy' to name a few. Although we have limited powers regarding traffic regulation we are trying to encourage more sustainable transport by, for example, looking at the possibility of a bus service for the southern end of the village as we discussed in our last two newsletters. We have also welcomed Southern Water and the WSCC Waste Prevention Team to speak to local residents at Parish Council meetings so that we have a better understanding of how to use water more sensibly and to recycle more of our rubbish.

To maintain the focus on these and other climate change issues we will be including an article in future newsletters entitled a greener future.

We are always looking for new ideas and ways of spreading the messages from the many organisations involved in the urgent issues involving climate change. Can we afford to lose the reduction in CO₂ emissions that the Coronavirus has forced us to make? If you have any thoughts or would like to help in some way please let us know and we may be able to introduce new initiatives or put you in contact with like minded organisations in the local area.

Cllr John Gunston