

**Local Government Act 1972**



Local Government for Langton Green, Speldhurst, Ashurst and Old Groombridge

**Minutes of the Full Council Meeting**

**Held on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> September 2023 at 7.30pm in Speldhurst Village Hall, Langton Green**

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**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Councillors Curry (Chair), Cleaver, Davies, Dooley, Ellery, Leach, Muress, Norton, Rowe, Scarbrough, Tarricone and Turner.

**OFFICERS PRESENT**

K Neve, Clerk and K Harman, Assistant Clerk (KH) (minutes).

**IN ATTENDANCE**

Borough Cllr Sankey was in attendance.

Apologies had been received from County Cllr McNroy who was attending another meeting.

**MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

There were six members of the public present.

**23/187 To enquire if anyone intends to record the meeting**

The meeting was recorded by the Clerk for accuracy of the minutes. The recording will be deleted once the meeting minutes are signed off at the next Full Council meeting.

**23/188 To accept and approve apologies and reasons for absence.**

Apologies had been received from Cllr Lyle (health-related).

**23/189 Disclosure of Interests**

Cllrs Ellery, Rowe and Assistant Clerk (KH) declared an interest in agenda item 13 as shareholders in the Speldhurst Community Shop Ltd.

**23/190 Declarations of Lobbying**

There were none.

**23/191 Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> August 2023**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the 7<sup>th</sup> August 2023 Full Council meeting, previously forwarded to members, were confirmed as correct records and signed by the Chair.

### **23/192 Public Open Session**

None of the members of the public attending wished to speak.

### **23/193 Borough and County Councillors' Reports**

Borough Cllr Sankey reported the following:

- Due to the current heatwave, bin collections would commence at 6.00am.
- Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC) had recently received an RSPCA Gold Paw Print for their work in animal licensing.
- Following recent roadworks on Etherington and Speldhurst Hills in Speldhurst, gravel had not been cleared away sufficiently by the Kent County Council (KCC) contractors and was washing into nearby streams. He had been in contact with KCC and the road had now been swept but the drains were blocked with gravel.
- The planning application for the installation of solar panels on the Broomlands Estate in Langton Green had been called in to the TWBC Planning Committee.

### **23/194 Chair's Report**

There was nothing to report that wasn't already covered in other items on the agenda.

### **23/195 Clerk's Report**

The Clerk said the office had been busy with the Speldhurst Chapel Project consultation. She also gave a reminder to councillors to regularly log onto their Speldhurst Parish Council (SPC) emails.

The Chair agreed to bring item 13 on the agenda **Speldhurst Chapel Project** forward for discussion for the benefit of members of public attending the meeting for this item.

#### **a) To consider the responses on the consultation for the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) and to decide whether the Council should proceed with an application for a Public Works Loan.**

The responses to the consultation had been collated\* and this information had been circulated to councillors ahead of the meeting to enable them to make an informed decision. Councillors agreed that the response rate to the consultation of 637 was exceptionally high, especially considering it was carried out during the summer holidays.

In summary, the responses received across all four villages within the parish were for approximately two-thirds in favour of SPC proceeding with an application to the PWLB and one-third against. Councillors unanimously agreed that the responses were a clear endorsement from parishioners to proceed with the application.

The Chair made the following points:

- The consultation met the requirements of KALC (Kent Association of Local Councils) and that SPC had carried out its due diligence.
- There would be opportunities to withdraw the application if the purchase became no longer viable, right up to the point of draw-down of the loan.
- According to The Good Councillors' Guide, Cllrs Rowe and Ellery were eligible to vote despite having shares in the existing Speldhurst Shop and Post Office.
- The Chapel Project Team were in liaison with TWBC Planning Services to obtain advice regarding a change of use of the building.

The Chair proposed a vote on whether the Council should proceed with an application for a PWLB of £325,000 to purchase the Speldhurst Chapel site. Cllr Rowe requested the vote to be recorded. 11 councillors voted in favour of proceeding with an application with Cllr Turner abstaining. It was therefore **RESOLVED** to proceed with an application to the PWLB to purchase the Chapel site.

\* A small amount of collation of the responses was necessary to ensure that any duplicate responses were removed (when more than one same response was received per household) along with responses with invalid addresses. Totals were then calculated to reflect the results per village, per question etc to give a clear breakdown and understanding of residents' views.

**b) To consider approving expenditure on appointing a building surveyor and valuer and for legal work should the Council vote to proceed.**

It was **RESOLVED** to approve an initial expenditure of up to £10,000 for the services of a building survey, valuation and for legal work. It was agreed that all expenditure would be reported back to Full Council each month for councillors' scrutiny.

Mr Edward Pinnell of the Chapel Project Team thanked the SPC councillors and clerks for their hard work and input to date.

**23/196 General Matters – Actionable tasks which do not fall to a committee.**

<b>Ongoing</b>				
	<b>Summary</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Created</b>	<b>Status</b>
<b>9/23</b>	Trial weed control April-Sept without use of glyphosate.	Env WG	09/01/23	In progress
<b>New – Items arising since last Full Council Meeting</b>				
	<b>Summary</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Created</b>	<b>Status</b>
<b>67/23</b>	Purchase Pavilion Booking System.	Asst Clerk (KH)	03/7/23	<b>Complete</b>
<b>69/23</b>	Provide Cllrs with update on energy usage.	Chair	03/7/23	<b>Complete</b>
<b>73/23</b>	Clerk to examine the insurance renewal and report back to the next meeting.	Clerk	07/08/23	<b>Complete</b>
<b>74/23</b>	Chair to look at CCTV connection for energy monitoring equipment.	Chair	07/08/23	<b>Complete</b>
<b>75/23</b>	Chair to obtain a quotation from Energypal for the 2024 Pavilion Energy contract and bring to next meeting.	Chair	07/08/23	<b>Complete</b>
<b>76/23</b>	Notify HMRC of dissolution of SPC Pavilion Ltd, and request zero rates from the rateable authority.	RFO/Clerk/Cllr Lyle	07/08	<b>TBA</b>
<b>77/23</b>	Accept quotation from Kestrel Mechanical Services following recent boiler service and schedule works.	Clerk	07/08/23	<b>Complete</b>
<b>78/23</b>	Chair to look into purchase of remote access to the controls of the Pavilion boiler.	Chair	07/08/23	<b>Complete</b>
<b>79/23</b>	Accept quotation from Ashford Security for the emergency lighting repairs and schedule works. <b><i>George's opinion is that this work is not necessary and we should wait until the next scheduled check by Ashford Security.</i></b>	Clerk	07/08/23	<b>Closed</b>
<b>80/23</b>	Accept quotation from Ashford Security for the maintenance contract for the emergency lighting, intruder alarm and fire alarm for the Pavilion. <b><i>The new contract would commence in May 2024.</i></b>	Clerk	07/08/23	<b>Complete</b>
<b>81/23</b>	Respond in support to TWBC for the change of name in the proposed 'Goudhurst, Lamberhurst and Horsmonden' Ward to 'Rural Tunbridge Wells' Ward.	Clerk	07/08/23	<b>Complete</b>
<b>82/23</b>	Confirm staff salaries back dated to 1st April 2023 and notify Payroll provider.	Clerk	07/08/23	<b>Complete</b>
<b>83/23</b>	Update Employee Code of Conduct on website.	Clerk	07/08/23	<b>Complete</b>
<b>84/23</b>	Accept quotation by Capel Groundcare to repair the wetpour at LGRG and schedule works.	Asst Clerk (KH)	07/08/23	<b>Complete</b>
<b>85/23</b>	Order replacement consumables for Defibrillators.	Asst Clerk (KH)	07/08/23	<b>Complete</b>
<b>86/23</b>	Report to Finance Committee to request a future budget of a minimum of £6,000 for replacement Defibrillators. <b><i>This is already in the budget for next year.</i></b>	Clerk/RFO/Asst Clerk (KH)	07/08/23	<b>Closed</b>

<b>87/23</b>	Respond to request to use the LGRG by a Football Goalkeeping Coaching company.	Asst Clerk (KH)	07/08/23	<b>Complete</b>
<b>88/23</b>	Update Air Committee Terms of Reference on website.	Clerk	07/08/23	<b>Complete</b>
<b>89/23</b>	Check tax implications on mobile phone for Groundsman.	RFO/Clerk	04/09/23	
<b>90/23</b>	Allocate £10,000 in accounting system for PWLB and include item on each future agenda on progress.	RFO/Clerk	04/09/23	
<b>91/23</b>	Publish Notice of conclusion and section 3 of AGAR on website.	Clerk	04/09/23	
<b>92/23</b>	Respond to Sevenoaks DC on planning application and notify relevant Sevenoaks DC ward councillors.	Asst Clerk (KH)	04/09/23	
<b>93/23</b>	Download app and complete paperwork for legal review	Clerk	04/09/23	
<b>94/23</b>	Confirm with Energypal the new 2 year energy contract with EDF.	Clerk	04/09/23	
<b>95/23</b>	Purchase new tables and chairs for Pavilion and allocate £5,000 in accounting system for this.	Clerk/RFO	04/09/23	
<b>96/23</b>	Order wreaths for Remembrance Sunday and contact relevant Churches to confirm times of Services.	Clerk	04/09/23	
<b>97/23</b>	Establish WG for Annual Parish Meeting 2024 and put item on agenda for next meeting.	Cllrs Curry, Muress & Tarricone/Clerk	04/09/23	
<b>98/23</b>	Confirm appointment of SPC rep to LGVH Trustees and request updates and minutes from their meetings.	Clerk	04/09/23	
<b>99/23</b>	Confirm Bronze package with Hugo Fox for website.	Clerk	04/09/23	
<b>100/23</b>	Check with KCC Highways re ATCs not clashing with roadworks on Speldhurst Road.	Clerk	04/09/23	
<b>101/23</b>	Seek quotations for works to path, step and fence at LGRG for Amenities Cttee to consider.	Asst Clerk (KH)	04/09/23	
<b>102/23</b>	Accept 2FA on office.com - Cllr Curry/Clerk to assist.	All Cllrs/Clerk	04/09/23	

### 23/197 Finance Committee – Report by Cllr Ellery

- Report by the Chair including any committee meetings held since the last Full Council meeting, the minutes having previously been forwarded to all Members. There had been no meeting.
- Report on budget virements and request that the virements listed be approved. There were none.
- Report on interim payments made since the last meeting.

**Mastercard:** £5.97\* Rumwoods Ltd Gift for George Mercieca; £5.72\* Amazon Salt for Weed Control; ££26.64\* Amazon Vinegar for Weed Control; £83.57\* Amazon Natural Roundup; £9 Unity Trust DD for Card Charges; £68.53\* Langton Green Service Station for Fuel for Van; £11.69\* Amazon Pavilion Internet Cabling/Switch; £18.99\* Amazon Ethernet Port for Pavilion; £30.60\* Amazon Pressure Sprayer for Weed Control; £97.54\* Elite Industrial Supplies Ltd for Hi Vis Jacket; £287.95\* CeX for Mobile Phone for Groundsman; £26.70\* Amazon Vinegar for Weed Control; £84.46\* Amazon Salt and Natural Roundup for Weed Control; £34.98\* B&Q for Grass Seed and WD40.

**Unity:** £24.96 BT DD for mobile phone; £208.47 Top Up for Unity Trust Mastercard; £25.35 Castle Water DD for Pavilion Water; £63.54 BT DD for Office Phone and Broadband; £1,099.04 NEST Pension DD.

Cllr Ellery queried whether the Groundsman should declare the provision of a work mobile phone as a tax benefit and the Clerk said she would check with the Responsible Finance Officer (RFO).

- To note decisions made under delegated authority. Items are starred above\*.

**23/198 Accounts for Payment**

It was **RESOLVED** that the invoices as listed below and checked by Cllr Muress, be paid.

Date	Payee Name	Reference	Amount £	Detail
05/09/2023	Katrina Lyle	MT2525	8.00	Payment for Companies House
05/09/2023	Kate Harman	MT2526	25.00	Office Clean
05/09/2023	Katie Neve	MT2527	20.63	Mileage and Expenses
05/09/2023	M R Lawrence	MT2528	350.00	Mowing and Strimming
05/09/2023	Capel Groundcare	MT2529	543.60	Playground Repairs
05/09/2023	Capel Groundcare	MT2530	872.16	Repairs to Playground wetpour
05/09/2023	J S Facilities Management	MT2533	191.94	Pavilion Cleaning
05/09/2023	Agrifactors (Southern) Ltd	MT2534	840.00	Pitch Maintenance
05/09/2023	Bright Sparks Commercial Ltd	MR2535	814.80	Electrical Inspection
05/09/2023	Kestrel Mechanical Services Ltd	MT2536	194.40	Boiler Maintenance Visit
14/09/23	KCC (KCS)	DD	362.41	Photocopier
15/09/23	Commercial Services Kent Ltd	MT2531	589.97	Groombridge Maintenance
15/09/23	Commercial Services Kent Ltd	MT2532	663.68	LGRG Maintenance
15/09/2023	M:power accounting	MT2540	54.00	Payroll
17/09/2023	J S Facilities Management	MT2541	198.53	Pavilion Cleaning
20/09/2023	Employees	MT2537	6,849.21	Salaries
20/09/2023	EDF Energy	DD	1,721.00	Pavilion Energy
22/09/2023	HMRC	MT2538	1,399.06	Tax and NI
29/09/223	Castle Water	DD	25.35	Pavilion Water
29/09/2023	Cloudy IT	MT2539	361.80	IT Support
	<b>TOTAL PAYMENTS</b>		<b>£16,085.54</b>	

**23/199 Speldhurst Chapel Project**

Discussed after item 23/195 above.

**23/200 Audited AGAR 2022-23**

Councillors were asked by the Clerk to note the completion letter and notice. The notice of conclusion would be posted on the website and noticeboard as required by the audit process.

**23/201 Planning Committee**

A meeting of the Planning Committee had been held on 14<sup>th</sup> August and draft minutes had been circulated. Cllr Rowe reported that 16 applications had been considered, with the committee remaining neutral on 12 and objecting to 4. The application for the Broomlands Estate had been objected to and more recently called in. Cllr Sankey provided an explanation of the Calling In process which meant the proposal would be considered and decided by the TWBC Planning Committee rather than delegated to the Planning Officer.

**To consider planning application 23/01473/FULL – Land South of Hallborough, Poundsbridge, Penshurst**

**Proposal: Erection of a forestry and wood workers' workshop with solar arrays. Hardstanding and landscaping.**

Councillors had previously objected to the application however SPC had since then been approached by the Planning Officer for a further comment following a change in the proposal by the applicant.

**Decision:** Thank you for inviting Speldhurst Parish Council (SPC) for further comments on planning application 23/01473/FUL (Land South of Hallborough Poundsbridge Penshurst Tonbridge Kent TN11 8AS - Erection of a forestry and wood workers workshop with solar arrays. Hardstanding and landscaping).

SPC's principal concern is the increased traffic movements associated with a timber based commercial business through Speldhurst Village which is one of only two access routes to the site and potential noise considerations. We note further details presented by the agent for the applicant indicating the maximum vehicle size would be limited to transit flatbeds of no more than 3.5 tonnes and one or two deliveries per year. Furthermore, the agent has said they would accept conditions being imposed limiting the vehicle size and restricting the site to non-commercial use which they say would limit the number of vehicle movements. While SPC acknowledges these concessions the agent has not commented on noise concerns associated with increased activity at the site or provided any noise impact assessment and mitigation proposals. Noise concerns were also raised by the Environmental Protection Officer in her email dated 14<sup>th</sup> July 2023.

If the applicant can produce a noise impact assessment with appropriate mitigations where relevant and they are conditioned by the Planning Authority together with conditions limiting size of vehicle and vehicle movements SPC would be happy to withdraw its objections.

The Assistant Clerk (KH) was asked to inform the Sevenoaks District councillor for Penshurst and Fordcombe of SPC's response to the application.

**23/202 Langton Green Recreation Ground (LGRG)**

- a) **To receive an update on the Pavilion Review:** The Chair provided an update as follows:
  - The Pavilion Review Panel were still waiting on legal confirmation before finalising the longer term Hire Agreement and it was hoped this document would be completed by the end of the year once confirmation of SPC's rights had been received from the solicitor. A further Interim Hire Agreement had been prepared based on the previous document and signed by Emma Howden of the Langton Pavilion Café. The Chair approved Cllr Ellery's request that Full Council be given the opportunity to review the new 12-month Hire Agreement document before it is put to the café proprietor for signature.
  - The Pavilion Review Panel's delegated authority to act and make decisions on behalf of SPC was due to expire imminently. It was **RESOLVED** to renew the delegated authority for Cllrs Rowe, Lyle, Curry, Davies and the Clerk as the Pavilion Review Panel to make decisions on behalf of SPC until February 2024.
  - An email had been received by the Chair from Mr Guy Lambert, Chair of Langton Green Community Sports Association (LGCSA) which had been circulated to councillors via email prior to the meeting.
- b) **To consider fixing the Energy Contract:** The Chair had approached a broker from Energy Pal, who had provided three different options for the renewal of the council's energy contract which was due to end in December. It was **RESOLVED** to take out a new two-year fixed term energy contract with EDF, who appeared to be the best value for money, with a contract day rate of 30.2 pence per day and a daily standing charge of 25 pence per day, excluding VAT.
- c) **To consider the purchase of new tables, chairs and storage:** SPC had a responsibility as part of the Heads of Terms to provide replacement chairs, tables and storage for the pavilion function room for a capacity of 110 users which it was hoped would enable easier logistical changes to the room set up. It was **RESOLVED** to delegate the purchase of suitable tables, chairs and storage to the Pavilion Review Panel up to a maximum value of £5,000 which would be taken from the RRIM (Repair, Renewal, Improvement and

Management) account. Cllr Dooley suggested it would be sensible to additionally invest in adequate trollies to enable easy moving of the chairs and tables.

- d) The Chair advised councillors that certain areas of the Pavilion had been hard-wired to ensure that all SPC's energy monitoring devices remained working whilst the building was without Wi-Fi. Access to the devices had been restricted.

8.40pm Cllr Leach left the meeting due to childcare requirements.

### **23/203 Remembrance Sunday**

The following councillors agreed to lay wreaths on behalf of SPC at the village Remembrance Sunday services:

Ashurst: Cllr Tarricone.

Speldhurst: Cllr Curry

Langton Green: Cllr Cleaver

Old Groombridge: Cllr Norton

The Clerk would order the wreaths, along with one on behalf of the Langton Green Village Society for which SPC would be reimbursed, from the Royal British Legion Village.

### **23/204 Annual Parish Meeting 2024**

Consideration was given to holding an Annual Parish Meeting (APM) in 2024. The Speldhurst Chapel Project was suggested as a topic for discussion and councillors were asked to email any further suggestions for topics or suitable speakers to the Clerk. It was **RESOLVED** that Cllrs Curry, Tarricone and Muress would form an APM Working Group.

### **23/205 Appointed Trustee to Langton Green Village Hall**

It was **RESOLVED** to appoint Malcolm Greenslade as the Speldhurst Parish Council Trustee for Langton Green Village Hall for 2024. The Clerk was asked to request regular updates from Mr Greenslade for Full Council periodically.

### **23/206 Committees and Working Groups (WG) and other Reports: to include any meetings held since the last Full Council meeting, the draft minutes having previously been forwarded to all Members.**

- a) **Governance Committee – Report by Cllr Mrs Lyle.** There had been no meeting.
- **Insurance Renewal** – Councillors were asked to note the response from Zurich Insurance regarding the renewal costs.
  - **Website Provision** – After free use for some time, Hugo Fox had now introduced a three-tiered charging system. It was **RESOLVED** to purchase the Bronze package from Hugo Fox for SPC's website provision at a cost of £9.99 pcm, excluding VAT.
- b) **Highways Committee – Report by Cllr Norton.**
- There had been no committee meeting however councillors and the Clerk had met with KCC Highways Team to discuss the Highways Improvement Plan (HIP) on 16<sup>th</sup> August at which the following topics were discussed:
- Installation of a pedestrian crossing outside Langton Green Primary School.
  - Automated Traffic Counts (ATCs) to be carried out in various parts of the parish.
  - Informal footpath on Farnham Lane between Dornden Drive and Great Footway.
- The Highways Committee meeting had been changed from 26<sup>th</sup> September to 3<sup>rd</sup> October and a meeting to discuss the Speldhurst HIP would be held on 8<sup>th</sup> September at 12.45pm.
- Footpaths:** Cllr Muress would be having a meeting with the Assistant Clerk (CB) to discuss the footpath maps for the parish and would subsequently be seeking volunteers to become Footpath Adopters.
- It was noted that a meeting to discuss the proposed cycle route through Langton Green and Rusthall to Tunbridge Wells town centre would be held with the Chair, Clerk, Borough Cllr Sankey, Hilary Smith of TWBC and the consultants appointed by TWBC.
- c) **Amenities Committee** – There had been no meeting.

- SPC's responsibilities regarding maintenance of the outside areas surrounding Langton Green Village Hall (LGVH) was considered and it was **RESOLVED** that the outside step and path at the back of the Main Hall as well as the fences around both the patio and the junior playground are all the responsibility of SPC.
  - It was **RESOLVED** to allow a local archaeologist who is trying to establish the history of Speldhurst to dig two test pits in Pocket Park. The pits would be dug, filled in and made good in the same day.
- d) **Air Traffic Committee – Report by Cllr Tarricone.** There had been no meeting. The committee was looking into how best to oppose the recent decision from Gatwick regarding the second runway (existing emergency runway) and changes to the existing flight patterns being approved by the Planning Inspectorate. This could involve collaborating with other organisations.
- e) **Environment WG – Report by Cllr Turner.** The meeting had been postponed to 6<sup>th</sup> September and Cllr Turner would provide updates on the EV charger and glyphosate-free weed control at the next Full Council meeting.
- f) **KALC – Report by the Chair** – The Chair would be attending a KALC meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> September at which he would raise SPC's concerns about air traffic.

**23/207 Diary Dates** – The following dates were noted:

6<sup>th</sup> September – Environment Working Group  
18<sup>th</sup> September – Planning Committee  
2<sup>nd</sup> October – Full Council (Ashurst VH)  
3<sup>rd</sup> October – Highways Committee  
9<sup>th</sup> October – Finance Committee  
16<sup>th</sup> October – Planning Committee  
23<sup>rd</sup> October – Governance Committee  
30<sup>th</sup> October – Amenities Committee  
31<sup>st</sup> October – Environment Working Group

**23/208 Items for Information:**

- The Assistant Clerk (KH) advised that the Hallmaster Booking system for the Langton Pavilion was now live. She would be adding data to the system during the coming weeks.
- The Chair advised councillors and clerks that two factor authentication was in the process of being implemented.
- Cllr Tarricone advised that both he and former councillor Julia Soyke were working on getting further volunteers for the Ashurst Speedwatch group.

There being nothing further to discuss, the meeting closed at 9.14pm.

**Chair**