

**Local Government Act 1972**



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

**Minutes of the Full Council Meeting**

**Held at 7.30pm on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> March 2024 in the Palmer Room, Langton Green Village Hall**

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**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Councillors Curry (Chair), Lyle (Vice-Chair), Cleaver, Ellery, Leach, Norton, Rowe and Turner.

**OFFICERS PRESENT**

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

**IN ATTENDANCE**

Borough Cllr Allen was in attendance.

**MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

There 24 members of the public present.

**24/43 To enquire if anyone intends to record the meeting**

The meeting was recorded by the Clerk for the accuracy of the minutes. The recording would be deleted in line with our data protection policy providing the meeting minutes are signed off at the next Full Council meeting.

**24/44 To accept and approve apologies and reasons for absence.**

Apologies had been received from Cllrs Muress (away); Davies (family commitment) and Tarricone (work commitments).

**24/45 Disclosure of Interests**

Councillors' ongoing disclosures were noted:

Cllr Lyle is a Speldhurst Parish Council (SPC) Trustee of Langton Green Community Sports Association (LGCSA).

Cllrs Ellery, Rowe and KH have shares in the original Speldhurst shop and post office.

**24/46 Declarations of Lobbying**

Cllrs Curry, Lyle and Leach had been lobbied regarding the 3G pitch application from LGCSA.

**24/47 Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2024**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of 5<sup>th</sup> February 2024 Full Council meeting, previously forwarded to members, were a correct record and signed by the Chair.

The Chair brought item 8, Chair's Report, forward to this point in the meeting and reported as follows:

"Good evening. We have some very exciting news to share with you this evening, among some other pressing issues which I am sure many of you are here about.

Over the past week, we have been hearing some concerning rumours regarding the 3G application, and we put some clarifying points up on the website to try to put minds at ease.

LGCSA have asked that I correct some of these points for accuracy, and I am pleased to do so. We have also updated the website.

On funding, we stated they had a commitment for £1.5m. This is not the case yet; the application is the first step to potentially attracting that funding. I am happy to correct the record. The point was really made to clarify that SPC do not have any financial interest in the application.

We expressed sympathy if the community felt that they had not been adequately consulted. LGCSA would like it noted that they formed a Community Involvement Committee in November 2023, and they have met with, amongst others, Langton Green Primary School, Aylesford Football Club, MSport, First Class Football, Home Health Fitness and The Crowborough Junior Football League, to ascertain the levels of demand for a 3G facility in the area.

To this, I would comment that to me, engaging only with those who may stand to benefit from a 3G pitch does not represent true community outreach, other than perhaps the primary school, who to the best of my knowledge have not yet made any statement about the application. That was the focus of the comment – that we sympathise with the community who felt this engagement did not reach them.

It has also been suggested that I have not presented answers which LGCSA have provided me with for questions I have asked of them. This is not true – at Planning, I did mention the early Saturday morning I spent at Bennett with them, and many of the points I raised were in reference to answers I gained from that trip. These may not have been minuted in their totality, and I am happy to correct those draft minutes. Among those comments I made were:

- That the club members already play on rubber crumb surfaces, so concerns about new exposure to the material could be interpreted as reduced.
- That the fencing, while tall, when painted dark green, does blend in with the tree line more than one might expect.
- That parking, while a challenge, can be operationally managed with a “dead window” between matches, and they are actively having thoughts about implementing this.

I thank Chris Allen for his time showing me the pitch in operation.

I also raised two questions verbally, and over email as requested, which I was happy with the answers to:

- If the new access path would affect the swales, and the positioning of it – it is to be positioned next to them (rather than over them) and should not affect their performance.
- The biodiversity net gain report appeared not to include the square meterage of the new paths, only the pitch. I am told the net gain would be slightly reduced, but still within acceptable parameters.

I’m also happy to relay that per the planning process, LGCSA are not obliged to inform anyone of their application; that is down to Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC) as planning authority.

On the matter of our neutrality, I am currently personally neutral on the subject. There are arguments and counterarguments until the cows come home for almost every aspect of the application. The benefit to local youth and sports are clear to me. The impact on the local amenity, and community outside of sports associations, also requires keen inspection.

I can see no requirement for a Parish Council to not have an opinion on the application affecting their own land.

LGCSA have stated they do not wish to attend tonight as they consider us “predetermined” i.e. that our minds are already made up. However, while the Planning Committee have made a recommendation to Full Council, this meeting, it is for Full Council tonight to decide our official position.

With regards to our minutes, they reflect what was said at meetings. There is no expectation of us to ensure everything the public says is correct and factual, and equally they should not be read as such.

And finally, I’d like to clarify that LGCSA have followed the planning process correctly. Any disappointment in how they have handled the application falls outside that of the planning process, and more about how they choose to interact with anyone outside their organisation.

They are not here tonight, because by their statement, they are disappointed with how SPC fail to protect them in meetings from being vocally confronted. SPC endeavour to chair public meetings correctly and respectfully at all times. We have a code of conduct we are obliged to adhere to. While debate is welcome, civility and kindness are equally important. If anybody attending this meeting or future meetings of the parish council feels that we have failed to do this, our door is always open. Please come and speak to us.

I do think that if they had landed the application, then held a public open session of their own, outside of SPC, explaining why the application had to be submitted in a hurry (there’s a funding window), explaining some of their choices, and explaining how operational mitigation of many concerns could be assured, these answers could have really helped allay concerns from local residents. But they chose not to; such is their right. I genuinely feel that with better public engagement, this application could have been met with much broader support, and I think that is a shame”.

Cllrs Rowe, Norton, Cleaver, Turner and Curry then commented on Mr Lambert’s (Chairman LGCSA) letter of 1<sup>st</sup> March regarding SPC’s conduct which, in summary, included the following points:

- The letter questioned the integrity of councillors, inferring they are biased, not impartial and unqualified to comment on the application.
- This is a serious allegation which Councillors refute. All councillors follow the NOLAN principles, their integrity is sound and SPC has gone the extra mile to hear comments from both sides.
- Councillors have issues with how LGCSA are conducting themselves. It was inappropriate and unprofessional to publicise their letter of complaint.
- SPC are not the decision-making authority in the planning process – they are consultees only and councillors can therefore attend meetings with their own personal opinions, predetermined or otherwise. The issues are then discussed at meetings so that a majority opinion can be agreed on behalf of the parish.
- It was disappointing that LGCSA representatives chose not to attend public meetings - SPC reiterated its commitment to an environment which promotes healthy debate rather than heated argument and hopes LGCSA will re-engage soon.

#### **24/48 Public Open Session**

Approximately 24 members of the public attended the meeting, most regarding application 24/00235/FULL for the 3G pitch, Langton Green Recreation Ground. It appeared that 2 were in favour of the application and the majority of the remainder objecting. Mr James Bowdidge was attending to give an update report on the Langton Pavilion Hub. Below is a summary of the points raised:

- In favour:
  - If SPC had not included inaccuracies regarding the 3G pitch application on their website, LGCSA would not have responded in the way they had although with that said I did not agree with all of the contents of the letter and in particular calling into question the integrity of councillors. It is recognised that their public communications do need to improve.
  - It is important that SPC and LGCSA try to work more coherently together for the sake of Langton Green (LG).
- Objecting:

- It is sad that the whole application has become so divisive and derogatory. Engagement by LGCSA with the community could have really helped everyone. There were approximately 160 comments submitted on the planning portal in support before residents were made aware of the application illustrating that LGCSA members were asked by the club to comment on the 3G before residents were advised of its existence.
- Comments on the planning portal: 80% are in favour of the 3G but only 13.7% of them live in LG and would be affected by the new pitch. The majority of supporters do not live in LG.
- One resident reported that LGCSA have been ‘trolling’ her because she objected to the application online. Reports had been received of members being hounded to submit a comment.
- SPC need to seriously consider the future financial implications to them if the 3G goes ahead. This affects the whole parish who pay their rates.
- Refer to paragraphs 21, 22, 25, cp4, r1 in the TWBC Local Plan.
- Increased traffic: road safety issues in an area which already experiences acute problems.
- Environmental reasons: Light and noise pollution; flooding; excessive traffic; damage to wildlife. The Environmental Officer reports that the effects of the 3G on the village have been underestimated.
- Health consequences: is the rubber crumb poisonous and toxic? What will happen when the pitch needs replacing and how sustainable is it?
- Has the application been called in? Chair: Yes, but a date for the meeting has not yet been confirmed. Comments on the planning portal will be accepted up until the date of the meeting. SPC will publicise when known.
- Where will access to the site be? Chair: From the bottom of the carpark, alongside the swales.
- The field in question is a borough asset – it must be viewed as part of the recreation ground, not just a football pitch so that residents can continue to enjoy using it for playing ball, picnicking and walking. LG will never get its green field back.
- The application is not site-specific. It is a template produced by the Football Foundation with much information omitted.
- The majority of residents no longer trust the football club – an organisation that is hoping to make severe changes to the amenity of the village.
- Why don’t LGCSA spend their efforts making the original football pitch play-worthy? They still have not sorted out the drainage on that field.
- The Chair advised that LGCSA have followed the planning procedure for the 3G application correctly.
- Mr James Bowdidge spoke, as Chair of the LG Village Society (LGVS). He said that the LGVS no longer commented on planning applications because it was felt that the parish council did this adequately. The Langton Pavilion Hub had to date been very successful. He had just visited a dance class being held in the Pavilion for children with Downs Syndrome and thanked SPC for providing the space free of charge for such charitable endeavours.

**Planning Committee:** this item was brought forward so that members of the public could hear councillors’ discussions on application 24/00235/FULL – 3G pitch on the Langton Green Recreation Ground.

Cllr Rowe, Planning Committee Chair, reported as follows:

A meeting was held on 12<sup>th</sup> February which was dominated by the 3G pitch application. Eleven other applications were considered in all, 2 supported, 8 neutral and 1 objection. Draft minutes had been circulated. Cllr Rowe explained that the response agreed by the Planning Committee was a recommendation to Full Council for consideration. No one on the committee was downplaying the importance of sports access for all. The fact that SPC allows LGCSA priority use of the recreation ground and allowed it (the recreation ground) to be out of action for two years while works on the drainage was carried out illustrates SPC’s commitment to sports facilities in the parish.

- Representations from the Environment Working Group (EWG) on the 3G Pitch application: Cllr Turner reported that the EWG had significant concerns regarding the environmental impact of the 3G pitch and would therefore be supporting the recommendation from the Planning Committee to object.
- **24/00235/FULL – Langton Green Recreation Ground, Speldhurst Road, Langton Green**

**Proposal:** Creation of 3G Artificial Grass pitch with perimeter fencing, hardstanding areas, storage container, floodlights, access footpaths, tree removal and replacement planting.

There followed much discussion and consideration, including the following points:

Chair:

- The 2017 consultation demonstrated that there was great demand for the pitch in LG.
- Concern about the active follow-ups by LGCSA to primarily its members.
- Disappointment with how LGCSA have carried themselves – going forward organisational trust is important and doesn't give much hope of a good future relationship.
- SPC are qualified to comment on local residents' concerns and also how the application would affect SPC's land.
- Extremely reluctantly objects to the proposal, based on technical planning reasons. If the proposal had been for a different location with a different surface, he may consider it more positively.

Cllr Rowe:

- If TWBC are minded to approve the application, there will have to be discussions between SPC and LGCSA about the access they require with SPC's land. At that point, SPC might look to carrying out a community consultation (similar to the consultation carried out with the Speldhurst Chapel project) to gain a better understanding of how the parish residents wish SPC to respond.

Cllr Ellery:

- Residents with concerns appear to be making more effort to put their thoughts across.
- This is not the right location for a 3G: on the Greenbelt with no streetlights – introducing floodlights; traffic which is already a nightmare; residents cannot currently access the facility on match days – it is all just going to get a lot worse.
- SPC should not allow access to its land and should go further with its objections.

Cllr Lyle:

- Acknowledges the demand for this kind of facility.
- LGCSA must be congratulated for the huge amount of effort they put into children's sport.
- Whilst supporting the concept, this is not the right location for such a facility. The statistics in the proposal are incorrect and do not represent this specific area.
- SPC have had no consultation or explanations of the proposals from LGCSA.
- Reluctantly opposing this proposal but does not wish to close the door on future proposals.

Cllr Cleaver:

- Written representations will be reported to the Planning Committee right up to the point of their meeting.
- The field is only leased – at some point they will have to renew the lease.
- The lack of communication from LGCSA is a shame.
- He has a number of serious reservations and believes SPC needs to listen to the residents of the parish and respond accordingly.

Cllr Leach:

- LGCSA are trying to do the right thing in totally the wrong way.
- Concerned the rubber crumb will not stay in the pitch – it will get trodden in the surrounding areas and get into the water system.
- Concerned about the cost implications to SPC of the paths and works traffic on its land – where will the money come from to maintain everything?

Cllr Turner:

- Concerned about the number of comments regarding lack of trust with the way LGCSA are conducting themselves.

It was then **RESOLVED** unanimously to object to the application. It was further **RESOLVED** to authorise Cllr Rowe to update the Council's response to take into account points raised at Full Council. The Council's response was submitted on the TWBC Planning Portal the day after the Full Council meeting and has been recorded in the minutes for reference:

Speldhurst Parish Council objects to this planning application. The Council recognises the importance of children playing sports and acknowledges it would be beneficial to have outdoor facilities which can be used all year round regardless of weather conditions. But after careful consideration, the Council has concluded that the negatives associated with the proposed location outweigh the benefits and therefore objects to building a 3G pitch at this site.

The key reasons for the Council's objection are as follows:

- The infrastructure around the location on the western edge of Langton Green in a rural setting is not suitable to cope with the increase in demand and when taken together with an increase in disturbance, noise and nuisance the location is not appropriate.
  - Limited details provided on usage other than the hours of operation which are 7 days per week from 08.00 to 21.30 weekdays and 08.00 to 21.00 weekends. As no specific detail on activity schedules within these hours has been submitted in the application, it is difficult to forecast the impacts, and they must be taken as worst-case. For example, no details on split between competitive matches and for training; there are references to hiring of facility to 3<sup>rd</sup> parties but no details to who, how often and when; references to facility being used for adult football which the current site is not used for; limited information on how many spectators can be accommodated and how numbers will be managed.
  - Without usage details it is not possible to determine traffic volumes which will clearly increase with the hours of operation being proposed or parking requirements which already struggle to accommodate demand for existing facilities and services. Not possible to quantify noise levels and other general nuisances associated with increased levels of people activity when no details of proposed usage have been provided. Therefore, not possible to undertake any adequate modelling of impacts and to determine what levels of mitigation are required or whether the mitigation provided by the applicant is sufficient.
  - Local roads are already congested at various times during the week and on weekends. The road between the junction with the A264 and Lampington Row is often difficult to navigate due to customers of the Hare pub parking along this stretch of road effectively reducing this part of the road to a single lane. Speldhurst Road is also often blocked due to traffic congestion when there is overspill from the car park. And this is before any additional traffic resulting from the proposed 3G pitch.
  - The designated car park to be used for the new facility is regularly full and even during quieter periods can be busy with existing demand. On 15.02.2024 at 10.20 there were 75 parked cars counted. The only modelling undertaken by the applicant assumed 90 vacant spaces always being available which is plainly untrue. The new 3G facility will only worsen the parking problems in this part of LG.
  - The applicant has simply stated "The proposed future use of the site will result in a negligible impact on the local highway network and local transport network and will not lead to car parking stress on local roads due to suitable on-site provision of spaces." The Council felt this statement is not realistic given the applicant has provided no evidence or undertaken any studies to support this statement.
  - Noise levels cannot be analysed because no usage information has been provided. What is clear though is with increased usage, the additional hours of operation and the addition of adult football with spectators, noise levels will increase and be sustained over much longer periods.

- There are no safe crossing points in this part of LG. Combining increased traffic with higher pedestrian numbers accessing the 3G facility particularly during winter months and in the dark with no streetlights creates a much higher risk of a pedestrian being hit by a car. No risk assessment has been provided by the applicant.
- The application is silent on changing and toilet facilities covering the hours of operation being proposed.
- Impact on the character or appearance of the area and to the local ecology
  - The designated field is accessible to all local residents to walk on, play on and use for other recreational activities 24x7. This valuable amenity will be lost to the local community as the 3G pitch will be fenced and only accessible with approved access. The advantages of recreational exercise will be lost to casual users who will be excluded from accessing this field therefore reducing rather than increasing recreational and sporting opportunities for residents of the parish.
  - Light pollution from floodlights in a low light area. While the plans show only a 1 lux overspill, LG has no streetlights and the area around the designated field is regarded by local residents as a dark skies area. This will be inextricably lost as a benefit.
  - The proposed site is adjacent to a designated Site of Nature Conservation Interest and is in close proximity of Priest Wood Local Wildlife Site. The applicant has failed to undertake full and proper Ecological Assessments at different times of the year given the nature of the proposed development. Instead, the applicant is relying on a “Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment” and the document titled “Landscape Use Assessment for Bats” which are inadequate to properly assess the full impact this development will have on the local environment, ecology and habitat of the surrounding area.
  - The facility will damage the local ecology and the floodlights will drive away local wildlife. This part of LG has a very rural feel and presence which will be completely lost.
  - Application states 23 mature trees will have to be removed. While replacement trees will be planted it will take many years for them to reach maturity and provide equivalent habitat that is being lost
  - The site is outside the LBD and is part of the Metropolitan Green Belt. The proposed development is in conflict with many parts of the NPPF including sections 142, 153 and 154 which are all about preserving the openness and permanence of the green belt.
  - The proposed development will be harmful to the High Weald National Landscape (formally AONB) and is not compliant with policies EN1, EN22 & EN26 of the current Local Plan for TWBC.
- Environment & Health
  - There is uncertainty over the longer term for this type of 3G pitch. Sports England and the Football Foundations position on 3G pitches can be read here <https://www.sportengland.org/how-we-can-help/facilities-and-planning/planning-for-sport/position-statement-on-3g-pitches>.
  - The results of a major study by the Department of Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) that will determine the long-term future and viability of this type of 3G pitch is due to be announced in Spring 2025. Given this important milestone it makes no sense to install a new 3G pitch in a rural setting with all the health & environmental risks associated with this type of pitch until a decision on their future is announced.
  - The EU has already banned 3G pitches of this type from 2031. It is anticipated that supplies to maintain existing 3G pitches will become increasingly less available as the 2031 date approaches thus raising a question over the sustainability of a 3G pitch in Langton Green.
  - Contamination of land due to microplastics is well documented and has not been fully addressed by the applicant. The material proposed has been banned from disposal in landfill.
- Drainage

- It is felt that proposals for drainage do not go far enough and there are insufficient guarantees and safeguards in place to protect nearby properties from water run-off. Local properties were flooded as recently as 2020 due primarily to excessive water run-off from the drainage work undertaken on the Recreation Ground by the applicant.
  - Extreme weather events are occurring more frequently than has been modelled.
  - The proposed drainage solution is unclear with references to retaining and disposing of surface water onsite and other references suggesting a connection to an existing drainage system. Either way there are no details of how surrounding land, or the local drainage system will be protected from contamination of microplastics in the surface water being discharged.
- SPC land
- No details provided by the applicant about the footpath access they wish to build on Council land including whether footpaths will be lit or dark.
  - No Environmental Impact or Ecological Assessment specific to footpaths has been provided.
  - As a footpath will run parallel to the swales which may contain lying water there is a danger of a person, especially a young child, falling into the swale particularly at night. No risk or H&S assessment has been provided and what safeguarding solutions will be implemented.
  - The Sports Association will require permission from Speldhurst Parish Council to build the footpaths to access the 3G pitch. This permission has neither been requested nor granted.
  - The application is silent on where the site access would be, but it is understood the applicant wishes this to be via the Recreation Ground which will require permission from Speldhurst Parish Council. This permission has neither been requested nor granted.

#### 24/49 Borough and County Councillors' Reports

- Borough Cllr Sankey was working abroad and had given his apologies. He sent a report to the Clerk as follows: "To SPC and those who have come to take part in tonight's discussion. I apologise that I am unable to be here to listen directly to all your views on what I know to be the largest scale planning application we have seen in this ward during my term as a councillor. I want to assure you that I will be reading in detail the minutes from tonight's meeting and am available to all of you if you need me upon my return to work on the 6<sup>th</sup>."
- County Cllr McInroy had sent his apologies.
- Borough Cllr Allen said that there was nothing to report at the moment, but he would advise SPC as soon as a date had been set for the TWBC Planning Committee meeting to discuss the 3G planning application.

#### 24/50 Chair's Report

Referred to above, between items 24/47 and 24/48.

#### 24/51 Clerk's Report

- She had successfully applied for a grant from Tesco and will be receiving £1,000 towards the biodiversity project for Pocket Park.
- SPC has been informed that a complaint has been lodged with the Charity Commissioners against LGCSA.
- We have received a 'thank you' from Groombridge School's PTA for granting permission for them to erect a temporary traffic control sign on the Green ahead of their May Fayre.
- Ashurst McDermot Village Hall's meeting minutes had been circulated.
- A reminder to councillors to give the clerks adequate notice of apologies for meetings to make sure they are quorate.

#### 24/52 General Matters – Actionable tasks which do not fall to a committee.

Ongoing				
	Summary	Owner	Created	Status
07/24	Set up meeting to discuss ongoing relationship with LGCSA.	Cllrs Davies, Muress, Chris Allen and James Bowdidge	08/01/24	In progress



<b>08/24</b>	Confirm with TWBC the transfer of small business rate relief from office to Pavilion.	Clerk	08/01/24	<b>Complete</b>
<b>17/24</b>	Submit formal offer of up to £300,000 to purchase Speldhurst Chapel.	Clerk/Cllr Rowe	06/02/24	<b>Complete</b>
<b>18/24</b>	Schedule meeting of the Annual Parish Open Meeting.	Clerk	06/02/24	In progress
<b>19/24</b>	Submit responses on planning applications to TWBC.	Asst Clerk (KH)	06/02/24	<b>Complete</b>
<b>20/24</b>	Contact TWBC Licensing regarding alcohol licence for the Pavilion.	Clerk	06/02/24	In progress
<b>21/24</b>	Confirm with KCC councillors' agreement to the design fees for Old Groombridge highway improvements.	Clerk	06/02/24	<b>Complete</b>
<b>22/24</b>	Accept quotation for the replacement of rubber matting in junior playground and replacement of spring clamps on Spring Moon at a total max cost of £13,000.	Asst Clerk (KH)	06/02/24	<b>Re Tendering in Progress</b>
<b>New – Items arising since last Full Council Meeting</b>				
	<b>Summary</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Created</b>	<b>Status</b>
<b>23/24</b>	Submit planning comments to TWBC on 3G Pitch.	Cllr Rowe/ Asst Clerk (KH)	04/03/24	
<b>24/24</b>	Reword item re recording of meetings.	Cllrs Ellery & Curry	04/03/24	
<b>25/24</b>	Undertake EICR report for Pavilion and provide original certificate.	Cllr Curry/Clerk	04/03/24	
<b>26/24</b>	Undertake legionella survey up to a max of £540.	Clerk	04/03/24	
<b>27/24</b>	Send response to KCC on Footpath WT431.	Clerk/Cllr Norton	04/03/24	
<b>28/24</b>	Draft amended Amenities ToR for next FC meeting.	Cllr Lyle/Asst Clerk (KH)	04/03/24	
<b>29/24</b>	Draft amended EWG ToR for next FC meeting.	Cllr Turner/Asst Clerk (CB)	04/03/24	

Borough Cllr Allen left the meeting at 8.56pm.

#### 24/53 Finance Committee

- Report by the Chair, Cllr Ellery: There had not been a meeting.
- Budget Virements: There were no new budget virements to report.
- Interim Payments:  
Unity Trust Bank £11,850.52: HMRC £1,317.20 Tax and NI Contributions; Capel Groundcare £240.00 Zip wire; TWBC £222.78 Non-Domestic rate; Talk Talk Business £19.74 Pavilion broadband; Castle Water £19.74 Pavilion water; Unity Trust Mastercard £209.79 to bring balance to zero; Employees £5,098.35 salaries; EDF Energy £667.00 Pavilion energy; PPL PRS Ltd £378.40 Music licence for Pavilion.  
Unity Trust Mastercard £136.99: Unity Trust Bank £9.00 Bank card charges; Danda Ltd £32.99\* Pavilion ceiling tiles; Amazon Business £11.49\* tape measure, Amazon Business £11.98\* sapling tree ties; Homebase £36.50\* Pavilion kitchen paint; Amazon Business £17.97\* Light bulbs for office and £17.06 Computer mouse x 2.
- Decisions made under delegated authority are starred \* above.

#### 24/54 Accounts for Payment

It was **RESOLVED** that the invoices as listed below and checked by Cllrs Leach and Curry, be paid.

Date Paid	Payee Name	Reference	Amount Paid £	Detail
01/03/2024	BT PLC	DD	63.54	Office Broadband & Phone
03/03/2024	Talk Talk Business	DD	15.26	Pavilion Broadband

05/03/2024	Viking Direct	MT2634	151.74	Stationery and Toilet Paper
05/03/2024	Viking Direct	MT2635	95.36	Paper
05/03/2024	Tivoli	MT2636	133.68	Dog Waste Emptying
05/03/2024	Performance Fire Protection Ltd	MT2637	69.00	Fire Extinguisher Service
05/03/2024	The Living Forest Ltd	MT2638	570.00	Tree Work
05/03/2024	The Living Forest Ltd	MT2639	354.00	Tree Work - The Boundary
05/03/2024	M R Lawrence	MT2640	600.00	Tree Cutting
05/03/2024	Langton Life	MT2641	375.00	Magazine Article Apr/May
05/03/2024	Brooklynn Monk	MT2642	108.00	Pavilion Cleaning
05/03/2024	Tate & Tonbridge Fencing	MT2644	15.00	Fencing Material
05/03/2024	Cloudy IT	MT2645	355.92	IT Services
05/03/2024	JLM Pest Control	MT2646	230.00	Pest Control
10/03/2024	BT PLC	DD	24.96	Office Mobile
15/03/2024	KCC (KCS)	DD	38.51	Photocopier
15/03/2024	Employees	MT4281	5,097.95	Salaries
20/03/2024	HMRC	MT2643	1,285.23	Tax and NI
20/03/2024	EDF Energy	DD	667.00	Pavilion Energy
20/03/2024	N.E.S.T. Pension Scheme	DD	623.02	Pensions
28/03/2024	Veolia	DD	300.80	Waste and Recycling
	<b>Total Payments</b>		<b>11,173.97</b>	

#### 24/55 Speldhurst Chapel Project

- Cllr Rowe, who is leading the project for SPC, said he was pleased to report that SPC had made an offer of £300,000 for the Chapel to the owners which had been accepted.
- The offer had been conditional on the owners agreeing to arrange for a voluntary first registration of the property which will make the exchange and completion simpler for SPC. The owners had accepted this condition and had instructed their solicitors to arrange a first registration at Land Registry.
- The timetable for completion will be influenced by how long the first registration with Land Registry takes. The approval for the PWLB expires end of January 2025.
- The Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) loan would not be drawn down until all parties were ready to complete. It was hoped that the interest rates may have fallen by that time.
- The Chair commended Cllr Rowe on all the effort he had put into getting the project to this point.

#### 24/56 Annual Parish Meeting (APM) 2024

The Chair said that due to the 3G application being all-encompassing, very little progress had been made on the APM to date. He asked for two further volunteers to help him organise the event (councillors to email the Clerk) and explained that the plan was for the evening to be an update to residents on projects in the parish.

#### 24/57 Vacancy on Council – An update.

Mrs Kay Dooley had resigned due to personal and professional commitments. There were now two vacancies to advertise. The Chair said that he was very thankful for Mrs Dooley's time and commitment to the parish council to date.

#### 24/58 The Great British Spring Clean

It was agreed that regretfully there was not currently the office capacity to participate in the scheme this year due to the other outstanding commitments for the clerks. Councillors and their families were invited to participate

personally, and the scheme would be advertised on socials. SPC's litter-picking equipment was offered up to anyone who wished to participate.

#### **24/59 Recording of Meetings**

The question of when meeting minutes are deleted, whether they should be recorded at all and what SPC should provide for Freedom of Information (FOI) requests was discussed. The Clerk had provided a report which detailed the parish council's legal requirements and the conduct expected from councillors. It was **RESOLVED** that the Chair and Cllr Ellery would work together on a statement that could be read out at the start of meetings so that members of public are aware anything they say will be on an audio recording.

#### **24/60 Planning Committee**

Referred to above, after the Public Open Session item 24/48.

#### **24/61 Langton Green Recreation Ground (LGRG) – To receive an update on the Pavilion**

- To receive an update on the Community Hub: All feedback received to date had been positive.
- To receive an update on the Pavilion Partnership working with LGCSA: This matter was on hold until Cllr Muress returned from holiday shortly.
- It was **RESOLVED** to undertake a second EICR (electrical installation condition report) at a cost of £600 + VAT.
- It was **RESOLVED** to undertake a legionella survey on the Pavilion up to a maximum cost of £540.

#### **24/62 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** – There was nothing to report.
- b) **Highways Committee** – Report by Cllr Norton: A meeting had been held on 27<sup>th</sup> February with County Cllr McInroy in attendance which was helpful. Members were trying to push forward with the Highways Improvement Plan (HIP) priorities however were making slow progress. It was hoped a meeting could be held with KCC Highways in liaison with County Cllr McInroy.  
It was **RESOLVED** to endorse Footpath WT431 in Groombridge Place. The Chair commended the Clerk and Cllr Norton for pushing these matters forward.
- c) **Amenities Committee** – Report by Cllr Lyle:  
There had been a meeting of the committee on 19<sup>th</sup> February.
  - Delegated Authority for the Amenities Committee to spend up to £500 on individual items such as tree maintenance and minor playground repairs: Councillors agreed to this policy change in principle, with guidelines. Cllr Lyle would draft appropriate changes to the Terms of Reference document for circulation and submission to Full Council.
- d) **Air Traffic Committee** – Report by Cllr Curry:  
A meeting had been held on 7<sup>th</sup> February, the minutes of which had been circulated. It had been agreed that SPC's efforts should be put into flight path reconfiguration.
- e) **Environment WG (EWG)** – Report by Cllr Turner:  
A meeting had been held on 14<sup>th</sup> February, the minutes of which had been circulated. It was **RESOLVED** to agree a change in the Terms of Reference to allow Cllr Turner, who had already completed 3 years' Chairmanship, to remain as Chair of the EWG.
- f) **KALC** – Report by the Chair:  
SPC were hosting the next KALC (Kent Association of Local Councils) meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> March in the Pavilion.

#### **24/63 Diary Dates** – The following dates were noted:

11<sup>th</sup> March – Planning Committee

18<sup>th</sup> March – Finance Committee

8<sup>th</sup> April – Full Council (Ashurst Village Hall)

**24/64 Items for Information:**

- Cllr Leach said that it was sad the Speldhurst Nursery School had closed. However, as it was a private business and not SPC's building, she sympathised with the families who had been left in the lurch but there was little the parish council could do to help.

There being nothing further to discuss, the meeting closed at 9.29pm.

**Chair**