



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

**Minutes of a Finance Committee Meeting held in The Committee Room, Langton Green
Village Hall on Friday, 7th May 2010 at 7.30pm**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Cllrs. Parker (Chairman), Mrs Hull, Mrs Soyke, Mrs Podbury, Wheeler and Cllr. Mrs Jeffreys (ex officio)

OFFICER PRESENT: Chris May – Clerk

Trevor Palmer LGCT was present.

- 1. Declarations of Interests:** The following declared prejudicial interests; Chris May – Payment re holiday; Salary increase; Overtime request. Cllr Mrs Soyke – Ashurst Community area – consideration for grant request. Cllr Parker – grant request from LGCT re Village Hall extension and LGRS annual insurance.
- 2. Declarations of Lobbying:** None received
- 3. Apologies for Absence:** Cllr Mrs Waters (no babysitter) Cllr Pendleton (holiday)
- 4. Minutes** of the meeting dated **18th February 2010**, copies having previously been forwarded to Members, were approved and signed as a correct record.
- 5. Parish Office and Village Hall extension** – Trevor Palmer, LGCT gave a detailed presentation with plans for the proposed phases for the extension to the Village Hall, which included the Parish Office. There are possibilities to save VAT and different scenarios were outlined for ownership/lease back of the office, further discussions with HMRC were planned. Mr Palmer presented details of the funding and asked if the Parish Council would be prepared to guarantee the shortfall subject to a limit. A summary of his presentation with the plans is attached
- 6. Matters Arising and Correspondence** – The Clerk had been telephoned by Roy Harvey who was preparing to maintain the Village sign. He advised that he would be combining two years maintenance and that the cost would therefore be more than quoted for last year. He will send a revised maintenance schedule with costings.
Paul Harvey had emailed advising that the Speldhurst Village Hall would be increasing rental by 5% in September.
Village House Nursery School (LGVH) had been in correspondence regarding a new awning for the patio area but had not supplied any details as requested.
TWBC had applied for the contract for grounds maintenance service.
- 7. The Precept – a review** – It was acknowledged that there was a lot of ill feeling and anger at the APM and that the Parish Council could have done more to prevent this by being more open and advising the Parish before the precept was published. A six monthly newsletter was suggested.
Cllr Mrs Jeffreys said that there would be an Open meeting in the autumn before the precept is decided to gather ideas from residents.

8. **2010-11 Budget and supplementary information** – The new financial sheets had been circulated and the clerk explained that the difference between the fixed budget figures and year end forecast was the carried forward figures from the previous financial year. It was decided to charge the contingency account with £8,000 which covered the cost of the planning application for the Parish Office and that the Play Area – Ashurst sum of £20,000 should be moved from the blue front summary sheet to the Grants-Works supplementary sheet. Cllr Mrs Jeffreys also requested that the money paid to St John's Church – prof fees be marked to denote that it was paid from 2009-10 S137 money.
9. **Financial Position as at 30th April 2010** - The Clerk had previously circulated the Financial Position and this was duly noted by the Committee.
10. **Speldhurst Recreation Ground: Pavilion project.** Dennis Gibbs, Chairman of the Speldhurst Recreation Ground Committee had submitted a detailed application requesting a grant towards the refurbishment of the pavilion. The amount requested was £18,638 which was the largest amount sought from any other Council. After a lengthy discussion on why this was the case it was unanimously **RESOLVED** to recommend to Full Council that this amount be granted.
11. **Grant request from LGCT** – Cllr Parker left the room. The figures presented by Mr Palmer were again discussed in detail and it was unanimously **RESOLVED** to recommend to Full Council that the Parish Council guarantee any shortfall on the project up to a maximum of £15,000. This was in addition to the cost of the planning application. Cllr Parker was invited back to the meeting.
12. **Ashurst Community area – consideration for a grant request** – Cllr Mrs Soyke had written detailing the cost of clearing and fencing the land which totalled about £6-7,000 and said that the Hall Trust would be contributing to the scheme but no sum had been decided. After much discussion it was decided that unless the area was insured the Parish Council could not grant public money to the project.
13. **EDF – street lighting** – EDF had written last year advising that the terms and conditions for lighting were changing. This letter was sent to the old clerk's address before the redirection and consequently the Parish Council did not know about the changes. The changes are to the unmetered supply and means that the bill for one street light was going to increase to £500p.a. The first quarter's bill has to be paid but the clerk was asked to investigate and change supplier as soon as was practicable.
14. **New Notice Board for Speldhurst** – This was agreed in the budget and would be ordered as soon as the site could be agreed with the Trustees of SPVH.
15. **LGRS Annual Insurance** – The request for £750 was agreed.
16. **Report on clerk's meeting with Barclays Bank** – The clerk had met David Lacey, Local Business Manager based in Uckfield. He agreed to refund the £30 charge for being overdrawn. He was asked to see if the Parish Council could have its own debit card for online banking purposes.
17. **Consideration to the future use of Direct Debits for some utility bills** – The clerk explained that many other Parish Councils used this facility. It was decided to defer any decision until the next Finance meeting.
18. **Clerk's salary** – The clerk left the room. His delay coming back from holiday was discussed and it was **RESOLVED** that he should be paid for this time. It was **RESOLVED** to increase his salary by one spinal point from LC2 30 (£25,472) to LC2 31 (£26,276) pro rata. It was also **RESOLVED** to pay the clerk overtime for 3 months while training the assistant and it would then be reviewed. It was **RESOLVED** to pay the assistant £25pm home office allowance.
19. **Land outside the Old Watson Hall – an update** - The clerk had met the Conservation Officer, Alan Legg who was keen to proceed with the project and had funds available. He had drawn up a simpler plan and this would be taken forward once everything was up to date.
20. **Speldhurst School: Outside Classroom Project - an update** – The clerk said that the Parish Council had committed to helping the school and PTA with this project but had not put money aside from the contingency. It was suggested that the contingency fund be debited £3500 and placed in grants-works "Items noted but not agreed". This was agreed.

- 21. Purchase of Computer Printer and software** – The clerk advised the committee that no purchase had been made to date. He was waiting for the assistant to be employed and would then purchase two printers.
- 22. Items for Information** – Cllr Mrs Podbury said that Parish Vision would need a separate bank account if it was to apply for certain grants. This was discussed and it was decided not to do so because the project was Parish Council led and therefore did not qualify for the grants.

The meeting closed at 10.25pm

CHAIRMAN