

Local Government Act 1972



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

## MINUTES OF THE FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE MEETING

Held on Monday 24<sup>th</sup> November 2025 at 7.30pm in the

Parish Council Office, Langton Green Recreation Ground

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### MEMBERS PRESENT

Cllrs Rowe (Chair), Cleaver (Vice-Chair), Curry, Ellery and Turner.

### MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no members of the public present.

### OFFICERS PRESENT

Mrs K Neve – Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer (RFO).

#### 1. TO ENQUIRE IF ANYONE PRESENT INTENDS TO RECORD THE MEETING:

The meeting was recorded by the Clerk for accuracy of the minutes. The recording would be deleted once the meeting minutes are signed off at the next Finance and Governance Committee meeting.

#### 2. TO RECEIVE AND APPROVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr Tarricone (prior commitment).

#### 3. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

Councillors' ongoing disclosures were noted: Cllrs Curry, Ellery and Rowe own community shares in Speldhurst shop.

Cllr Rowe is part of the Speldhurst Parish History Society.

Cllr Ellery is the Speldhurst Parish Council (SPC) representative on the Speldhurst Village Hall.

Mrs Neve declared an interest in the item relating to staff salaries and the Community Hub as a family member now works there.

#### 4. DECLARATIONS OF LOBBYING

Cllr Curry had been lobbied regarding the Pavilion.

#### 5. MINUTES

**RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the Finance and Governance Committee meeting dated 1<sup>st</sup> October 2025, copies having previously been forwarded to Members, be approved and signed as a correct record.

6. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

There were no members of the public present.

7. REVIEW OF ACTION POINTS

The Clerk reported that most action points had been completed or were in progress.

8. FINANCE ITEMS

a) Interim Payments

**Unity Trust Bank:** £37.50 Ashurst Village Hall for Room Hire; £540 Nature Plus for Pocket Park Wildflower Seed; £85.20\* Kidman's for machinery services; £32.45\* Mrs C Barrett for hours worked; £729.13 NEST pension for staff pensions; £46.13 Castle Water for Pavilion water; £309.25 Veolia for waste and recycling; £469.25\* Unity Trust Credit Card.

**Mastercard:** £9 Monthly Credit Card Charges; -£55\* Go Outdoors for refund for Wellington Boots; £32.99\* Sports Direct for Wellington Boots; -£84 KALC refund for Conference; £8.59\* Amazon for Fire Extinguisher anti Tamper Seals; £215.90\* Dell for new computer monitor. Starred items were made under delegated power.

b) Financial position to review expenditure vs budget (including Pavilion) at 17<sup>th</sup> November 2025

Councillors noted the summary sheets and detailed reports which had been circulated prior to the meeting. It was also noted that the Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS) limit was due to increase from £85,000 to £120,000 on 1<sup>st</sup> December.

Councillors noted the following items of spending still to come in this financial year:

- Tree work at the Langton Green Recreation Ground (£750)
- Head Impact Criteria Test for Playground matting (£395) (Replacement matting would be in the region of £12-£13,000 and if required it would come out of Playground EMR.
- Potential purchase of equipment at the Pavilion
- Rialtas Yearend Closedown (£920)
- Revaluation of Pavilion (£650)

c) Budget Virements

There were none at this time.

d) Banking and reserves – to consider the present banking arrangements.

- **To note the bank reconciliations, balances and current bank interest rates** – The Clerk confirmed that all the bank reconciliations had been checked and signed by a councillor, in line with financial procedures. Councillors noted the balances and current bank interest rates.
- **To note the transfer of funds between accounts** – The Clerk reported that the transfer of £30,000 had been made into the Unity Trust Bank account from each Cambridge BS, Nationwide BS and CCLA as approved at the last FC meeting.
- **To consider opening a Unity Trust Savings Account** – The Clerk requested authorisation to set up a savings account within Unity Bank linked with the current account to facilitate easier transfer of funds. It was **RESOLVED** to approve the opening of a Unity Trust Savings account with the transfer of funds between the current account and the savings account by the Clerk.

e) Committee and Working Group expenditure

The Clerk presented a report detailing anticipated expenditure to be included in the projected budget figures.

**Amenities Committee**

- Playground fencing replacement (approx. £6,350)
- Tree Survey (approx. £1,380)
- Replacement bollards in car park (next phase) (approx. £7,909)
- Defibrillator Servicing (£1,000)
- Possible replacement Bus Shelter in Langton Green (match funding through grant scheme)

**Finance and Governance Committee**

- Internal and External Audits (£1,540)
- Accounting Contract and Yearend Closedown (£1,920)
- Potential grant application from Speldhurst Village Hall towards the refurbishment of their kitchen
- Consideration of a possible EMR for a replacement vehicle (electric) – this would be a future consideration

**Highways Committee**

- A request to add £20,000 to Ear Marked Reserve to support Highway Improvement Priorities

**Planning Committee**

- Possible Neighbourhood Plan (£5,000) which would be discussed at the next Full Council meeting.

**f) Grant requests**

- **St John's Church, Groombridge – RESOLVED** that a grant of £1,000 be paid to St John's Church, Groombridge for the purposes of annual churchyard maintenance.
- **Speldhurst Parish History Society – RESOLVED** that a one-off grant of £500 be paid to Speldhurst Parish History Society for the purposes of researching the history of the parish. Councillors asked that the History Society be requested to attend the Annual Parish Meeting to promote their findings.

Cllr Ellery reported that Speldhurst Village Hall may submit a grant request towards the refurbishment of their kitchen.

**g) To consider equipment required at the Pavilion**

It was the parish council's obligation to provide a working oven at the Pavilion. The current oven had broken. It was **RESOLVED** to authorise expenditure of up to £2,000 to funding the purchase and fitting of a new oven.

Councillors concluded that the request to purchase a new coffee machine for the Pavilion did not fall within the parish council's responsibilities and was a matter for the hirer to address.

**h) To consider the renewal of the Rialtas Gold Scheme Member Yearend**

It was **RESOLVED** to renew the Rialtas Gold Scheme Member Yearend for a further three years at a cost of £920 per year.

**i) Precept 2026/27**

The Clerk presented a draft budget for recommendation to the January Full Council meeting. Councillors discussed the draft budget in detail and **RESOLVED** to recommend to Full Council an overall budget of £258,512 which equated to an increase of 5.36% in the precept.

**9. GOVERNANCE ITEMS**

**a) Governance Checks**

The Clerk reported that the monthly checks were up to date. Cllr Rowe had carried out the last check. The Clerk would contact councillors to arrange the following months' checks.

**b) Internal Auditor (IA)**

The Clerk reported that the next Internal Audit visit would be on 2<sup>nd</sup> December.

**c) External Audit (Forvis Mazars LLP)**

The Clerk reported that a new Assertion 10 would be introduced for the next year's Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR).

**d) Insurance Policy**

The Clerk reported that there had been no increase in premium following the Speldhurst Chapel revaluation. Cllr Rowe asked if the premium for the Speldhurst Chapel had been recharged to the Speldhurst Community Shop. The Clerk said she would follow this up. A resident was making a claim against our insurance regarding her car window having been smashed which she alleges happened when the verge was strimmed. The insurance company had confirmed that they will be denying the claim on the grounds that they found no evidence that the operator acted negligently or breached their duty of care under the law or health and safety regulations.

**e) Review of Fixed Asset Register**

The Clerk reported that the Internal Auditor had recommended that fixed assets valued under £500 did not need to be included in the Fixed Asset Register. The register had been updated. Councillors asked the Clerk to discuss further when the Internal Auditor visited as they felt many of the items below £500 should still be included on the register as they were instrumental to the insurance policy.

- Councillors noted the purchase of a new monitor for the Deputy Clerk at a cost of £215.90 under delegated powers on the recommendation of Cllr Curry. This had been funded from the EMR for Computer Capital Spending and had been included on the Fixed Asset Register.

**f) Photographic record of assets**

The photographic record of assets was up to date.

**g) Councillor Vacancies**

The Clerk reported that there remained two vacancies

**h) Committees**

Councillors noted that Full Council had approved the separation of the Amenities Committee and the Environment Working Group, together with updated terms of reference and committee membership at the last Full Council meeting.

**i) Policies**

The Clerk reported that the following policies were due for review.

- Governance Checklist
- Co-Option Policy
- Media Policy
- Training and Development Policy
- Video Meeting Policy and Guidelines

**RESOLVED** – That the policies be recommended to Full Council for approval.

**j) CCTV – Annual Renewal**

The Clerk reported that the renewal cost was lower than the previous year, as consideration had been taken for the newly installed kit on the. **RESOLVED** – to renew the 12-month MA agreement with WJ Sunstone at a cost of £2,047.94 including VAT.

**k) Staff Members**

- **Staff Contracts**

The Clerk reported that the wording in the Deputy Clerk's contract had been amended for consistency and it was **RESOLVED** to approve the updated contract for the Deputy Clerk.

- **Staff Pay Award**

Having taken into account the pay increases for 2025/26 by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, councillors **RESOLVED** to finalise the pay award for 2025/26 as set at 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025, with no further increase.

- **Staff Training**

The following training was noted:

- **Clerk** – SLCC (Society of Local Council Clerks) Conference.
- **Deputy Clerk** – SLCC Conference and KALC Clerks' Conference.
- **Parish Council Administrator** – KALC Accessibility Webinar.

Further training was being explored.

**10. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

- CCLA Market Update (November)
- Dates of forthcoming meetings:
  - Monday 26<sup>th</sup> January
  - Monday 9<sup>th</sup> March
  - Monday 27<sup>th</sup> April
  - Monday 20<sup>th</sup> July
  - Monday 28<sup>th</sup> September
  - Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> November
- The Clerk announced that due to a change in personal circumstances it was likely that she would be stepping down from her role within the next three months. An item regarding the staff vacancy would be included on the next Full Council agenda.

There being nothing further to discuss, the meeting closed at 9.30pm.

**Chair**

**Finance Committee Action Points**

Action Number	Action	Owner	Date created	Status
6/25	Explore the following training: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conflict Resolution</li> <li>Website Accessibility Refresher (<b>Complete</b>)</li> <li>Cyber Security</li> </ul>	Clerk	10/03	Closed

**Governance Committee Actions**

Action No.	Action	Owner	Date created	Status
17/24	Book onto data protection refresher training course. <i>TWBC too busy but have given link to free ICO training.</i>	Clerk	22/04/24	Closed
12/25	Book onto cyber security training.	Clerk	28/04/25	Closed

The actions above have been included in item 18/25 below and were currently being explored.

**Finance and Governance Committee Action Points**

Action Number	Action	Owner	Date created	Status
4/25	Arrange the following Governance Checks: July – Cllr Rowe, August – Cllr Turner, September – Cllr Cleaver	Clerk	21/07	Complete
6/25	Review fixed assets to remove those items under £500 and include in an inventory list.	Clerk	21/07	Complete
9/25	Amend payment for defibrillators to be funded from the Ear Marked Reserve (EMR).	Clerk	01/10	Complete
10/25	Investigate the Unity Trust Bank savings account.	Clerk	01/10	Complete
11/25	List underspends for possible virement into EMRs for next meeting.	Clerk	01/10	
12/25	Set up EMR for computer capital spending and transfer £2,500 into it.	Clerk	01/10	Complete
13/25	Requested each committee to submit any future funding projects in time for the next meeting.	Clerk	01/10	Complete
14/25	Confirm and pay grants to Baby Umbrella and All Saints' Church, Langton Green.	Clerk	01/10	Complete
15/25	Notify Insurance Company of Revaluation of Speldhurst Chapel and seek reimbursement from Speldhurst Community Shop if necessary.	Clerk	01/10	Complete
16/25	Confirm preferred Electricity provider for the renewal of the Contract and make recommendation to Full Council. Give notice on the current contract.	Clerk/Cllr Curry	01/10	Complete
17/25	Confirm the contract for the replacement bollards.	Dep Clerk	01/10	Complete
18/25	Explore the following training: Conflict Resolution; Cyber Training; Data Protection; FOI/SAR.	Clerk	01/10	In progress
19/25	Include Internal Financial Control System on next Full Council agenda.	Clerk	01/10	Complete

20/25	Confirm staff contracts.	Clerk	01/10	<b>Complete</b>
21/25	Arrange meeting of the Pavilion Review Working Group.	Clerk	01/10	<b>Complete</b>
22/25	Contact Rialtas Accounting regarding corrections required in the accounts.	Clerk	24/11	
23/25	Open Unity Trust Savings Account.	Clerk	24/11	
24/25	Confirm grants to St John's Church, Groombridge and the Speldhurst Parish History Society and update grants list.	Clerk	24/11	
25/25	Order new oven for Pavilion.	Clerk	24/11	
26/25	Renewal Rialtas Gold Scheme Member Yearend.	Clerk	24/11	
27/25	Update budget and circulate to committee members prior to December Full Council meeting.	Clerk	24/11	
28/25	Put following on December Full Council agenda: Governance Checklist; Co-option Policy; Media Policy; Training and Development Policy; Video Meeting Policy and Guidelines.	Clerk	24/11	
29/25	Renew CCTV annual maintenance agreement.	Clerk	24/11	
30/25	Update Deputy Clerk's contract.	Clerk	24/11	
31/25	Add item on December Full Council agenda for staff vacancy.	Clerk	24/11	