

Local Government Act 1972



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

**Minutes of a Finance Committee Meeting held on
Monday 20th March 2023 at 7.30pm in the
Parish Council Office, Langton Green Recreation Ground**

MEMBERS PRESENT

Cllrs Ellery (Chair), Barrington Johnson, Rowe, Scarbrough and Tarricone.

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. Covid Compliance

Councillors were asked if they were comfortable with the arrangements for the meeting, which they confirmed. There were no other specific items relating to covid compliance.

2. 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.

3. To receive and approve apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Rajah (prior commitments). Apologies were also received from Cllrs Curry and Lyle (ex-officio).

4. Disclosures of Interest

The Chair and Cllr Rowe declared an interest in item 16j – as a shareholder of the Speldhurst Community Shop Ltd.

5. Declarations of Lobbying

There were none.

6. Minutes

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Finance Committee meeting dated 23rd November 2022, copies having previously been forwarded to Members, be approved, and signed as a correct record.

7. Public Open Session

There were no members of the public present.

8. Review of Action Points

The Clerk reported that all action points had been completed except for 44/22. “Make virement from contingency to CCTV when contract figure was known”. This would be explained under agenda item 10.

9. Interim Payments

Unity Bank: LGCT £207.16 for office electricity; JS Facilities £168.00 for pavilion cleaning; Kidman’s £37.09* for parts

Mastercard: £9 card charges

Payments made under delegated authority are marked with an asterisk.

10. Financial position to review expenditure vs budget at 31st March 2023:

Summary sheets and detailed reports had been circulated prior to the meeting. The RFO had assessed the figures at year-end and calculated that the virement for CCTV, which was an action point from the last meeting was unnecessary. This was because the negotiated contract figure was lower than previously thought and it was offset by other figures that were in credit.

There were small differences between budget and expenditure but the overall plus balance to be carried forward into General Reserves would be about £2,500. He would adjust any carried forward amounts once the final figures were known at close year-end (31st March).

11. Financial position to review expenditure for the Pavilion at 31st March 2023

Summary sheets and detailed reports had been circulated prior to the meeting. The RFO reported that there was a deficit this year of about £7,600 (final figure will be determined at year-end). It was agreed that a virement from the RRIM EMR account to General Reserves would be made for the final figure. The excess expenditure was mainly due to increased electricity costs, emergency lighting repairs and boiler upgrade. The transfer from the EMR account would require Full Council approval and because it was year-end would need to be approved retrospectively.

12. Budget Virements

Please refer to item 16 (Grant Requests) for further budget virements.

13. Banking and reserves

The RFO reported that all accounts were within FSCS protection limits, but other accounts were sought because when the half-yearly precept was paid at the end of April balances would exceed the limit. The RFO again mentioned CCLA as a possible placement and Cllr Ellery had suggested a one-year Government Bond. There was much discussion and the RFO said that this would have to be classed as an investment and questioned whether now was the right time to place money for a long period when there could be demands in the short-term. The RFO was requested to explore if it was possible for a Parish Council to purchase a bond.

14. Committee and Working Group expenditure

RESOLVED to renew CPRE membership at a cost of £60.

15. To review the following policies

- a) Budget Virement Policy
- b) Grant Awarding Guidelines

It was agreed to recommend both policies for approval with no changes.

16 Grant Requests

- a) **St Mary’s Church, Speldhurst** – **RESOLVED** to grant a further amount of £1,000 for maintaining the churchyard.
- b) **Speldhurst Recreation Ground** – the applicant explained that rising costs had almost doubled the costs since the original request. Speldhurst Parish Council (SPC) had already made a grant of £8,000 towards the project and after consideration agreed to make a recommendation to Full Council that a further grant be made of £7,000, making a total grant of £15,000 towards the new playground equipment. If approved by Full Council a virement would be made from contingency for £7,000 and be added to the committed funds column.
- c) **Little Birches Nursery** – there was much discussion on the application. Councillors **RESOLVED** to support the upgrade to patio flooring up to a maximum of £1,500 once the final costs and overall funding for the project were known. A virement would be made from contingency to a new section and added to the committed column.
- d) **Citizen’s Advice Bureau** – **RESOLVED** to grant £1,000.
- e) **St John’s Church, Groombridge** – **RESOLVED** to grant £1,000 towards the maintenance of the churchyard.
- f) **St Martin’s Church, Ashurst** – it was agreed to defer this request until the next meeting as a grant had already been made in this financial year.
- g) **Langton Green Village Hall** – The Trustees had applied for a grant to upgrade the hall. This was applied for in two parts and spread over two financial years.
The first grant application was for £10,000 towards renovation of the hall toilets, which if agreed was to be paid in August 2023. After much discussion it agreed to recommend to Full Council that this request be supported subject to further details of the quotations. If agreed by Full Council a virement would be made from contingency.
The second grant application was for £15,000 towards solar panels, which if agreed was to be paid in May 2024 and would be budgeted for in the next financial year. Again after discussing the request, it was agreed to recommend that Full Council approve the grant subject to further details of the quotations.
- h) **Coronation Treasure Hunt** – **RESOLVED** to approve a grant for £150 to support the event. Councillors said that they would prefer it if the grant was not spent on the purchase of 50 pence pieces.
- i) **Speldhurst Pram Race** – Councillors said the application did not specify what the money was for and although they are happy to support the event, on this occasion they required more details. The decision was deferred.
- j) **Speldhurst Community Shop** – The RFO had received notification from the organisers that their bid for money from the Community Ownership Fund (COF) had been rejected. They would be asking for a meeting to discuss the way forward.
The RFO had made enquiries into the cost of a Public Works Loan Board (PWLb), which would now be in the region of £300,000. He said the loan over 50 years (4.69%) based on Equal Instalments of Principal (EIP) would initially cost £20,000pa but interest payments would reduce over the years as the principal reduced. Over 25 years (4.35%) the initial cost would be £25,000pa. This would mean if consultation were successful the precept would have to be raised by about 13.5%.
This item would need to be added to the Full Council agenda for April for Councillors to discuss and decide whether to take this proposition forward.

17 Staff and Training

The Clerk would be undertaking the KALC Audit and Year End Training.

18 Items for Information

- The Clerk reconfirmed the change of external auditor which was now Mazars LLP.
- Date of next meeting 26th June 2023.

There being nothing further to discuss, the meeting closed at 8.50pm.

Chair

Finance Committee Action Points

Action Number	Action	Owner	Date created	Status
1/23	Create a virement from RRIM EMR to General Reserves once final figure is known (about £7.6k)	RFO	20/3	
2/23	Add the above EMR virement to Full Council agenda to be approved retrospectively	Clerk	20/3	
3/23	Renew CPRE membership	Clerk	20/3	
4/23	Policies on Full Council agenda	Clerk	20/3	
5/23	Pay St Mary's Church grant £1,000	Clerk	20/3	
6/23	Add recommendation of additional grant Speldhurst Playground to Full Council agenda	Clerk	20/3	
7/23	Make virement for £1,500 from contingency to new section for grant to Little Birches	RFO	20/3	
8/23	Pay CAB grant £1,000	Clerk	20/3	
9/23	Pay St John's Church grant £1,000	Clerk	20/3	
10/23	Add recommendation of grants to LGVH Trustees to Full Council agenda	Clerk	20/3	
11/23	Request copies and details of quotes from LGVH Trustees	Clerk	20/3	
12/23	Pay grant of £150 for Treasure Hunt	Clerk	20/3	
13/23	Respond to Pram Race request asking for more details	Clerk	20/3	
14/23	Add Community Shop PWLB item to FC agenda	Clerk	20/3	