



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

**Minutes of the Highways Working Group Meeting held on Tuesday 7th March 2023 at 7.30pm
Conducted via Microsoft Teams electronic communication.**

MEMBERS PRESENT Cllrs Norton (Chair), Barrington-Johnson (Vice-Chair), Dooley, Rajah and Tarricone, with Mr Langridge and Mr Whittaker.

BOROUGH AND COUNTY COUNCILLORS PRESENT: County Cllr McInroy.

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC: There were two members of public present.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Mrs K Neve – Clerk and Mrs C Barrett – Assistant Clerk (CB) (minutes).

1. To enquire if anyone present intends to film, photograph and/or record the meeting

The meeting was recorded by the Clerk for administrative purposes.

2. To receive and approve apologies and reason for absence

Apologies had been received from Cllrs Turner (unavailable) Ellery (prior commitment) and Borough Cllr Sankey (prior commitment).

3. Disclosure of Interests

There were none.

4. Declarations of Lobbying

There were none.

5. Minutes of the meeting held on 2nd November 2022 – RESOLVED that the minutes of the Highways Working Group meeting dated 2nd November 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

6. Public Open Session

Members of the public are invited to make representations to the Committee on any matters relating to the work of the Committee or to raise any issues of concern.

- Mr and Mrs Guy attended the meeting to raise the issue of parking in the layby on the A264 Langton Road. This caused serious visibility issues for them when exiting their property, which was accessed through the layby. The development of the nearby furniture shop into two houses with no designated parking spaces had already forced residents living along the A264 to move further along the road and

use the layby for parking. However, the situation had deteriorated in the last 18 months-2 years, culminating in several vans and a trailer starting to use the layby to park for days at a time. The depth of the layby meant that these vans tended to double park, which made exiting safely onto the busy A264 road challenging. Mr Guy said that their concerns were shared by their immediate neighbours. Councillors discussed solutions to this issue, including placing an island in the layby to make it impossible to double park there, and introducing marked parking bays. Cllr Dooley commented that marked parking bays could still present a risk to drivers reversing out of them onto a busy road. Mr Whittaker said that visibility was also poor coming out of nearby Stonewall Park Road, again, due to high-sided vehicles parked close to the junction.

The Clerk had consulted Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC) parking services, who had suggested painting white markings on the road surface of the layby as a deterrent. It was agreed that this should be the first step in tackling the problem. The aim of finding a long-term solution, such as narrowing the layby, would be added to the parish council's Langton Green H.I.P, although Cllr Norton explained that there were many road safety priorities across the Parish and unfortunately KCC budgets had been sharply reduced in recent years. Mr and Mrs Guy thanked the Parish Council for its support and it was agreed that the Clerk would email them with any updates.

Mr and Mrs Guy left the meeting at 7.55pm.

7. Review of action points

The action points were reviewed alongside the H.I.P. Action points 29/22, 30/22, 31/22, 32/22, 34/22, 35/22, and 36/22 were marked as complete. Action points 30/22 and 33/22 were still in progress.

8. Review of Highways Committee's Budget – to review the expenditure to-date.

The Clerk had circulated details of the annual budget which remained on track. There had been no major expenditure since the last meeting. The Clerk anticipated costs of £165 for the production of 'slow down for horses' signage.

9. Future Meetings of the Highways Working Group (HWG)

It had been agreed to continue operating as a Working Group for a further 6 months at a meeting on 14th June 2022. It was now time to review this position. The Clerk advised that the logical date for reverting back to committee status would be at the Annual Statutory Meeting on 9th May. Cllr Norton said it would be beneficial to return to in-person meetings. In response to a suggestion by Cllr Barrington-Johnson, it was agreed that if Cllr Turner was still unable to attend in person by this date, ways should be found to continue his participation, which was valued by members. An action point was set for the Chair to let Cllr Turner know the Working Group's plans and put forward this recommendation at the next Full Council.

10. Highways Terms of Reference

The following amendments were agreed:

- Item 10 - the words 'or opportunities' would be added after the words 'new problems'.
- Item 11 - the following sentence would be added: The committee will report on information received regarding the condition and maintenance of the public rights of way, and recommend actions as appropriate.
- Item 14 - the following sentence would be added: Terms of Reference will be reviewed periodically but no less than every 3 years.

Cllr Norton also suggested inserting the following paragraph as an introduction to the Terms of Reference (ToR):

The role of the Working Group is to:

- 1) Monitor and review highways issues within the parish, with particular reference to road safety.
- 2) Recommend actions for the parish council to pursue with Kent County Council (KCC), Kent Police and other stakeholders.

It was agreed that Working Group members would review this paragraph again when the minutes were shared to ensure they were happy with its content.

11. Highways Improvement Plan (HIP) (including consideration of any new issues by village taking into account correspondence, recent accidents, Speedwatch, and media)

a) Ashurst

- **Accidents in Ashurst** – The Clerk had circulated information about a number of Road Traffic Accidents (RTA's) which had taken place in Ashurst. She had been in contact with Kent County Council (KCC) Highways about this, and they had inspected the site but did not think that the state of the road surface was a contributing factor and had concluded, with Kent Police, that the accidents were due to driver error.

Cllr Tarricone said that speeding was an issue in both directions coming in to and out of Ashurst. He had approached residents for their support in lobbying KCC Highways for traffic calming measures at the top of the hill entering the village. Cllr Norton commented that this anecdotal evidence aligned with the speeding data which had been recorded by the Speed Indicator Device (SID).

It was agreed that the importance of establishing Speedwatch in Ashurst should be communicated to residents. Cllr Tarricone had volunteered to operate Speedwatch and Cllr Barrington-Johnson and Mr Langridge had volunteered to help get it set up. Cllr Barrington-Johnson advised that the ideal number of operators for each Speedwatch session was 3. The Clerk would continue to collate SID data, as it was agreed that this would be invaluable in showing that there was a serious speeding issue in the village. It was hoped that these two measures would have some success in persuading KCC Highways of the need for further traffic-calming.

b) Groombridge

- **SID Post Replacement** – The Clerk had instructed KCC to go ahead with the replacement and they would remove the old post as part of the works. The Clerk had written to the insurance company with a further chaser letter and so far, had not had a response.
- **Old Groombridge H.I.P.** – Cllr Norton had reviewed the Old Groombridge H.I.P. with Mr Myles, and concluded that while all the items remained relevant, the priority should be achieving a 20mph zone. Cllr Norton would raise this with KCC Highways who were due to visit the council office on 14th March. It was further agreed that it would be simpler to merge the two Old Groombridge H.I.P. action points into a single one.

c) Langton Green

- **Langton Road Layby Parking** – as discussed during the public open session, this item would be incorporated into the Langton Green H.I.P.
- **School Travel Plan** - There was some discussion as to the best way to support Langton Green Primary School in implementing its travel plan. Cllr Dooley said she was concerned about the effectiveness of the KCC Travel Plan, which could be more of a box ticking exercise that placed an obligation on Headteachers to produce a plan and persuade parents to adhere to it. Cllr Barrington-Johnson said that any involvement by the parish council should be proactive, with more of a local, targeted plan, featuring practical ideas to help convince parents of the benefits of initiatives such as walking buses, car sharing and walking to school where possible. He suggested that 2 or 3 people come up with some ideas about how the parish council could help and then visit the school to present them. Cllr Dooley also suggested starting with social media, using it in a sensitive way to engage people. It was agreed that Cllr Dooley would liaise with the Clerk about how to progress.
- **Footway Parking** – Permission had been given from Kent Police and TWBC to start re-issuing fliers asking drivers not to park on footways. It was agreed that the Clerk would print and issue fliers for all Councillors to place on the car windscreens of any offending vehicles.

- **Parking a Caravan in a Residential Area** – As the Police Community Support Officer and KCC were not minded to take up this issue, it was agreed not to pursue it further.
- **Speed Limit on Farnham Lane/Burnt House Lane** – The Clerk had circulated an email from a resident asking what could be done about the national speed limit on Farnham Lane and Burnt House Lane. This stretch of road was used daily as a ‘rat run’ for those driving to and from work and school in Tunbridge Wells and by delivery drivers throughout the day, with vehicles frequently reaching high speeds. With several Public Rights of Way in the surrounding fields and woods, the road was also used by dog walkers crossing from one footpath to another. The road was narrow and the 60mph speed limit made it extremely dangerous for cars meeting other cars and cars meeting pedestrians. It was agreed to add an action to the Langton Green H.I.P. item 8, as part of Farnham Lane’s traffic-calming aims.
- Cllr Norton added that he had held a successful meeting with Mr Whittaker, Cllr Barrington-Johnson and Mr Langridge to define a clear set of priorities for Langton Green, and the H.I.P had been updated accordingly.

d) Speldhurst

- **Stockland Green Road Speed Limit** – Cllr Rajah had emailed local residents appealing for Speedwatch volunteers and asking them to report near misses on the Near Miss register. He had compiled a dossier of local concerns and accident reports.
- **School Travel Plan** – Cllr Dooley would liaise with the Clerk’s office about how to progress a plan for Speldhurst Primary School at the same time as Langton Green Primary School.
- The Clerk had emailed Borough Cllr Rutland, who had offered to chase up the Police regarding enforcement sessions on Speldhurst Hill.
- Cllr Norton said that items on the Speldhurst HIP would be prioritised at a meeting between the relevant councillors.
- The Assistant Clerk (CB) had drafted a letter to Barden Road residents requesting that they report near misses on the Near Miss register and let the parish council know about any Road Traffic Accidents they experienced or witnessed.
- The Assistant Clerk (CB) would appeal for new Speedwatch Volunteers in the Speldhurst Parish Magazine.

12. SID Read Outs – SID data had been considered as part of item 11a relating to the Ashurst H.I.P.

13. Items requiring Full Council approval

- 3 ‘Slow Down for Horses’ signs at a cost of £55 each.
- The re-adoption of committee status at the Annual Statutory Full Council Meeting on 9th May, subject to Cllr Turner’s ability to attend.
- Amended ToR.

14. Items for information

- www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/report-a-problem - Reminder
- Network Rail Kent and Sussex Route Update February 2023

There being nothing further to discuss, the meeting ended at 9.08pm.

Chairman

Action Number	Action	Owner	Date created	Status
29/22	Email Cllr Rutland re. Speldhurst Hill Speedwatch site police attendance: Justine.Rutland@TunbridgeWells.gov.uk <i>Clerk has written to Cllr Rutland.</i>	Cllr Ellery	02/11	Complete
30/22	Investigate privately owned land at locations where mirrors could be installed for horse & rider safety.	Clerk	02/11	In progress
31/22	Contact KCC Highways rep to clarify comments following site visit on 12/08. <i>Meeting to take place on 14th March.</i>	Clerk	02/11	Complete
32/22	Draft letter to Miller Homes re. land owned by them on Farnham Lane. <i>Ed drafted - Letter, chaser and further letter sent – no response.</i>	Chair/Cllr Ellery	02/11	Complete
33/22	Contact residents on Barden Rd where 20mph ends leading out of village to Bidborough re. near miss register.	Clerk/Assist Clerk (CB)	02/11	In progress
34/22	Follow up with Cllr Rajah to collate near miss data for Stockland Green Road. <i>See report.</i>	Clerk/Assist Clerk (CB)	02/11	Complete
35/22	Email SID reporting instruction manual to Cllr Ellery. Ask manufacturer how to extract raw data.	Clerk/Assist Clerk (CB)	02/11	Complete
36/22	Publicise transport public satisfaction survey.	Assist Clerk (CB)	02/11	Complete
1/23	Add all new information to the H.I.P.	Assistant Clerk (CB)	07/03	TBA
2/23	Request white lines for LG layby	Clerk	07/03	TBA
3/23	Contact Cllr Turner regarding return to Committee status	Chair	07/03	TBA
4/23	Amend ToR	Clerk	07/03	TBA
5/23	Coordinate volunteers for Ashurst Speedwatch	Cllr Tarricone	07/03	TBA
6/23	Liaise with Clerk's office about progressing a plan to support the primary schools with their travel plans	Cllr Dooley	07/03	TBA
7/23	Issue all Cllrs with footway parking fliers	Clerk	07/03	TBA
8/23	Arrange meeting to prioritise items on Speldhurst H.I.P.	Chair	07/03	TBA
9/23	Appeal for new Speldhurst Speedwatch volunteers in media	Assistant Clerk (CB)	07/03	TBA
10/23	Present all items for approval at April FC	Clerk/Chair	07/03	TBA