



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

Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held

on Monday 6th September 2021 at 7.30pm in the Palmer Room at Langton Green Village Hall

MEMBERS PRESENT

Cllrs Pate (Chairman), Barrington-Johnson, Curry, Langridge, Myles, Rowe, Scarborough and Mrs Soyke.

OFFICERS PRESENT

Mrs K Neve – Clerk.

IN ATTENDANCE

Borough Cllr Allen was in attendance. Apologies had been received from County Cllr McInroy and Borough Cllrs Stanyer and Ms Willis.

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were two members of the public present.

21/168 To enquire if anyone intends to record the meeting

No-one present intended to record the meeting.

21/169 To accept and approve apologies and reasons for absence

Apologies had been received from Cllrs Mrs Lyle for health reasons, Ellery due to a prior commitment, Rajah for Covid-related reasons, Turner due to a family commitment and Mrs Woodliffe for health reasons.

21/170 Disclosure of Interests

The Clerk declared an interest in item 20a.

21/171 Declarations of Lobbying

There were none.

21/172 Minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 2nd August 2021

RESOLVED that the minutes, previously forwarded to Members were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

21/173 Borough and County Councillors' Reports

- Borough Cllr Allen reported that the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, Robert Jenrick, had visited Tunbridge Wells on 1st September and met with the MP, Leader and CEX to look at the regeneration work being undertaken in town centres. The Secretary of State walked through parts of Royal Tunbridge Wells and was briefed on a number of initiatives including the newly renovated and repurposed flats for homeless residents in Crescent Road, a project that was made possible by financial support from his government department, as well as s106 planning contributions; the Amelia Scott, the new cultural and learning space, which will house a range of arts heritage, culture and wellbeing services, attracting footfall to the town centre; and walking through the town's pedestrian precinct, he saw first-hand some of the challenges the Council faces from the closure of high street chains, the impact of the pandemic on footfall and high business rates.
- The Clerk read out a report submitted by Borough Cllr Ms Willis updating on homelessness in the borough. 697 people facing homelessness had contacted the council from 1st January to 31st July. Emergency housing for people that need it would be provided when the weather becomes colder. Rough sleeping was an ongoing challenge. The homeless charity, the Bridge Trust, had helped purchase three flats. The Council was looking at preventative work and Tunbridge Wells Churches were looking at a peer mentoring scheme. The first two residents had moved into the Crescent Road accommodation and TWBC were committed to providing homes to five Afghan families in the next year.
- The Clerk read out a report submitted by County Cllr McInroy which covered two important consultations: the KCC Budget Consultation, asking for spending priorities, which closes on 19th September and the KCC Household Waste and Recycling Centre Consultation, which closes on 30th September. He encouraged councillors and residents to complete the household waste survey, in particular, as he had received many comments regarding the unnecessary inconvenience of having to book appointment slots. Both surveys can be accessed on the KCC website – www.kcc.gov.uk.

21/174 Public Open Session

No members of the public present wished to speak.

21/175 Appointment of Committees/Working Groups (WG)

RESOLVED that the recommendation by the Governance WG to reassign Cllr Ellery from Planning to Governance be endorsed. Cllr Ellery would remain a member of the Planning Committee until the members shielding because of Covid return to physical meetings, but he would only be called if needed.

21/176 Finance Committee

- a) There had been no meeting of the Finance Committee meeting since the last Full Council meeting.
- b) Budget virements: There were none.
- c) Interim payments made since the last meeting: Unity: £123.32 transfer to Mastercard; £195.64 Veolia waste removal. Mastercard: £1.98* Emergency light testers; 39.41* Petrol (van and tools).
- d) Decisions made under delegated authority are starred above.

21/177 Accounts for Payment

RESOLVED that the invoices as listed, be paid, with the exception of the LGRG grounds maintenance payment which was to be delayed until clarification is sought from the RFO. The description of which should be changed from mowing to grounds maintenance in.

Councillors agreed that a review of the contract to provide maintenance was to be sought through the Finance Committee and the LGRG (Cllrs Ellery and Mrs Lyle to work on this) to ensure value for money.

Payee Name	Ref.	Amount £	Detail
BT PLC	DD	24.72	Mobile
Ashurst McDermott Hall Trust	MT2070	30.00	Room hire
Sac-O-Mat UK Ltd	MT2071	170.54	Canine refuse bags
Langton Green Charitable Trust	MT2072	21.25	Meeting room hire
PKF Littlejohn LLP	MT2073	720.00	External Audit fees
Viking Direct	MT2074	99.12	Stationery
Kidman's Ltd	MT2075	79.87	Tool replacement parts
RBS Software Solutions	MT2076	148.80	Software support package
Tate & Tonbridge Fencing	MT2077	97.55	Posts for LGRG
Prestige Plumbing Services	MT2078	694.80	Pavilion – water heater/taps
KALC	MT2079	60.00	Training – Clerk's Conference
Treework	MT2080	732.00	Trees – Pocket Park
Speldhurst News	MT2081	12.00	Broadsheet subscription
NALC	MT2082	30.00	Training – Environment
Agrifactors (Southern) Ltd	MT2083	1,260.00	LGRG Grounds Maintenance
Langton Life	MT2084	300.00	Advertisement LL
MR Lawrence	MT2085	380.00	Mowing LG & Speld
Katie Neve	MT2086	35.55	Expenses
Kate Harman	MT2087	9.00	Expenses
C May	MT2088	19.50	Expenses
KCC (KCS)	DD	117.83	Photocopier
Employees	MT2089	5,282.29	Salaries
N.E.S.T. Pension Scheme	MT2091	422.66	Pension contributions
EDF Energy	DD	322.00	Pavilion – electricity
Castle Water	DD	5.00	Pavilion – water
Veolia	DD	145.24	Pavilion – waste disposal
Total:		£11,219.72	

21/177 Planning Committee

Cllr Barrington-Johnson reported that a Planning Committee meeting had taken place on 16th August 2021 and referred to the minutes which had been circulated prior to the meeting. Cllr Barrington-Johnson updated councillors on:

- Jockey Farm, Rusthall – A meeting had been held between SPC, RPC and Greg Clark MP regarding the MP's response to the TW Draft Local Plan on the proposal for additional recreational facilities. Both SPC and RPC representatives, on reflection, had agreed that the proposals should remain in the Local Plan as it provided some protection against housing development, and the Parish Council would be consulted on any future application. They would jointly speak to the owners of the farm to explain their response.
- Permitted Development – Article 4 Directions – In 2013 the Government had changed the nationally set regulations on permitted development rights to allow offices to be converted to residential use without the need for planning permission. This had had significant implications for the town centre of Tunbridge Wells with considerable loss of office premises and in 2018 TWBC served a number of "Article 4 Directions" on various premises removing these rights, requiring instead full planning permission for any future proposals. Further changes have since been made and there are potential significant implications for the loss of facilities in smaller settlements which provide an essential service to the local populations.

In order to protect essential local shops, cafes and restaurants, TWBC had served a series of Article 4 Directions in some of the parishes within the borough, including Langton Green. The affected premises were the Baker, Newsagents, Convenience Store, Restaurant and Café on Langton Road.

The Chairman detailed that he had been contacted by the Courier regarding Article 4 impact on the Parish and had provided what he intended as a balanced quote (which was used in the article), aiming to highlight any effort to protect local amenities was a positive one for the community that we serve.

21/178 Langton Green Recreation Ground (LGRG)

The Clerk read out a report on behalf of Cllr Mrs Lyle from the Pavilion Management Working Group updating councillors that:

- a) The café was back at full strength at the Pavilion and monitoring how it was operating with them providing Saturday café facilities alongside the football training. They were planning to restart the volunteer led community lunch on a Monday in October.
SPC had received 8/12 of its budgeted income at a point that was 5/12 through the financial year, which was encouraging, although it should be noted that the budget was very conservative and anticipated a loss this year. A breakeven point was anticipated, provided there were no major unbudgeted expenses this year.
Cllr Mrs Lyle was seeking to convene another meeting of the Pavilion Management Committee primarily to discuss the expectations for how the Pavilion should function. LGCSA were unwilling to clear up after their bookings at the weekend which severely limited the appeal of the Pavilion as a party venue. In addition, the LGCSA believe too little was charged for the café's occupational licence and it did not generate enough money from the Pavilion.
The possibility of having the cafe as the sole user at a higher fee was being explored. This would give the café more freedom of opportunity and responsibility, would be easier to manage vis a vis LGCSA, and would simplify the management from SPC's perspective. There were however several emotive, in-principle and legal hurdles to overcome before any such agreement could be made. Cllr Mrs Lyle would keep councillors updated and seek the council's view and/or approval when appropriate.
- b) c) and d) Neither of the two companies that had come out to look had followed up with a quote which was disappointing. They only have the current very expensive quotes for the matting. The pathway widening could wait a year for review to see how it was once it was only Year Reception using the school side entrance again (and have some short term/removable solution laid down by the Groundsman if required). The recreation ground swales would need to be revisited and Cllr Mrs Lyle asked for any recommendations for contractors to help to be passed to her, Cllrs Turner and Mrs Woodliffe or the Clerk.

21/179 EV Charge Points

The Clerk advised councillors that the residents' survey for EV charge points had gone live and asked councillors to encourage their local networking groups to complete the survey before the deadline of 17th September.

21/180 The Queen's Platinum Jubilee Tree Planting

Cllr Langridge agreed to champion this item and look into bringing a proposal forward to a future meeting on a suggested tree planting scheme for each of the villages within the parish to commemorate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

21/181 Langton Green Village Sign

Cllr Langridge reported that the Langton Green Village sign had required refurbishment. It was on Parish Council land and the original creator, Ron Harvey, had been commissioned to undertake the work, which took place during August, with permission from the Parish Council, given by the Chairman. The refurbishment would be paid for out of Village Society funds.

21/182 Langton Green Village Hall

Cllr Barrington-Johnson reported that Mark Taylor had stepped down as Trustee representing SPC for the Langton Green Village Hall. Malcolm Greenslade had been suggested to replace him as the SPC representative. The representative would liaise on issues which affect SPC. **RESOLVED** – that Malcolm Greenslade be accepted as the new SPC representative for the Langton Green Village Hall.

21/183 Storage of Historical Archive Material for the Parish

Cllr Langridge reported that he had been approached by a resident who wished to donate some historical information and he proposed the setting up of an historical society which was to be associated with the Parish Council so that the ownership passed on to future generations. Councillors were supportive of the idea and Cllr Langridge agreed to bring a proposal to a future meeting on the setting up of the historical society.

21/184 Annual Open Meeting

The Chairman reported that the suggested guest speaker for the proposed next annual open meeting was unavailable to attend on Monday 18th October. Councillors agreed with the Chairman's recommendation that, as the open meeting was at the discretion of the Council, it be deferred until next annual parish meeting in May when residents would hopefully be more comfortable attending an open meeting. A KALC Community Award was due to be presented and it was agreed that the recipient be invited to attend the October Full Council meeting when the award would be given.

21/185 Chairman's Report

The Chairman had nothing to raise.

21/186 Working Groups and Other Reports to include any Meetings held since the last Full Council Meeting, the Draft Minutes having been previously forwarded to all Members.

a) **Governance WG** – A meeting of the Governance Working Party had taken place on 1st September and the draft minutes which had been circulated prior to the meeting. The Clerk read out a report by Cllr Mrs Lyle requesting the council to resolve and approve:

- The final wording of the new Clerk's (KN) contract of employment. **RESOLVED** – that the inclusion of the following wording in the Clerk's (KN) contract be approved: "Your pay will be reviewed annually (upwards only) having regard to a) inflation, b) NALC rates and c) increased competence and responsibility". The Clerk (KN) would aim to start CILCA in February 2022 as part of the contract and would be attending the annual Clerk's Conference later this month.
- The outgoing Clerk's (CM) proposed reduction in working hours was discussed and it was **RESOLVED** – that the Clerk's (CM) request to reduce his working hours as follows be approved: August - 25 hours, September - 20 hours, October - 15 hours and November - 10 hours. A new contract would be drawn up by the Clerk (KN) in October to be submitted to Full Council for approval.
- The Assistant Clerk (CB) had requested to carry out some extra work outside the SPC work which would not impact on her SPC work. It was also recommended that she become a member of SLCC. **RESOLVED** – that the request by the Assistant Clerk (CB) to carry out additional work outside SPC be approved and her membership of SLCC be agreed.

- Delegation of authority to RFO – Delegated authority needed to be transferred to the Clerk (KN) and the credit card transferred to the new Clerk (KN). The WG agreed that the delegated authority should remain with the Clerk. **RESOLVED** – that the credit card be transferred to the new Clerk (KN).
- Policies
 - The revised Standing Orders – Financial Regulations that separate out the Clerk’s and RFO’s responsibilities.
 - The adoption of the Environment Policy.
 - The draft policy on the use of Council Land.**RESOLVED** – that the following policies be agreed and adopted: the revised Standing Orders – Financial Regulations; the revised Environment Policy and the draft policy on the use of Council land.

- b) **Highway WG** – There had been no meeting since the last Full Council meeting.
- Cllr Pate reported that a meeting was due to take place on 8th September when the community feedback on the TRO – 50-40mph A264 Ashurst and B2110 Groombridge Hill would be discussed. Cllr Barrington-Johnson said that if the TRO had to be referred to the Joint Transportation Board (JTB), County Cllr McInroy should be approached to offer his support.
- c) **Amenities WG** – There had been no meeting of the Amenities WG since the last Full Council meeting.
- Cllr Rowe reported that a meeting was due to take place on 27th September.
- d) **Air Traffic WG** – There had been no meeting of the Air Traffic meeting since the last Full Council meeting.
- Cllr Barrington-Johnson advised that a meeting would soon be required. There was currently a total review of air space in the country being undertaken. He had attended a recent meeting led by Gatwick and would be attending another meeting on Gatwick’s plans to formally convert their emergency runway into a full use runway which would increase the current capacity of 42 million to 78 million; the same size as Heathrow. Cllr Barrington-Johnson explained that other councillors were also able to attend this meeting and he would report back to the next meeting. Cllr Soyke suggested that we liaise closely with Kent County Council and involve County Cllr McInroy for support.
- e) **Footpaths** – Cllr Langridge reported that around 60 notices regarding problem solving had now been put up. Rotherfield PC had seen our signs and would be copying our idea. The biggest problem was hedges and overhanging trees. Cllr Langridge encouraged councillors and residents to take a pair of secateurs with them while using any of the footpaths to deal with any urgent and dangerous overhanging.
- f) **EWG** – There had been no meeting of the Environment Working Group since the last Full Council meeting.
- g) **KALC** – There was nothing to report.

21/187 Diary Dates

- 8th September – Highways Working Group
- 13th September – Planning Committee
- 27th September – Amenities Working Group
- 4th October – Full Council Meeting

21/188 Items for Information:

- The Clerk reported that a letter had been received from a resident seeking reimbursement for tree works they had carried out after receiving the letter from SPC asking householders to cut overhanging foliage from footpaths. Councillors were sympathetic but were unable to agree to reimbursement as the responsibility lay with the householder.
- The Clerk reported that a 6-week consultation ends on 30 September inviting comments on the continuation of the booking system to visit KCC Household Waste Recycling Centres. This had been shared on social media to encourage residents to indicate their dissatisfaction at the booking system.
- The Clerk reported that a letter had been received notifying the Parish Council that the owners of Shadwell Woods would soon be putting the land up for sale.
- The Clerk advised councillors that TWBC had reminded Parish Councils to respond to the consultation on the Electoral Review by 9th September. Councillors confirmed that they were responding individually.
- The Chairman asked Borough Cllr Allen if there were any update on the suspension of the garden waste service. Borough Cllr Allen agreed to inform Speldhurst Parish Council at the earliest opportunity if he receives an update and reported that the length of time of the suspension would be added on free of charge.

There being no further items the meeting closed at 21:03.

Chairman