

Speldhurst Parish Council

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

MINUTES OF A FULL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, 16TH NOVEMBER at 7.30pm IN THE ASHURST VILLAGE HALL

MEMBERS PRESENT: Cllrs. Mrs Jeffreys (Chairman), Mrs Paulson-Ellis, Mrs Hull, Mrs Podbury, Mrs Waters, Mrs Soyke, Brown, Ellis, Parker and Wheeler

OFFICER PRESENT: Chris May, Clerk

There were no members of the public present.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Cllr Langridge (holiday)

2292 DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL AND PREJUDICIAL INTEREST:

Personal – Cllr Mrs Soyke – Ashurst Village Play Area – resident of Ashurst (1825-3). Cllr Mrs Hull – Sir Thomas Smythe Trust (2281) – Candidate is known to her.

Personal & Prejudicial – Clerk Chris May – 2298 iii) and iv) approval and review of overtime to Clerk. Cllrs Parker and Ellis 2298vi) – Trustees LGCT and Cllr Parker 2303 (Chairman of Rural Society).

2293 DECLARATIONS OF LOBBYING: No declarations were received

2294 MINUTES: The Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on **19th October 2009**, having previously been forwarded to Members, were approved and signed.

2295 PUBLIC OPEN SESSION – There were no members of the public present.

2296 CO-OPTION OF COUNCILLORS – SIGNING OF DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE

Rupert Milner and Christopher Pendleton, being appointed co-opted councillors, duly signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office book.

Cllr Mrs Jeffreys introduced the Parish Councillors and they were welcomed to the meeting.

2297 COMMITTEES 2009/10

Cllr Mrs Jeffreys proposed and all agreed that Cllr Milner be appointed to the Planning Committee and Cllr Pendleton be appointed to the Finance Committee (he is already a member of the Parish Vision Committee). Both Councillors agreed these committee positions.

2298 FINANCE COMMITTEE – Report by Cllr Parker

- i) Cllr Parker said that at present there were three members of the Governance Committee – they were Cllr Mrs Jeffreys, Mrs Soyke and Parker and they were looking for one additional member. The Committee would start in January after guidance from the Internal Auditor.
Mrs Soyke asked that, as parts of the ‘Practitioners Guide to Governance and Accountability for Local Councils’ were not user-friendly, the training on this which “may be delivered by NALC or SLCC or the local district council” be requested.
- ii) Mr John Roberts had agreed to be the new Internal Auditor for the Parish Council and a meeting had been set up for Thursday 26th and Cllr Mrs Jeffreys, Parker and the Clerk would attend.
- iii) Approval of payment of overtime to the Clerk – The Clerk had submitted his claim to all members for review. He left the room. The Council agreed his claim.

- iv) The Finance Committee recommended that the current arrangements for payment of overtime following review of monthly details provided by the clerk be continued until the end of this financial year, when the situation should be reviewed. This was approved unanimously. The Clerk was invited back in to the room.
- v) The Terms of Reference for the Finance Committee were submitted to Council for approval and they were unanimously approved.
- vi) Cllr Parker advised the Council that the Finance Committee had approved the following payments
- To continue KCC regular inspections of the playground at a cost £734.17 (ex VAT)
 - Mayor of TW Toy appeal £50
 - TW CAB donation £500
 - British Legion Poppy Appeal £80 (less cost of wreathes)

He advised the Council that the Parish Council could not, as landlords, pay for the drainage ditch that was needed by LGCT to save on VAT and then receive a payment back from LGCT. Cllr Parker and Ellis then left the room. It then decided that as landlords that Parish Council should pay the total amount of £1,991.29 with no payment back from LGCT. This was resolved 8 votes for, 1 against and 1 abstention. Cllrs Parker and Ellis were invited back in to the room.

- vii) 2257-11 Cllr Parker asked Full Council to approve the recommendation by the Finance Committee that Tate Fencing install 1.2metre high double wire welded mesh panel fencing along two sides of the teen area at a cost of £3,805.00. He noted that it was the more expensive option but it was thought it would last at least 10 years thus saving in the longer term. It was unanimously agreed.
- viii) Cllr Parker advised Council that there were a number of projects in the coming financial year that would have an impact on the precept and that Councillors should be prepared for a considerably higher figure at next month's meeting. He said that as the Council was becoming more proactive there was a cost and that should be recognised.

The Clerk, in his report, noted that the Notice of Conclusion of Audit and Right to Inspect the Annual Return had been posted on the notice boards from 28th October until 11th November and that there had been no requests from the public to inspect the figures.

2299 ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT – October 2009 – Invoices verified by Cllr Wheeler

The following payments had been made and authorisation was requested retrospectively.

| | | | | |
|------------------|----------|---------------|-----------------------|-----|
| KALC | £ | 8.50 | KALC AGM Refreshments | 711 |
| BT | £ | 29.38 | Mobile Phone | 712 |
| Post Office Ltd | £ | 78.10 | Redirection of mail | 715 |
| RBL Poppy Appeal | £ | 80.00 | Wreathes and donation | 716 |
| TOTAL | £ | 195.98 | | |

ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT – October 2009 – Invoices verified by Cllr Wheeler

| | | | | |
|---------------------------|----------|-----------------|--------------------------------|-----|
| Lantec Systems | £ | 28.75 | Upgrade laptop | 713 |
| Cheque cancelled | £ | 0 | | 714 |
| Mr R Ellis | £ | 17.63 | New padlock and keys | 717 |
| St George's Community | £ | 50.00 | TW Mayor's Charity Appeal | 718 |
| TW & District CAB | £ | 500.00 | Donation | 719 |
| KCC | £ | 844.30 | Playground Inspections | 720 |
| Ryman | £ | 151.96 | Stationery | 721 |
| Southern Water | £ | 25.99 | LG Pavilion | 722 |
| M R Lawrence | £ | 180.00 | Roopers grass cutting | 723 |
| M R Lawrence | £ | 350.00 | LG Shrubs on A264 | 724 |
| M R Lawrence | £ | 80.00 | LGRG Litter | 725 |
| RIP Cleaning Services | £ | 101.20 | LGRG Emptying dog bins | 726 |
| KCC | £ | 5,100.00 | Re payment of funds | 727 |
| Direct Technical Services | £ | 19.92 | Street light | 728 |
| LGCT | £ | 43.12 | Hire of hall | 729 |
| SLCC | £ | 149.00 | Clerk membership | 730 |
| Mr C May | £ | 1,271.69 | Salary | 731 |
| HMRC | £ | 660.73 | Employer/Employee NI & Tax | 732 |
| Mr C May | £ | 251.32 | Expenses | 733 |
| Donaldson West | £ | 100.00 | Caution Application re Ashurst | 734 |
| TOTAL | £ | 9,925.61 | | |

2300 HIGHWAYS REPORT - The Clerk had circulated a report to all Councillors prior to the meeting which included updates on a number of Highways issues.

- i) The Clerk had again requested KHS for an update on progress on the parking restrictions in Speldhurst. This has been passed to Michael Sammut who was giving the matter top priority.
- ii) Langton Green crossing at the Twitten was installed during the week beginning 2nd November. The initial reaction was that it needed more signage from the Speldhurst direction. ***The Clerk was asked to contact KHS to try and get better warning signs.***
- iii) 2190 Langton Green – Land outside the old Watson Hall – The Clerk had obtained two names of possible contractors and ***will start the process of advising neighbours and obtaining tenders.***
- iv) 2213 Groombridge Traffic Survey – KHS have said that this road will be the subject of the third phase (Area 3) of the countywide Speed Limit Review and it will also be considered for inclusion in the current round of ISS bids. The Parish Council has agreed to finance an ISS in the next financial year.
- v) Ashurst ISS – The Clerk has instructed KHS that the Parish Council will fund an ISS and we are now awaiting information from the Road Safety Team.
- vi) The Spire Hospital bus stop – There has been a new entrance to the field near the site and ***the Clerk will inspect it.***
- vii) Ashurst footpath – ***the Clerk will meet Cllr Mrs Soyke to discuss how to proceed.***

2148 PARISH VISION – The minutes of the meeting held had been circulated and Cllr. Mrs Podbury said that the funding from CIRK for £750 had been paid, which was a total of £1,750 in grants. The committee had met and discussed some quick fixes (reporting issues to KHS and TWBC) and would now concentrate on the questionnaire at the coming meeting. She added that TWBC (in particular Estelle Hudson and Holly Goring) had been particularly helpful. They had also advised that they could get low cost printing to help with the questionnaires etc.

2301 ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE – Cllr Mrs Podbury had produced a paper which had been circulated to members. She said that the Parish Vision project had highlighted a number of issues that needed to be handled in a more pro-active way and proposed that a committee be formed to deal with them. It would include items such as light trespass and the increase in flights and look in to issues like climate change and energy efficiency. It was unanimously agreed that a committee be formed and terms of reference written and it was suggested that the committee be made up of two Councillors and two members of the public. ***Cllr Mrs Podbury requested that she attend the ACRK meeting on Climate Change.***

2302 PARISH COUNCIL WEBSITE AND LOGO – A paper had been circulated to all members and it was unanimously agreed that the website should be kept up to date with the minutes and that the meetings be advertised. The Councillors would have photographs next to their details and that the site would be developed over time to include more items of interest and useful contacts and there would be no extra cost involved. It would not compete with Village websites but it would consider having a page for villages without a website. ***The Clerk would ensure that the site was regularly updated.***
Cllr Langridge has done some work on the logo and suggestions will be circulated in due course.

1825-3 ASHURST VILLAGE PLAY AREA – Registering of Common Ground – A letter had been received by email from Donaldson West stating that insurance companies were not prepared to provide cover for title indemnity insurance to protect against the risk of an objection to the use of the unregistered land because there had been no acts of possession as far as they were concerned. There was a risk therefore that after use of the land that someone could demonstrate ownership, however unlikely. An application to the Land Registry is to be made to register a caution against first registration at a cost of £100 and this approved by Council.
Cllr Mrs Soyke is to ask the Ashurst McDermott Hall management committee to consider using a part of the present Village Hall garden as a picnic/play area, instead of the unregistered land.

2028-3 TWBC LOCAL HOUSING NEEDS – No meeting had been held and Terms of Reference need to be written. An email had been circulated to members of the committee from TWBC regarding RSLs and Cllr Mrs Hull said that the TWBC had a timetable and were pushing the agenda through without having resolved the issue of whether Langton Green could be considered for housing, as well as Speldhurst. She also said that brown field sites should be considered as a priority by the TWBC. ***The Clerk was to contact TWBC about this issue. A date for a meeting of the committee is to be organised.***

2137-4 LAMPINGTON ROW – A paper had been circulated on a meeting held on Friday 13th at the Langton Green Primary School with Cllr Mrs Jeffreys, the Clerk, PCSO Nuttall and the Headmistress Judith Lees. The school was to consider another attempt at organising a “walking bus” now that the crossing at The Twitten had been installed.

It might also start one from the Recreation Ground but was concerned about the cost of using the Hall as a register point. The path from the Recreation Ground to the school was very dark in the winter and the need of some kind of lighting was discussed. Two school pitches used by the Sports Club needed some proper drainage because they were often waterlogged. The three schools in Langton Green, Speldhurst and Rusthall were planning a musical project and asked if funding for mini buses to enable the elderly people to attend was a possibility.

The Clerk was asked to advise Mrs Lees that the LGCT would be happy to hear from them regarding use of the Hall.

2120-6 BEECH TREE ON THE GREEN – Work on the tree had been delayed in the TWBC Planning Department. It was hoped to have the work completed in three weeks.

2303 DISCUSSION ON AN ASSISTANT CLERK – Cllr Wheeler raised the issue because he felt that the experience over the last six months had warned the Council that they were extremely vulnerable if the Clerk was absent for any length of time for whatever reason. He said that they needed back up especially with the ever growing committees and duties being assigned. The Council agreed in principle but Cllr Mrs Waters said there were issues – for example the justification of the cost to the electorate and it was agreed that the Village Magazines would be the start of the process of advising the Parish that this was being considered. Cllr Mrs Paulson-Ellis highlighted there was also a logistical problem until an office was built. It was agreed that Cllrs Mrs Jeffreys, Wheeler and the Clerk would do some preliminary work and report back in the New Year and that any appointment would be announced at the AGM.

2249 PARISH OFFICE – There had been no progress on the process of obtaining an accurate cost. It was decided that a meeting of Transfer of Land committee was required and that Donaldson West should be advised that their services would be required on this matter.

2281 SIR THOMAS SMYTHE TRUST – Mrs Katya Merrick had been proposed by the Council to be the new Trustee for the Trust. The Chairman thanked Cllr Mrs Hull for her work.

2282 BERRY TRUST – The Clerk had not found anybody who could be contacted regarding the problem of the poor condition of the footpath and it was not an issue for KCC because it was on private land. It was therefore decided that there was no more that could be achieved.

2285 GROOMBRIDGE: CHRISTMAS LIGHTS – The Clerk had contacted Mr Kilshaw about this issue. It was decided that proper lights and certificates were required for all the trees and ***the Clerk was asked to get costings for the provision of lights for all the trees along The Walk and to apply for a grant from TWBC.*** The Crown would supply the electricity.

2303 LGRS REQUEST FOR PERMISSION FOR A CHRISTMAS TREE ON COUNCIL LAND – The Rural Society requested permission to have a Christmas tree at the same place as last year, next to the Village sign and would be carrying out a risk assessment and using a qualified electrician. It was unanimously agreed to grant permission.

2304 FOOTPATH ON LGRG CAR PARK – An email had been received from a registered blind user of the footpath saying that cars were parking over the footpath and her guide dog had to guide her, and her family, around the cars. This had been discussed at the Recreation committee meeting and it was recommended that eight bollards be installed to make cars park within the allotted area. This was unanimously agreed and ***the Clerk was asked to obtain a quote for the installation of the bollards.***

2305 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT – Cllr Mrs Soyke had attended the Chairman's meeting in the Chairman's absence. She said there will be cuts in most council services on all levels. TWBC is remarkably well placed, but needs to make big savings to keep reserves up which generate income themselves, albeit less than before. Problems were likely to remain for 15 – 20 years owing to the massive national debt levels. Any planning committee members at parish level who feel they would like some training should contact TWBC planners, and Training courses will be arranged for them as needed.

2306 COMMITTEE REPORTS

- i) Planning – Cllr Mrs Podbury gave a brief summary of the meetings which had all been minuted and circulated to members. She mentioned that two Cllrs had received a complaint about the Farm Shop which had been selling meat from two lorries. ***The Clerk was requested to contact the Enforcement Officer/Environmental Health Officer.***
- ii) Recreation Ground – Cllr Ellis reported the Recreation Committee had met and the minutes had been circulated. He mentioned that there would be another attempt to hire a Groundsman to look after the Recreation Ground on a part time basis.

The Recreation Committee meeting had discussed the football fees for the current season and had decided to keep them at current levels.

The gates on the playground were again not shutting properly and ***the Clerk was asked to contact Maria Cook about this.***

He would investigate the ownership sign and the proposed contract with TWBC about maintenance that were budgeted for.

- iii) Footpaths – Cllr Mrs Podbury had circulated an update. She reported that it could cost about £1,400 for a 20ft container to store the materials and they would only unload on hard standing ground. There was no progress on the need for a member of the footpath team to be trained to use a chainsaw. There was also a need for a 4x4 type vehicle or a trailer to transport the materials.
- iv) KALC Cllr Brown had produced a summary of the AGM with the salient points including the proposed reduction from 38mph to 34mph for the conducting of speed watch.

2307 OTHER MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF 19th OCTOBER 2009 – Cllr Wheeler said that he been contacted by Mr Mortley to say that he had not received a reply to his email and subsequent letter noted in 2289-vi). ***The Clerk would send a copy to Mr Mortley.***

Cllrs Mrs Hull and Mrs Podbury thought that the unavailability of the Speldhurst Village Hall for Full Council meetings in 2010 should be addressed because they felt it was important that members of the village should have access to the meetings. The Clerk advised that the Hall Management committee was to meet on December 2nd and this matter would be discussed.

2308 CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED

- i) Email invitation to Mayor's Quiz
- ii) Kent Karrier – Dial-A-Ride brochures
- iii) TW CAB Annual Report 2008-09
- iv) Email from Direct Technical Services – looking to introduce a 36 month lighting contract. ***This was agreed by Council and the Clerk would advise them.***
- v) Elliott Hire – Brochure on storage
- vi) Sovereign – updated brochure on playground equipment
- vii) KALC Parish News
- viii) NALC Annual Report 2008-09
- ix) KALC Chairmanship Training Day
- x) Two Power of Well Being certificates for Cllrs Brown and Langridge
- xi) Barclays Bank advising us of changes to the Deposit Account. It will now be a “Business Saver” Account with tiered rates of interest earning 0.050% and if we deposit over £1million it will earn 0.150%
- xii) KCC letter dated 27th Oct (addressed to Pauline Lambell) advising that they are switching to email on Public Path Orders and Definitive Map Modification Orders.
- xiii) Invitation for Clerk to attend a KHS Parish Seminar on 24th November
- xiv) BTCV – Kent Heritage Trees Project
- xv) Email (via Cllr Mrs Podbury) from Speldhurst Scouts requesting permission to replace the bench outside the Church that was recently smashed by a hit and run driver. They will fund it as part of their centenary celebrations and permission is requested. They plan to incorporate the back with the inscription to Will Hinton (ex Clerk and first leader of the Scouts in Speldhurst and Langton). ***This was agreed and the Clerk would advise them.***

2309 DIARY DATES

Thursday 19th Nov – Parish Vision Meeting 11.30am LGVH

Thursday 19th Nov – Planning Meeting 7.30pm LGVH

Tuesday 24th Nov – Clerk KHS Parish Seminar

Thursday 26th Nov – Meeting with Internal Auditor 10am LGVH

Thursday 26th Nov – Finance Meeting LGVH

Saturday 28th Nov – Saturday 12th Dec Chairman holiday

Tuesday 2nd Dec – Saturday 5th Clerk holiday

Monday 14th Dec – Full Council Meeting – LGVH

2310 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION – Cllr Parker advised that a book entitled “Langton Green Through The Ages” is to go on on sale costing £10 and profits would go to Hospice In The Weald.
He also asked if Cllrs could refrain from copying everyone with their emails.
Cllr Wheeler mentioned that there had been articles in the national newspapers about the spread of building on Green Belt.

There being nothing further to discuss the meeting closed at 10.30pm
CHAIRMAN