

Local Government Act 1972



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

Draft Minutes of the Full Council Meeting

Held at 7.00 pm on Monday 1st December 2025 in Palmer Room at Langton Green Village Hall

MEMBERS PRESENT

Cllrs Curry (Chair), Rowe (Vice-Chair), Cleaver, Dickens, Ellery, Farley, Leach, Littlefield, Norton and Tarricone,

OFFICERS PRESENT

K Neve (KN) Clerk and H Chater (HC) Deputy Clerk (Minutes).

IN ATTENDANCE

County Cllr Moreland, Borough Cllrs Sankey and Sharratt were in attendance.

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were 11 members of the public in attendance.

25/234 TO ENQUIRE IF ANYONE INTENDS TO RECORD THE MEETING

The Chair advised that the Clerk had started an audio recording which would be used to ensure the accuracy of minutes, and that anyone who wished to speak should consider that their voice may be recorded and that the recording could be requested via freedom of information.

25/235 TO ACCEPT AND APPROVE APOLOGIES AND REASONS FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Cllr Turner (holiday).

25/236 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

Councillors' ongoing disclosures were noted:

The Clerk disclosed an interest in Langton Green Pavilion as a family member is employed by the current hirers.

Cllrs Curry, Ellery and Rowe have community shares in the Speldhurst Shop.

The Clerk and Deputy Clerk declared an interest on item 12g re final pay awards.

25/237 DECLARATIONS OF LOBBYING

Cllrs Curry and Leach had been lobbied regarding Langton Green Pavilion.

25/238 MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 3rd November 2025

Councillors **RESOLVED** to approve that the minutes, previously forwarded to Members, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

The Chair brought item 7 forward (Borough and County Councillors' Report).

25/239 BOROUGH AND COUNTY COUNCILLORS' REPORTS

Borough Cllr Sankey

A proposal had been made for asylum accommodation at the former Army Training Camp in Crowborough, which was outside the Tunbridge Wells Borough and falls under Wealden District Council's jurisdiction. The decision was the responsibility of the Home Office, and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC) had not been consulted. Only one resident had contacted him directly, and no concerns had been reported to the Community Safety Unit. Residents with concerns were encouraged to contact their Member of Parliament.

Cllr Sankey had reached out to Wealden District Council to stay informed and offer support if needed. Cllr Sankey condemned any attempts to use this issue to create fear or division in the community and would not tolerate hostility or extremism. Residents were encouraged to contact Cllr Sankey directly with any safety or community concerns. Cllr Sankey thanked Speldhurst Parish Council for its measured response.

Other Updates:

- **Royal Victoria Place (RVP):** Public consultation was now open regarding redevelopment proposals.
- **RVP Car Park:** The car park had reopened, with larger parking spaces now available.
- **CTRS Scheme:** At the upcoming Cabinet meeting, the Council would advocate for extending the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) backdate period from 1 to 12 months.
- **Cycle Path Consultation:** Although the consultation had closed, residents were invited to contact the Council directly with any further comments or concerns.

Borough Cllr Sharratt

Borough Cllr Sharratt reported on her recent appointment as the Women and Girls' Champion for TWBC. Her early focus was on violence against women and girls (VAWG), and she shared UK statistics highlighting the scale of the issue, including prevalence of domestic violence, stalking, and sexual assault, most often committed by men known to the victims.

She described the recent Reclaim the Night march held on 25th November, marking the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and Girls. Over 100 participants, including residents from Speldhurst Parish, joined the walk from Rusthall and St John's to the Pantiles to promote women's safety in public spaces. She emphasised that the campaign, rooted in activism dating back to the 1970s, aimed to support safety for women and girls and should not be used to create division. She offered to speak with any residents who had related concerns. Cllr Sharratt also updated the meeting on the progress of the Tunbridge Wells Local Plan. It was due to be considered for adoption by Full Council on 10th December. Within the parish, the plan contained one housing site allocation and an allocation to expand football provision at Southwood Road Recreation Ground (located in Rusthall but within Speldhurst parish). She noted that the landowner was currently opposed to the latter proposal.

Finally, she reported that the Borough Council had indicated support for a "three-unitary" model in ongoing discussions about Local Government Reorganisation, although the final decision rested with central government.

County Cllr Moreland

An update was provided on Local Government Reorganisation, and the Ashurst community transport scheme consultation. Efforts to increase engagement on the consultation were ongoing.

Engineering works from 3rd to 5th January at Ashurst railway bridge were noted.

25/240 PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

A representative from Crowborough Shield reported on recent developments following a Scrutiny and Performance meeting held on 10th November with two Home Office officials. The Home Office had acknowledged that they had not consulted Crowborough residents or local councils regarding the proposed use of the Crowborough camp and had still not done so. Consultation with the District Council had also been limited.

Crowborough Shield had been formed to independently gather information and respond to the situation, operating on a non-political and legally verified basis. They had legal representation in place but could not take formal action until the Home Office confirmed lawful use of the camp. The site was currently undergoing significant refurbishment, indicating that the Home Office intended to proceed, although officially they must wait until the facility was deemed "safe, legal and compliant".

The group believed that the current delays from the Home Office were limited and that occupation of the site may still occur before Christmas, despite missing the previously suggested late-November timeline.

It was noted that the Crowborough site was being developed using a similar model to the Wethersfield camp in Essex. In Wethersfield, a private contractor (Foster Hartley Ltd) transported asylum seekers daily to nearby towns to reduce local impact. Crowborough Shield had received unconfirmed information that similar arrangements may be planned for Crowborough.

The speaker expressed concern that residents were not receiving adequate information from the Home Office and stated that Crowborough Shield continued to seek clarity. Their attendance at the meeting followed references to Crowborough Shield on a local Facebook page. The representative offered to speak with councillors or residents after the meeting.

A resident expressed concerns about the proposed use of the Crowborough camp and its possible impact on local safety and services. They highlighted that several members of their family lived in Crowborough, including a daughter who worked night shifts and was anxious about travelling past the camp alone. The resident stated that many people in the parish may be unaware of current developments in Crowborough but believed significant concerns would arise once more information became public. They reported feeling that they would no longer feel safe shopping or parking in Crowborough if the camp opened. They also raised concerns that asylum seekers housed at the camp may move freely off-site and travel into surrounding towns, potentially placing additional pressure on local services such as GP and dental provision, which were already limited.

The resident asked that the Parish Council and Borough Council support the District Council and Crowborough in their efforts to address the issue. They noted that the parish currently felt safe but could be affected once the camp became operational. He also referenced local speculation about other government-owned properties possibly being used in the future.

Summary of Resident Statement – Proposed Cycle Route

A resident, whose property borders the footpath proposed for inclusion in the new cycle route, expressed concern about a lack of communication regarding potential land acquisition. They reported hearing informally from neighbours that approximately 3 metres of their land may be required and stated that they had received no direct contact or consultation from Tunbridge Wells Borough Council. They also noted that other residents were worried about possible compulsory purchase.

They explained that the existing footpath between Great Footway and Langton Road was very narrow and that they had previously invested in new fencing for safety. They questioned how the proposed route would be funded and expressed frustration that they only became aware of the plans through neighbours after the consultation period had already closed.

In response, Cllr Norton clarified that the consultation and design phase was funded by Active England from national government funds, with no local taxpayer cost. No funding had yet been secured for construction. It was further explained that the consultants advising on the route had identified certain privately owned sections of land that may need to be acquired, but no decisions had been made.

Councillor Sankey acknowledged shortcomings in communication, noting that the shift to electronic notifications had left gaps for those not signed up. They apologised for the lack of direct contact and offered to meet with the resident to discuss the plans in detail and ensure their views were formally included. The project remained at an early stage, and councillors emphasised that its aims included improving safe walking and cycling routes, particularly for school travel, while ensuring that any land-related issues were handled appropriately.

A further resident expressed support for the proposed cycle, walking and scooting route but was concerned that the intersection was not a good route. He said that it was positive to see progress on the Pavilion Review and good to see Speldhurst Parish Council (SPC) and Langton Green Community Sports Association (LGCSA) working together. He thought it was a good idea to invest in the space and suggested that the chairs needed replacing as soon as possible to avoid an accident as he had seen children slip through the open backs of the chairs. He congratulated everyone coming together.

The Chair brought item 19 forward (Public Statement for the Speldhurst Parish Council website).

25/241 PUBLIC STATEMENT FOR THE SPELDHURST PARISH COUNCIL WEBISTE

Councillors discussed the proposed accommodation for asylum seekers at Crowborough Army Camp. It was agreed that the Council would signpost residents to their MP for concerns, and a statement would be published clarifying the Council's limited powers.

25/242 LANGTON GREEN RECREATION GROUND (LGRG)

- **To receive an update on progress of the Independent Review for the Pavilion**

Members reported ongoing close collaboration with LGCSA and thanked those involved for their time.

The oven in the pavilion had been replaced with a refurbished commercial three-phase unit due to repeated failures of domestic units, as approved by the Finance and Governance Committee on 24th November 2024.

A draft update for the website was presented, outlining the purpose and constraints of the review. Key points included:

- The pavilion was not a commercial property and could not be marketed as such due to the conditions in the lease and sublease.
- SPC was prohibited from alienating the lease (ie separating itself from the lease on the space), so all hires must remain hourly and without security of tenure.
- Use of the building must remain as a sports pavilion and community facility for the benefit of local residents.

- **To consider extending the current hire agreement for the community hub for a further 6 months to facilitate the review process.**

The original six-month review period falls across the Christmas/New Year period and required more time for a full process; therefore, SPC and LGCSA propose:

- A six-month extension to the review timetable;
- A parallel six-month extension to the CIC's temporary hire agreement, at the current highest rate.

Councillors **RESOLVED** to approve a six-month extension to the original short-term hire agreement.

Bid Process – Proposed Timetable

- **1 April** – Publication of documentation pack and opening of applications
- **31 May (midday)** – Deadline for bids
- **1 July** – Interviews and presentations
- **1 September** – Notification of successful bidder
- **19 October or later** – Anticipated start date for new hire term

SPC would publish the draft statement once LGCSA confirm final wording.

- **To consider undertaking a reinstatement valuation (IRV) of the Pavilion**

Councillors considered quotations for reassessing the pavilion's reinstatement value. It was **RESOLVED** to commission the £250 desktop survey from the Council's insurer (Zurich Municipal) over the higher-cost full survey.

- **To consider the purchase of new equipment for the Pavilion and note the purchase of a new oven as approved by the Finance and Governance Committee**

Equipment and Improvements

The refurbished commercial oven had been purchased under delegated authority, saving approximately £750.

Discussion then turned to improving the hireability and revenue potential of the building.

The Review Committee was preparing a list of recommended items (e.g. cutlery, crockery, glassware, improved furnishings) to be presented at January's Full Council for decision. These would enhance the space for community use and strengthen the tender offering.

Safety Concerns – Chairs and Seating

Concerns had been raised about several young children falling from the existing lightweight chairs. Councillors acknowledged a duty of care and agreed the issue must be addressed promptly.

Options discussed included:

Circulating suggested chair models to councillors via email;

Using delegated authority to purchase safe, backed chairs once councillors have reviewed and approved a proposal;

Incorporating chairs into the wider January improvement package, if feasible.

SPC would explore immediate options while ensuring proper process was followed.

Additional Notes

LGCSA and SPC would collaborate on identifying investments that increase long-term rental value.

LGCSA highlighted the growing variety of community activities at the pavilion, including a well-attended mothers-and-daughters self-defence class, and suggested this may be communicated more widely due to broader community relevance and link in with Cllr Sharratt's role as women and girls' champion.

25/243 CLERK'S REPORT

The Clerk introduced the new Deputy Clerk who was attending her first Full Council meeting. She also shared that a letter had been received from Langton Green Church thanking the Parish Council for the £1,000 grant for churchyard maintenance.

25/244 GENERAL MATTERS

Actionable tasks which do not fall to a committee. All items were either in progress or complete.

	Existing	Owner	Created	Status
31/25	Update Premises Licence to be held by Pavilion Working Group and confirm terms of reference.	Clerk	07/04/25	Complete
41/25	Establish review process for Community Hub.	Pav WG	06/05/25	Complete
43/25	Establish Pavilion Licence Committee and confirm ToF R.	Clerk	06/05/25	In progress
52/25	Set up working group of councillors to look at next year's APM and potential change of focus. Contact other PCs on theirs.	Clerk	02/06/25	Complete
70/25	Compile a list of potential dates for the APM.	Clerk	01/09/25	Complete
76/25	Email nominations for 2026 KALC award.	All Councillors	06/10/25	In progress
80/25	Circulate County and Borough Cllr Reports.	Clerk	03/11/25	Complete
81/25	Share Consultation on Ashurst Bus Service.	Administrator	03/11/25	Complete
82/25	Confirm date of APM as 13 th April 2026.	Deputy Clerk	03/11/25	Complete
83/25	Update Terms of Reference, committee membership and Policy on Use of Council Land on website and cllrs' folder.	Clerk	03/11/25	Complete
84/25	Accept quotation for treeworks at LGRG if no further acceptable quotations are received.	Deputy Clerk	03/11/25	Complete
85/25	Update Little Birches Nursery and LGVH of outcome of Little Birches Nursery garden proposal.	Clerk	03/11/25	Complete
86/25	Update Internal Financial Control System on website and cllrs' folder.	Clerk	03/11/25	Complete
87/25	Confirm Ashurst Village Hall Trustee.	Clerk	03/11/25	Complete
88/25	Respond to request for Defibrillator at Speldhurst Chapel.	Deputy Clerk	03/11/25	Complete
89/25	Send link to Cllr Ellery for KCC solar panel scheme.	Cllr Turner	03/11/25	Complete
90/25	Prepare extension to hire agreement for Pavilion.	Clerk	01/12/25	
91/25	Undertake reinstatement valuation (IRV) of Pavilion.	Deputy Clerk	01/12/25	
92/25	Update website regarding the Pavilion Review.	Administrator	01/12/25	
93/25	Confirm defibrillator servicing contract.	Deputy Clerk	01/12/25	
94/25	Confirm playground repairs.	Deputy Clerk	01/12/25	
96/25	Update website and cllrs' folder with the following policies:	Clerk	01/12/25	

	Co-option, Media, Training and Development and Video Meeting Policy and Guidelines.			
97/25	Prepare final budget proposal for January Full Council for precept confirmation.	Clerk	01/12/25	
98/25	Include KALC Award final nomination for approval at the January FC meeting.	Clerk	01/12/25	
99/25	Update planning decisions on TWBC Planning Portal.	Deputy Clerk	01/12/25	
100/25	Send letter to owners of Burrswood.	Deputy Clerk	01/12/25	
101/25	Include statement on website regarding Crowborough Army Camp.	Administrator	01/12/25	

25/245 COMMITTEE AND WORKING GROUPS (WG) AND OTHER REPORTS

To include any meetings held since the last Full Council meeting, the draft minutes having previously been forwarded to all Members.

- a) **Highways Committee** – There had been no meeting. The next meeting was scheduled for 8th December.
- b) **Amenities**– There had been no meeting.
 - To consider a drainage assessment for the flooding at the Recreation Ground.
The Clerk provided an update for councillors. Following a visit by a drainage engineer, Kent County Council (KCC) had booked in a gully cleansing at Lampington Row which the drainage engineer had advised was blocked and therefore causing the flooding issue from Winstone Scott Avenue.
 - To consider authorising defibrillator servicing.
The Deputy Clerk presented a report recommending a change to the defibrillator servicing contractor who would provide 4 service visits per year (which included multi-point AED and accessory checks to IEC 62353 and multi-point installation security and functionality check) plus training at a cost of £207.90 + VAT. The current contract cost was £139 + VAT per unit for one service visit. It was **RESOLVED** to appoint Hopkins TAS Ltd to service the defibrillators at a cost of £207.90 + VAT per defibrillator.
 - To consider authorising repairs to the playground equipment.
It was **RESOLVED** to approve repairs to the playground equipment at a cost of £3,109.19 + VAT, as advised by our Playground Inspection Contractor.
- c) **Environment Working Group (EWG)** – There had been no meeting.
- d) **KALC** – Cllr Curry reported that he had attended a Parish Chairs' meeting at which Tunbridge Wells Borough Council had delivered a presentation about Local Government Review and Devolution. The minutes had been circulated.

25/246 FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

The Finance and Governance Committee Minutes from the meeting held on 24th November had been circulated.

- a) Councillors noted the detailed budget reports.
- b) Report on interim payments made since the last meeting. There were none
- c) Decisions made under delegated authority. There were none.
- d) It was **RESOLVED** to approve the following policies; Co-option, Media, Training and Development and Video Meeting Policy and Guidelines.
- e) To consider a virement from the grants budget for the purchase of new equipment for the Pavilion. This was not required at this time.
- f) Precept 2026/27. It was noted that the precept would need to be formally agreed at the January Full Council Meeting. Councillors were considering an increase of no more than 5%. For 25/246 (f). Cllr Rowe provided a summary of the main items affecting the budget compared to the previous year as well as items not included. Councillors were asked to review and inform the Clerk of any amendments they would like to be considered as soon as possible. Cllr Rowe also said he had received the Tax Base from TWBC which showed an additional 17 taxable properties had been added since the last tax year.
- g) To consider the final pay award for staff for 2025/26. It was **RESOLVED** that no additional pay increase would be made beyond the award agreed on 1st April.

- h) To consider the Staff vacancy, including advertising arrangements, job evaluation and interview panel. The Clerk advised that due to a change in personal circumstances, it was likely that she would be stepping down from her role within the next 3 months. It was **RESOLVED** that the post be evaluated and advertised at the appropriate time and Cllrs Curry, Norton and Rowe be appointed on the interview panel.

25/247 ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT

It was **RESOLVED** that the invoices as listed below and checked by Cllr Farley, be paid.

Date	Payee Name	Reference	Amount Paid £	Transaction Detail
02/12/2025	St John's Church, Groombridge	MT3078	1,000.00	Churchyard Grant
02/12/2025	Mr E Langridge	MT3079	500.00	Speldhurst History Soc Grant
02/12/2025	Paul Curry	MT3080	38.41	IT Equipment
02/12/2025	Katie Neve	MT3081	42.75	Mileage Claim
02/12/2025	WJ-Sunstone	MT3082	2,047.94	Annual CCTV Contract
02/12/2025	Capel Groundcare	MT3083	84.00	Playground Inspection
02/12/2025	AgriFactors (Southern) Ltd	MT3084	1,260.00	LGRG Pitch Maintenance
02/12/2025	Langton Life	MT3085	375.00	Magazine Article
02/12/2025	SLCC Enterprises Ltd	MT3086	144.00	ILCA Training (AD)
02/12/2025	M R Lawrence	MT3089	565.00	Mowing and Strimming
02/12/2025	Alison Dry	MT3091	16.07	Travel Expenses
02/12/2025	The Living Forest Ltd	MT3092	279.00	Treeworks at Pocket Park
10/12/2025	KCC (KCS)	DD	38.10	Photocopier
10/12/2025	BT PLC	DD	28.64	Office Mobile
10/12/2025	Talk Talk Business	DD	69.17	Office/Pav Phone/Broadband
15/12/2025	Tivoli	MT3087	162.20	Canine Waste Removal
19/12/2025	HMRC	MT3088	1,827.23	Income Tax and NI
19/12/2025	EDF Energy	DD	909.16	Pavilion Electricity
20/12/2025	Employees	MT3090	5,158.51	Salaries
28/12/2025	Hugo Fox	DD	11.99	Website
31/12/2025	Unity Trust Bank	DD	11.25	Bank Charges

25/248 UPDATE ON VACANCIES ON THE COUNCIL

There was nothing new to report

25/249 SPELDHURST CHAPEL

Cllr Rowe reported that the opening of the Chapel had taken place on 8th November. There had been good attendance and a very successful opening. He said that this had been one of the biggest projects for SPC which he would like to promote as a case study as it was a fantastic asset. Councillors thanked Cllr Rowe for all his hard work on the project.

25/250 KALC COMMUNITY AWARDS SCHEME 2026.

The deadline for nominations is 30th January. Nominations were sought for consideration plus supporting statements and would be confirmed at the January Full Council meeting.

25/251 ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2026

The date for the Annual Parish Meeting was confirmed as Monday 13th April, to be held at Langton Green Pavilion. A revised proposal including additional organisations to be offered a space to share success and raise awareness, eg Langton Green Community Sports Association and Thrive, was agreed.

25/252 PLANNING COMMITTEE

Cllr Curry reported on the meeting held on 17th November; the minutes having been previously circulated.

- a) There were 3 applications that required consideration as the next Planning Committee meeting would be post the deadline for submitting comments.
- **25/02733/TPO – 8 Gipps Cross Lane, Langton Green**
Proposal: Trees: oak(T1) – Reduce canopy by 2.5-3m, remove major deadwood, crown lift to 3m over grass, 5m over highway, remove epicormic growth by 4m, thin crown by 15% for 0.5 -1m clearance over BT cables.
Decision: Remain neutral, leave to Tree Officer.
 - **25/02614/Full – Little Snape, Furzefield Avenue, Speldhurst**
Proposal: (Self – Build) Proposed two-storey dwelling, single storey detached garage and associated landscape alterations, alterations to the garage of the existing house and conversion to utility room.
Decision: It was **RESOLVED** to delegate authority to Cllr Curry, in consultation with the Planning Committee to submit a response.
Cllr Farley disclosed an interest as residents are known to him and took no part in the discussion or voting of this item.
 - **25/02365/FULL – 59 Asher Reeds, Langton Green**
Proposal: (Partly Retrospective) Demolition of shed and construction of outbuilding.
Decision: Remain neutral, leave to Planning Officer.
- b) To consider sending a letter to the owners of Burrswood raising concerns about the site and surrounding trees. A draft letter had been circulated and councillors **RESOLVED** to send the letter to the owners of Burrswood raising those concerns.
- c) To consider a Neighbourhood plan. Councillors **RESOLVED** that Speldhurst Parish Council would not pursue a neighbourhood plan at this time.

25/253 DIARY DATES

The Clerk confirmed the following meeting dates:

- 8th December - Highways Committee
- 5th January – Full Council
- 19th January – Planning Committee
- 26th January – Finance and Governance Committee

25/254 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

Councillors noted the following correspondence:

- Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Local Development Scheme Update November 2025
- KALC News (November)
- GACC Newsletter
- CAGNE Email

With nothing further to discuss, the meeting closed at 8.56pm.

Chair