



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

**MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL'S OPEN MEETING
HELD ON MONDAY 13th OCTOBER 2014 AT 8.00PM
IN SPELDHURST VILLAGE HALL**

PRESENT: Cllr. Mrs Lynn Jeffreys - Chairman, together with nine Parish Councillors and 60 parishioners.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Mr C May – Clerk; Mrs M Flemington – Assistant Clerk

Information on Gatwick, public rights of way and financial information papers were available to those present

1. **Apologies for Absence** – Cllrs Mrs Hull, Barrington-Johnson and Woodward. County Councillor John Davies and Borough Councillors Jukes and Stanyer also sent their apologies.
2. **Chairman's Introduction** - Cllr. Mrs Jeffreys opened the meeting by welcoming everyone.
3. **Aircraft Noise** – Cllr Mrs Soyke in the absence of the Aircraft Traffic Committee Chairman, Cllr Barrington-Johnson explained that the Parish Council has set up an Aircraft Traffic Committee to channel the concerns over aircraft noise, night flights, flight paths, and proposals for a second runway to Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC), Kent County Council (KCC) and our Member of Parliament. She said that Speldhurst Parish Council is now a member of the High Weald Councils Aviation Action Group (HWCAAG) and Gatwick Area Conservation Area Campaign (GACC), has recently held a meeting with Greg Clark MP and is trying to get TWBC and KCC to formulate their own policies on Gatwick. Cllr Mrs Soyke said that she has attended all the GATCOM meetings during the last year but that she is concerned that they are not interested in the issues of our local area.
 - Peter Irvine of Langton Green said that technically nothing has changed but practically it has. He believes that one of the reasons for the narrower flight path is to reduce the number of people affected and therefore reduce the number of complaints. He has written to Gatwick and his MP regarding the narrowing of the flight paths and that is important that everyone keeps complaining about this.
 - Simon Norton of Old Groombridge said he has written to Gatwick and has been told that nothing has changed. He would like Greg Clark MP and SPC to ask Gatwick to substantiate this claim. Cllr Mrs Soyke said that Greg Clark has contacted the Civil Aviation Authority and the Department for Transport.
 - Jeremy Stirling of Langton Green said that Gatwick could never be a hub. He said Stansted Airport has 52% surplus runway capacity. Details of the GACC Protest meeting to be held on 22nd November are on the GACC website.
 - Deborah Cambridge of Speldhurst referred to the Penshurst 'Gatwick Obviously Not' campaign and said she thinks it is important for a similar group to be set up in Speldhurst.
 - Graham Williams of Speldhurst said that Greg Clark has done a good job in pressuring Gatwick to re-consult but is concerned that KCC is not interested in the campaign. He thinks Gatwick are narrowing the flight path so they receive a lesser number of complaints and that point merge is operating some of the time already. He believes pressure needs to be kept up to ensure respite periods for this area.

- Jonathan Lineker of Speldhurst said he understands that Parish Councils are limited to some extent but that groups such as Gatwick Obviously Not and a Speldhurst Group should employ professional advisers to present technical facts in the campaign.
 - Simon Norton said he thinks KCC should be made to do more.
 - Mike Binns of Langton Green suggested that the effigy on the annual bonfire in Edenbridge should be Stuart Wingate CEO of GAL – it would raise awareness for the campaign.
 - Ken Gornall of Speldhurst said the Government needs to legislate/control night flights at Gatwick stating that, in his opinion, night landing slots were too cheap. He also mentioned that the angle of descent should be changed to 4% instead of 3% which would make a difference as planes could start their descent nearer the airport.
 - Claire Helman of Langton Green said she has lived in the village for two years and that the disturbance has increased greatly in this time. She said she thinks the night flying noise is most damaging and that the aim should be for night flight restrictions/quotas
 - Tessa Milligan of Speldhurst said that if KCC remain neutral residents should stop paying their Council Tax!
 - Ken Howes of Langton Green said that a unified approach is very important
 - Philip Tew asked if SPC should consider drafting a letter for circulating to all residents for them to send to Gatwick if they agree with its sentiments
 - Deborah Cambridge stressed how important it is for Speldhurst to set up a village organisation/campaign
 - Guy Harman of Speldhurst said that the issue is affecting house prices and sales in the area.
 - Simon Wilson of Langton Green said residents should donate money to an action group that can use the funds to fight Gatwick using technical advisers, QCs etc.
 - Cllr Mrs Soyke said that there is a noise monitor in Bidborough but that she had requested another one in the area. She said that because the ambient noise levels are low in this area the increasing aircraft noise is very disruptive. She agreed that night flights are not controlled and that a wide flight path that “spread the load” was preferred.
 - Cllr Mrs Jeffreys thanked everyone for their part in a very useful discussion and urged someone to come forward to set up a Speldhurst village organisation/campaign and reiterated that people must continue to complain.
4. **Finance and the precept** – Cllr Owen said that the precept for 2015/2016 will be set shortly (the precept for 2014/2015 is £130,000) and that all the Parish Council accounts are available to the public if they wish to see them. He advised that the Parish Council has recently given a grant of £25,000 to Speldhurst Recreation Ground towards the refurbishment of the children’s playground and said that if any organisations are thinking of applying for a grant next year they should let the Parish Council know as soon as possible. He reported that Kent County Council and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council are facing increasing financial cut-backs meaning that the Parish Council are being expected to spend more on grants and services etc. A resident asked if money could be budgeted for the aircraft noise campaign.
5. **Parish Plan** – Cllr Turner said that the Parish Plan will be a ‘vision’ for the Parish for the next five to ten years and that the working group currently comprises four Parish Councillors and eight members of the public meeting once a month and in smaller groups in between to discuss specific parts of the plan. He thanked James Bowdidge for the work he put in as leader of the group and said that a new leader and more members of the public are required – the leader must be a member of the public and not a councillor.
6. **Public rights of way** – Cllr Milner had prepared an information sheet for parishioners and a map showing all the footpaths in the parish and addressed the meeting. He said that there are fifty footpaths and two bridle paths within the parish totalling 20 miles and that they are much used and enjoyed by local residents and visitors to the area. He explained that Kent County Council funding for footpath maintenance is being cut every year and that there is always a problem (particularly severe this summer) with vegetation growing over paths. Speldhurst Parish Council has a group of footpath volunteers who carry out maintenance tasks on the paths and he thanked them and also the footpath adopters who report any problems on ‘their paths’. In addition the Parish Council Groundsman has carried out clearance work on several footpaths in Langton Green this year, some of which has been funded by the Langton Green Village Society. He said that dog poo and fly-tipping are

increasing problems. It is proposed to install a dog waste bin near the entrance to Shadwell Woods. Fly-tipping should be reported to Tunbridge Wells Borough Council who will remove it if it is on the highway/verges. James Bowdidge reported that he has lost four sheep this year to dog attacks on his land and that he has also had fencing wire cut adjoining the footpath on his land.

A resident asked if more could be done to encourage residents to keep their vegetation clear of footpaths. Cllr Milner explained that polite requests can be made but that the Parish Council does not have the power to enforce this.

7. Question and answer session –

Debbie Cambridge enquired what the situation is regarding the planning applications at Salomons. Cllr Mrs Soyke advised that planning permission has been refused for Father Christmas World and that some licensing applications have also been refused.

Nick Critchlow said that there is a warning at the Bidborough end of Barden Road stating that it is not suitable for HGVs but not at the Speldhurst end and could this be addressed.

Cllr Mrs Jeffreys advised parishioners that the Clerk is now on Twitter @clerkspc

The meeting closed at 9.35pm

CHAIRMAN