

Speldhurst Parish Council

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 Thursday, 26th November 2009 at 7.30pm

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

OFFICER PRESENT: Chris May – Clerk

No members of the public present

Cllr Parker welcomed Cllr Pendleton to his first Finance Committee meeting.

1. **Declarations of Interests:** Personal and Prejudicial: Clerk Chris May – Item 11 Pay rise for Clerk.
2. **Declarations of Lobbying:** None received
3. **Apologies for Absence:** Cllr Mrs Waters (business meeting)
4. **Minutes** of the meeting dated **2nd November 2009**, copies having previously been forwarded to Members, were approved and signed with the following two exceptions
 - Matters Arising iii) The donation made by the Parish Council to CAB was not made under section 137
 - Cllr Mrs Podbury was asked to investigate the cost of storing the footpath stiles etc at Spring Farm, Fordcombe.
5. **Matters Arising and Correspondence** – Cllr Mrs Podbury had investigated the storage at Spring Farm and reported that it would not be possible. She had looked in to the purchase of a 20 ft container for storage and reported that it would cost £1,400 and it needed to be on hard or firm standing. It would also need to be painted green. She said that the footpath team considered Langton Green to be the most convenient place for the container because it was central to the Parish. Sites on the Recreation ground were being looked at.
Cllr Parker reported on the meeting today with the Internal Auditor which had taken place in the Snooker Room, LGVH at 10am attended by Cllr Mrs Jeffreys, himself and the Clerk. It was a “get to know each other” meeting with a general discussion on matters and how we would proceed. He will meet the Clerk in January and then in May to finalise the accounts, then after that on a six monthly basis.
The Clerk reported that the Notice Board for Ashurst was on order.
He also reported that Tate Fencing had been given the order to install the fencing at the teen area.
6. **Financial Position as at 30th October 2009** - The Clerk had previously circulated the Financial Position and this was duly noted by the Committee.
7. **2009 – 10 Budget and Supplementary Information** – the Clerk had previously circulated the up-to-date Budget Sheet together with supplementary sheets.
8. **Approval of KCC Maintenance contracts 2010** – The Clerk had received two contracts from KCC Landscape Services for the mowing and cutting of hedges for Langton and Groombridge for 2010 which were 2% higher than the previous year. These were unanimously agreed and ***the Clerk was asked to contact KCC to confirm.***
9. **Installation of bollards on LGRG footpath** – The Clerk had received a quotation for the installation of eight bollards into concrete from KCC Landscape Services for £962 plus VAT and this unanimously approved. ***He was asked to contact the contractor to carry out the work.***

10. Groombridge Christmas Lights – The Clerk had advised Mr Kilshaw, the Proprietor of The Crown Inn that the Parish Council would take responsibility for the installation of the Christmas lights on the trees that are on Council land along The Walks. Mr Kilshaw would supply the electricity.

The Clerk had contacted Festive Decorations Ltd on the advice of TWBC and after some delay had quoted a figure for installing the lights. The lights would then be left there and reconnected next year at minimal cost. The recommendation was 5 sets of lights per tree and there were 11 trees with 2 transformers and extension leads and labour cost which totalled about £1,900. This was unanimously agreed and ***the Clerk was asked to contact TWBC for a grant towards the cost.***

11. Pay Rise for Clerk – The Clerk left the room. NALC had recently issued a new National Salary Award for Local Council Clerks which recommended to be applied from April 1st 2009. It was unanimously agreed to award the Clerk the pay rise. The Clerk was invited back to join the meeting.

12. 2010-11 Budget Forecast – Setting the Precept – The Clerk had circulated updated expenditure figures which showed the impact on the Precept.

Because the Precept had been kept low in the previous year and no contingency added it meant that there would have to be a considerable increase in the coming year to meet the demands of a number of projects that required funding.

In addition, if all the expenditure was paid by the end of the financial year the reserve or contingency would fall far below the 40% figure recommended by KALC and the Clerk considered this to be unacceptable. It was recommended that the Council's reserve be re-instated and a contingency figure be added.

There then began a long discussion on all of the proposed spending for the next financial year which included the proposed extension for Langton Green Village Hall, the Pavilion at Speldhurst and the Parish Office. To reduce the Precept it was considered prudent to take advantage of the low interest rates and use the facility of the Public Works Loan Board to fund the Parish Office over a long period and 25 years was recommended and agreed.

During the discussion Cllr Mrs Podbury thought that the proposed extension to the Langton Green Village Hall and Parish Office should be reviewed and consideration be given to alternatives, such as, include a Medical centre, which would attract different sources of funding. She also mentioned that the Parish Office could be funded by external sources such as Biffa.

It was proposed therefore that a Precept of £195,000 be recommended to Full Council for approval. It was acknowledged that this was a substantial increase on the previous year and it was thought that the Parish Council should be proactive in conveying to the public the programmes that were to be included by way of a brochure to each household.

13. Items for information – There were none.

The meeting closed at 9.35pm

CHAIRMAN