



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

Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on Monday 1st March 2021 at 7.00pm
Conducted online via Zoom electronic communication

MEMBERS PRESENT

Cllrs Barrington-Johnson (Chairman), Mrs Soyke, Mrs Lyle, Mrs Woodliffe, Pate, Ellery, Rowe, Turner, Scarbrough, Rajah, Langridge and Myles

OFFICERS PRESENT

Mr C May – Clerk, Mrs K Harman – Assistant Clerk and Mrs C Barrett – Admin Assistant

IN ATTENDANCE

County Cllr McInroy was in attendance. Cllr Ms Willis was in attendance then left the meeting after her report to attend another meeting.

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There was one member of the public present.

21/045 Welcome by the Chairman

Cllr Barrington-Johnson welcomed everyone to the meeting.

21/046 To enquire if anyone intends to record the meeting

No-one present intended to record the meeting.

21/047 To accept and approve apologies and reasons for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Mrs Podbury who had a prior engagement.

21/048 Disclosure of Interests

The Clerk, Assistant Clerk and Administration Assistant declared an interest in item 21/063a) at that point in the meeting.

21/049 Declarations of Lobbying

There were none.

21/050 Minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 1st February 2021.

RESOLVED that the minutes, previously forwarded to Members were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

21/051 Borough and County Councillors' Reports

Cllr Ms Willis provided an update on Covid-19 including that rates in Tunbridge Wells continued to be low and so far there had been a 90% uptake by those able to have the vaccine. Emergency housing had been provided for 57 householders and 24 rough sleepers.

The election will go ahead in May which will be challenging for staff under the current restrictions.

There is a meeting regarding Bidborough playground on 3rd March.

County Cllr McNroy said that Tunbridge Wells had seen a small increase in Covid-19 cases recently and reiterated that there is no room for complacency. Vaccines for 40-49 year olds would commence at the Masonic Hall, Southborough in the near future.

KCC's budget had been agreed and following feedback from a public consultation, a 3% increase had been ring-fenced for adult social services. County Councils are being forced to shoulder increasing costs by central government.

There is going to be a vacancy for the Conservatives Borough Council seat in Rusthall and they are keen to hear from anyone who would be interested in applying.

Cllr Mrs Soyke said that she had also been dealing with Bidborough Parish Council regarding the proposed cricket pavilion and playground.

She said she was resigning from Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and would not stand for re-election in May.

21/052 Public Open Session

Mr Garry Saunders said he was observing the meeting to obtain an update on parish matters and did not wish to speak.

21/053 Clerk's Report

The Clerk reported the following:

- Staff would begin updating noticeboards again starting 8th March.
- Graffiti had appeared in various places around Langton Green village over the previous weekend.

21/054 Finance Committee – Report by Cllr Mrs Lyle

- a) A meeting of the Finance Committee had been held on 10th February and draft minutes were circulated. A transfer of funds had been made from HSBC to Unity Trust Bank (UTB). This would keep the HSBC account active and ensure enough funds in UTB.
- b) Report on budget virements
A budget virement had been made to transfer £3k from LGRG pitch maintenance to LGRG maintenance. The Clerk advised that SPC's operating income was high due to the Business Rate Support Grants (BRSG), however this was almost offset by expenditure on the van. He said a Finance Meeting was being scheduled for the end of March so that the committee could see the accounts before the close of year-end and approve any virements. If the income was £5k or more over budget, he would transfer it to an Ear Marked Reserve account and request retrospective approval at the next Full Council meeting. The Pavilion accounts were in credit of around £6k due to BRSGs and reduced expenditure on utilities. Any surplus would be transferred to the RRIM account.
- c) Report on interim payments made since the last meeting
Unity Bank current account: £474 Breakthrough communications re e-newsletter; £375 SPC Pavilion Ltd - late payment penalty and £322 pavilion monthly electricity.
The following payments were made by Mastercard: £9.68* diesel; ££29.43* petrol; £250* refundable deposit for electric van and £12.67* new broom and miscellaneous from The Venture.
- d) Payments made under delegated authority are starred* above.
- e) **RESOLVED** that the Finance Committee Terms of Reference be adopted.

- f) **RESOLVED** to renew the authority to use Direct Debits and Bank Transfers (BACS).
- g) **RESOLVED** to grant £1,000 to All Saints' Church, Langton Green towards churchyard maintenance.
- h) **RESOLVED** to grant a further £1,000 to St Mary's Church, Speldhurst towards churchyard maintenance.

21/055 Accounts for Payment

RESOLVED to pay the invoices as listed:

Payee Name	Ref.	Amount £	Detail
BT PLC	DD	24.00	Mobile
Dave's Computer Repairs	MT1959	300.90	Computer upgrades and maintenance
Langton Life	MT1960	300.00	Magazine advert
Unipar Services LLP	MT1961	2,651.40	Purchase Speedwatch Suresight
TW Counselling Centre	MT1962	250.00	Grant
Treework	MT1963	696.00	Tree maintenance - The Boundary
Speldhurst Rainbows	MT1964	300.00	Grant
CPRE	MT1965	36.00	Annual membership
KALC	MT1966	120.00	Training
Knockout Print	MT1967	42.00	Van stickers
The Langton Green Village Hall	MT1968	514.42	Office - electricity for one year
Commercial Services Kent Ltd	MT1972	108.46	Lease of van finish
Employees	MT1969	3,799.80	Staff salaries
Castle Water	DD	30.00	Pavilion - water
N.E.S.T. Pension Scheme	MT1970	173.28	Pension
HMRC	MT1971	2,525.27	Tax NI 3 months
Total:		£11,871.53	

21/056 Langton Green Recreation Ground (LGRG)

- a) Cllr Mrs Lyle reported on behalf of the Pavilion Management Committee.
The pavilion had started taking bookings again but deposits would not be taken until further clarity on the lifting of restrictions was confirmed. The café proprietor was recommencing her takeaway service on the 9th March. The Occupational licence was being renewed.
- b) Traffic management and parking:
The Clerk was to organise meetings between Cllr Mrs Lyle and contractors for quotes to install matting to support parked cars. She would also be meeting Chris Davies of Agrifactors on site. She had spoken to the Chairman of the LGCSA who had requested double yellow lines around the entrance to the carpark. It was agreed the original plan of traffic management and sandwich boards was a better option for a rural setting. LGCSA hoped the barriers on the recreation ground would be removed by the end of March. It was reported that Chris Allen, who had been responsible for the work in obtaining the grants for the pavilion and drainage projects was very unwell. Councillors wished Chris Allen well.
- c) Improvements to pathway from Lampington Row to the LGRG
The grassed area was drying out and it was hoped there would no longer be an immediate issue but longer term it may have to be progressed.
- d) Drainage project update:
It was hoped that a solution regarding the standing water issue would be proposed following the meeting with Agrifactors.
- e) Cllr Turner suggested thinking about when the showers in the pavilion would need to be checked and cleaned. The Clerk advised that the Groundsman had been told how to run checks for legionnaires but at the moment the area was full of stored items.

21/057 Parish Council Vehicle

The Clerk provided an update:

- The leased vehicle had been returned. The Clerk was contesting a request for compensation towards damage on the vehicle from Enterprise.
- The new vehicle was being used by the Groundsman.
- The electric vehicle had been delivered and was on loan from KCC for 2 months. The clerk was waiting to receive further information about charging points. KCC were paying the insurance on the vehicle. It was agreed it should be utilised fully during the loan period to gain a better understanding of the functionality and suitability of an electric vehicle for the parish council.

21/058 Vacancy for Clerk's Position

The advertisement had been widely publicised on social media, KALC, SALC, village literature and via parentmail at local schools. A decision would be made whether to go to a wider audience.

21/059 Annual Parish Meeting

The working group had met the previous week, but planning was proving difficult because of the unknown factors. It was still unclear whether virtual meetings will be allowed by the government after 6th May and yet "normal" life was not permitted until June 21st, making a physical meeting difficult. The working group will meet the next day to discuss the provisional date of 24th May and whether an alternative was possible.

21/060 Newsletter

The Clerk asked members for suggestions of topics for inclusion in the spring edition and the following suggestions were made: precept explanation; new SPC van; Clerk's vacancy; new councillor vacancy; LGRG reopening; Environment Working Group; Speedwatch and APM.

21/061 Committees

The Clerk explained that committee membership is reviewed annually at this time and Councillors were asked to let him know if they wished to change committees. He said that all requests would be reviewed but it was important that numbers were consistent.

The chairmanship of the Council is due for renewal in May and a replacement chairman was needed.

The formation of an IT working group had been discussed and following Cllr Rajah's recent meeting with the office staff, he recommended that the decision be put on hold. It was agreed the matter would be discussed further at the Finance Committee meeting on the 29th March.

It was noted that Cllr Mrs Podbury would be standing down from both borough and parish council membership in May.

21/062 Chairman's Report

The Chairman said that he had sent a letter to Greg Clark MP asking him to lobby government to extend the virtual meetings dispensation. The parish council would need to think carefully about how it would manage meetings later in the year.

He reminded councillors to use their SPC emails rather than their personal accounts in line with GDPR.

21/063 Committee Reports to include any Committee Meetings held since the last Full Council Meeting, the Draft Minutes having been previously forwarded to all Members.

a) Governance

The Clerk, Assistant Clerk and Admin Assistant left the meeting during this item. Based on the recommendations of the Governance Committee it was:

RESOLVED to promote Catherine Barrett from Admin Assistant to Assistant Clerk and to increase her salary from £10.45ph to £11.50ph. This was in recognition of her work and ability in taking on a much wider role.

RESOLVED to increase Kate Harman's salary from £12.60ph to £13.00ph. Her salary will be reviewed upon a successful pass in CiLCA.

RESOLVED to increase Mr Cooper’s salary from £13ph to £13.25ph

RESOLVED to increase the Clerk’s salary from £18.80ph to £19.60ph

RESOLVED to adopt the following standing orders and policies on the recommendation of the Governance Committee:

- Documents
- Freedom of Information
- Complaints
- Signs
- Virement
- Lone Worker
- Co-option

- b) **Planning:** Cllr Ellery advised that a meeting had been held on 15th February when 12 applications had been considered including the Rusthall Recreation Ground at Southwood Road which had received considerable opposition. SPC added to their original objection. There were also 2 LAWPRO applications which members were unable to comment on and 9 applications on which SPC remained neutral. Communications had been received from a resident regarding site 231 in the Draft Local Plan and Burrswood. The meeting with Martin Homes was deferred at their request. There were 3 consultations which had been received as follows: Right to Regenerate; National Model Design Code Consultation and Future of New Homes Bonus. It was **RESOLVED** to delegate the decision on which consultations to respond to and a response on behalf of SPC to members of the planning committee which would be agreed via email.
- c) **Highways:** It was **RESOLVED** to delegate a response to the KCC consultation Vision Zero to members of the Highways Committee. Cllr Pate advised that he would be meeting KCC Highways with the Clerk on 8th March to follow up on issues which had been raised at the previous meeting.
- d) **Amenities:** Cllr Rowe said that there had not been a meeting of the Amenities Committee since the last Full Council meeting. He would be meeting contractors to discuss the repair of the gravel path along the Green, Langton Green. He would also be meeting Cllr Myles in Groombridge when the weather improved to discuss the options for preservation of the Green.
- e) **Air Traffic:** There was nothing to report.
- f) **Footpaths:** Cllr Langridge said that they had been working on a repair reporting system with QR codes.
- g) **Environment Working Group:** Cllr Turner reported that a meeting of the newly formed EWG had taken place on the 22nd February when they discussed the Terms of Reference and inviting members of the public to join the working group. Under their headline of Improve and Protect, they would be looking at 3 areas: enhancing the AONB; improving the environmental footprint of the parish; and encouraging residents to get involved including working with the local schools. They hoped that the Amenities and Planning committees would consider the environmental impact or issues when making decisions. Residents who may be interested in joining had been identified however none were known from Ashurst and Cllr Mrs Soyke was asked to help with this matter. It was **RESOLVED** to adopt the Environment Working Group’s Terms of References with the following changes: The specific reference to input on planning applications (Item 8.1) was to be removed and there was a slight change to the wording in 8.2.
- h) **KALC:** Cllr Barrington-Johnson advised that he would be attending a KALC meeting next week and then the Parish Chairmen’s meeting on 16th March. He would report back.

21/064 Covid Compliance: Cllr Barrington-Johnson said that if the current dispensation to hold virtual meetings was not extended, the parish council would need to give serious consideration as to how it operates all meetings from May onwards. It was agreed the matter would be discussed further in April when it was hoped more would be known.

21/065 Items for Information:

- Cllr Langridge said there had been a rise in dog thefts recently.
- Cllr Ellery spoke about Moby Dick's fish and chip van parking on the Langton Road on Saturday evenings. He had visited the van on the previous Saturday and been advised that it was the parish council which were preventing the van from visiting the village in the future. He was assured by the Assistant Clerk (who had been in regular contact with the proprietor to help him find a suitable position for the van) that this not the case and was disappointing after all the effort SPC had made trying to help retain this valuable service in the village. It was disappointing to hear that the blame for the service ceasing in the village was being put at the parish council's door.
- Cllr Ellery had attended a Trustees meeting for the Speldhurst Recreation Ground and advised that the committee had suffered a £1,295 loss in 2020 and had a projected loss of £2,755 in 2021. The committee may need to submit grant requests to the Parish Council in the coming year to meet their costs.

There being no further items the meeting closed at 9.17pm.

Chairman