

Local Government Act 1972



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

**Minutes of a Finance Committee Meeting held on
Monday 26th June 2023 at 7.30pm in the
Parish Council Office, Langton Green Recreation Ground**

MEMBERS PRESENT

Cllrs Ellery (Chair)(7.35pm), Scarbrough (Vice-Chair) (in the Chair until 7.35pm), Cleaver, Tarricone and Curry (ex-officio).

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no members of the public present.

OFFICERS PRESENT

Mrs K Neve – Clerk, Mr C May – Responsible Financial Officer (RFO).

1. To enquire if anyone present intends to record the meeting:

The meeting was recorded by the Clerk for accuracy of the minutes. The recording would be deleted once the meeting minutes are signed off at the next Finance Committee meeting.

2. To receive and approve apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Rowe (prior commitment). Apologies were also received from Cllr Lyle (ex-officio).

3. Disclosures of Interest

The Chair declared an interest in item 15h – as a shareholder of the Speldhurst Community Shop Ltd.

4. Declarations of Lobbying

Cllr Curry declared an interest in the Speldhurst School Grant Application as he recently been mildly lobbied as he had carried out some voluntary work at the school.

5. Minutes

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Finance Committee meeting dated 20th March 2023, copies having previously been forwarded to Members, be approved, and signed as a correct record.

6. Public Open Session

There were no members of the public present.

7. Review of Action Points

The Clerk reported that all action points had been completed.

8. Interim Payments

Unity Bank: £220.12 Veolia (recycling); £32.40 Bank charges; £652.78 transfer to Mastercard; £191.84 Pavilion cleaning; £54.00 Salary admin; £25.76 mobile.

Mastercard: £9.00 bank charges; £29.59* name badges; £25.11* name badges; £12.99* phone charger, £20.94* Office; £18.27* Maintenance equipment; £2.98* Pavilion maintenance; £26.56* maintenance; £18.99* weeding; £52.64* weedkiller; £24.00* sacks; £59.38* petrol.

Payments made under delegated authority are marked with an asterisk.

9. Financial position to review expenditure vs budget at 30th June 2023:

Summary sheets and detailed reports had been circulated prior to the meeting. The RFO reported that after 3 months into the financial year there were no anomalies, and that expenditure was in line with expectations.

10. Financial position to review expenditure for the Pavilion at 30th June 2023

Summary sheets and detailed reports had been circulated prior to the meeting. Cllr Curry explained the position of the licensee since the decision was made at the Emergency Full Council meeting held on 22nd July 2023. He said that SPC had extended the licence for a further 3 months and now clarification was being sought from both parties on legal rights.

It was too early to see a trend on most expenditure, except for Utilities which was going to be within expectations but still expensive. The RFO suggested that an energy broker should be contacted to review costs 2024 onwards.

11. Budget Virements

There were none.

12. Banking and reserves

The RFO reported that money held was with banks and within FSCS limits apart from Unity Bank which was over the limit by about £26,000 but would be reduced after payments approved at the July Full Council meeting.

He reported that he was still investigating the Internal Auditor's comments regarding how the Council's reserves were recorded and would make recommendations at the next meeting.

13. Committee and Working Group expenditure

The Clerk reported that there was currently no new planned committee and working group expenditure; however, the posts in the car park and the fence around the junior playground would soon both need replacing so an amount would need to be put in the budget for this – possibly around £10,000. When the amount was known and expenditure approved the RFO suggested transferring the funds to an Ear Marked Reserve account.

14. To review the following policies

a) Financial Regulations

At the last Full Council meeting on 5th June, the Clerk had advised councillors of an incident that had occurred at the Langton Green Recreation Ground (LGRG) involving a child being injured when a manhole cover over a sewerage drain had tipped up, causing the child to fall into the drain. Interim measures had immediately been carried out to make the manhole safe, and Dyno Rod had carried out a full survey of LGRG advising that two additional manhole covers had been discovered to be faulty. The recommended repairs have now been carried out and all plastic covers have been replaced with cast iron. The Clerk explained that there was a delay in the procedure whilst Full

Council approval was sought as the costs were in excess of the delegated authority spend limit for the Chair, Vice-Chair and Clerk (currently £2,000). The Clerk asked councillors to consider increasing the delegated authority spend limit for exceptional circumstances such as this when swift action was required for health and safety reasons. She further asked councillors to consider increasing the limit for the Finance Committee (currently £5,000). It was **RESOLVED** to recommend to Full Council that the limit for delegated authority for all three (Chair, Vice-Chair and Clerk) be raised to £5,000 in emergency situations and that any expenditure is reported as soon as is practicable. It was also **RESOLVED** to recommend to Full Council that the limit of expenditure that the Finance Committee can approve without referral be raised from £5,000 to £7,500.

16 Grant Requests

- a) **Speldhurst School** – **RESOLVED** to recommend to Full Council that a grant of £10,000 towards the new school kitchen be awarded.
- b) **St Mary’s Church, Speldhurst** – **RESOLVED** to grant £1,000 for churchyard maintenance.
- c) **Speldhurst Village Fete** – **RESOLVED** to grant £497.69 for the insurance but not any additional items. Clerk to advise.
- d) **Home-Start SW Kent** – **RESOLVED** to grant £750 towards the charitable work.
- e) **1st Speldhurst Rainbows Unit** – **RESOLVED** to grant £270 towards an event for the Rainbows.
- f) **St Martin’s Church, Ashurst** – **RESOLVED** to grant £1,000 for churchyard upkeep and £500 for the Broadsheet.
- g) **Update on Langton Green Village Hall Grant Application** – the Trustees had submitted further information for the grant previously awarded. This was acknowledged by the committee.
- h) **Update on Speldhurst Community Shop PWLB** – This was discussed ahead of a meeting which is to be held on Thursday 29th June when the Chapel Project Team will address the local community to gauge support. The RFO said that interest rates had gone up since it was last looked at in March, now currently about 5.4%. There was also the added complication of the Chapel Trustees now requesting 50% of any profit should the Chapel be sold after a “change of use” had been granted. All of this was noted and no decisions taken.
Cllr Curry asked the RFO to calculate the impact on the Band D precept if a PWLB was taken out in the current market so that he could advise the meeting on Thursday.

17 Broadband and Mobile Contract

The Clerk reported that, following consultation with the Chair she had renewed the BT Broadband and Mobile Phone contracts which were due to expire. The standard broadband contract had increased from last year due to inflation, but she had secured a further discount resulting in a monthly charge of £52.95 (the last 2-year contract was £48.95 per month) which included a new hub. The new 3-year mobile phone contract was reduced from £25.92 To £20.80 which included a new mobile phone. The old mobile phone would be reallocated to the Groundsman to upgrade his current phone.

18 Staff and Training

No training was currently planned but the following training has taken place since the last meeting: The Clerk had attended the Audit and Year End Training and the New Clerk’s Finance both organised by the Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC).

The Assistant Clerk has attended a course on Induction for new councillors.

Cllrs Curry and Muress had attended the Dynamic Councillor Training and Cllrs Cleaver and Leach would be booked onto the Dynamic Councillor Training when they are available.

19 Items for Information

- The Clerk asked councillors for guidance on when to start the process of reviewing the Energy Contract which was due for renewal at the end of the year.

- The Clerk advised councillors of a thank you letter received from St John’s Churchyard for their grant.
- Date of next meeting 9th October 2023.

There being nothing further to discuss, the meeting closed at 8.32pm.

Chair

Finance Committee Action Points

Action Number	Action	Owner	Date created	Status
15/23	Contact Energy Broker re energy prices for 2024	Clerk & Cllr Curry	26/06	
16/23	Review how reserves are recorded and make recommendations to Finance Committee	RFO	26/06	
17/23	Add FC agenda item for approval of expenditure limit increases for Fin Comm to £7,500	Clerk	26/06	
18/23	Add FC agenda item for approval of delegated emergency expenditure limit to £5,000	Clerk	26/06	
19/23	Add FC agenda item for approval of grant to Speldhurst school for £10,000	Clerk	26/06	
20/23	Pay grants awarded	Clerk	26/06	