

# Speed limit reduction

For many years, the Parish Council have been trying to get vehicles to slow down in the parish – particularly on Groombridge and Ashurst Hills, where there have been more accidents than anywhere in the parish. Recently, a county wide survey was undertaken by Kent Highway Services which recommended that the speed limit on both these roads should be reduced from 60mph to 50 mph. Recommending action is one thing – putting it into action is another. Because of budget cuts, Kent Highway Services do not have the £6 – £7,000 required to implement these changes. It was decided at a recent meeting of the Parish Council Highways Committee that if funding could not be found from any other source, they would recommend



to the full Council that the cost would be borne by the Parish. This recommendation was fully endorsed at the April meeting of the Parish Council and Kent Highway Services have been instructed to carry out the task.

One resident who heard of the decision said: 'This is indeed very good news and a step in the right direction. Perhaps at the next review they will recommend reducing it to 40mph!'

Since the decision has been taken to proceed, a significant contribution towards the costs has been promised from members funding by Kent County Councillor John Davies.



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# New housing dilemma

The dilemma is this - are we prepared to give up a small piece of Green Belt land – designated by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council as a 'rural exception site', so that people, particularly the young, can stay in the village where they were brought up? If we

local people which they could afford. After extensive (and exhaustive) research, a suitable site was identified, which is currently the only site available in the whole parish.

A design concept for the proposed scheme was presented at an Open Day where the idea was well received by the majority who attended. There is no doubt however, that the need for this development to be placed on Green Belt land causes concern to some residents.



There is also a concern amongst some members of the community that, should this development go ahead, it could become the catalyst for further building on our precious Green Belt. This is not the case. As a designated 'rural exception site', only special schemes for local people who cannot afford to buy a home of their own can be given planning permission. Almost every local authority in England has a Local Needs policy like this in place. It reflects recognition across the country of the importance of protecting the future of our communities.

don't, the future health of our communities may well be in serious decline.

A survey was carried out two years ago in the parish which identified a need for housing for

Further discussions with the community will continue with another consultation day, hopefully in the autumn, to assess all the facts and comments before a decision is made.

# STOP PRESS!

In order to attempt to improve the existing broadband situation in our villages from 'poor' to 'superfast', a PUBLIC MEETING will be held to gain people's views as to how this may be achieved. The meeting will be held on July 18 at 7.30pm in Langton Green Village Hall. Everyone welcome.

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# Village hall extension ahead of schedule

Due to the fine weather in the early months of this year, the Langton Green village hall extension is making excellent progress. Although the building works have restricted the amount of car parking spaces and the bicycle rack has been temporarily removed, it is a welcome sight, given the considerable use which the village hall has enjoyed since it opened in 2007. Part of the extension will be devoted to a Parish Council office, which is due for completion later in the year. The Parish Clerk and Assistant Clerk will be based here and it will become a place where residents can visit to discuss matters relating to the affairs of the parish.



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## Speldhurst's new Councillors

Following the retirement of four Councillors just before the May election, four residents put themselves forward for the vacancies. They are:



### **Tony Hemming**

Moved to Tunbridge Wells in 1977 and to Langton Green in 1985



### **Crispin Owen**

Moved from Tunbridge Wells to Langton Green in 2008



### **Peter Ringrose**

Has lived in Langton Green for three years having moved from Groombridge



### **Chris Woodward**

A long term resident of Langton Green, having moved to the village over thirty years ago

*(Full details are available on the Parish Council web site).*

## Pro-active signs

In an attempt to remind motorists to observe the speed limit in the parish, the Parish Council have grasped the nettle and produced their own speed warning signs. Because Kent County Council (unlike their counterparts in East Sussex) do not provide such signs, messages relevant to the location have been produced, to be sited in places such as approaches to schools and on dangerous bends. There are also ones reminding drivers that they are in a 30 mile an hour limit. These



signs are extremely cost effective, are transportable and are erected by Parish Councillors. The idea is not to blitz the parish, but to install them at locations which are considered to be where the greatest risks are.

There have been many positive comments from members of the public – hopefully drivers will take note.

## The figures and facts

Following a period when the Parish Council's reserves had fallen to an all-time low, we are pleased to report that we are now well structured for the future. This means that there is every possibility that the precept for next year, and possibly the year after, will be able to stay at the level set this year.

The Council accounts have recently been sent to an external auditor for scrutiny and we are required to explain the reasons for all the variances – year on year. The most significant increase was in the balances carried forward, which have risen from £50,492 to £136,380.

This change is due to several reasons:

Within the larger figure, we have restored our reserves to the £50,000 level recommended by

the National Association of Local Councils, together with a growing earmarked reserve for the repair and renewal of our fixed assets, such as the children's playground in Langton Green.

We have also carried forward funds set aside for projects which have not yet come to fruition (the re-creation of a safe path outside the former Watson Hall in Langton Green is an example) and money for special projects such as highways improvements, which we know from the Parish Vision survey are of the highest concern of our residents.

There is also a fund for unexpected requests for assistance – just such a request came towards the end of last year when we were able to offer a grant to Speldhurst School to go towards the purchase of an outdoor canopy.

As is always the case, anyone wishing to see our full figures can ask Chris May, our Clerk for copies which can be provided by post or by email.

### Speldhurst Parish Council

Lynn Jeffreys (Chairman)

Peter Brown

Tony Hemming

Rosemary Hull

Ed Langridge

Rupert Milner

Crispin Owen

Trevor Parker

Chris Pendleton

Joy Podbury

Peter Ringrose

Julia Soyke

Chris Woodward

This newsletter will be available, as will all future issues, on the Parish Council web site.

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