



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

**MINUTES OF A FULL COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON MONDAY, 11th April 2011 at 7.30pm
IN SPELDHURST VILLAGE HALL**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Cllrs Mrs Jeffreys (Chairman), Mrs Hull, Mrs Paulson-Ellis, Mrs Podbury, Mrs Soyke, Brown, Langridge, Milner, Parker, Pendleton and Wheeler

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

Alison Thompson of English Rural Housing Association and Sarah Lewis of Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

KCC Cllr John Davies, Borough Cllr David Jukes and 30 members of the public present.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: There were no apologies for absence

11/041 DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL AND PREJUDICIAL INTEREST: There were none.

11/042 DECLARATIONS OF LOBBYING: Cllrs Mrs Hull, Mrs Podbury, Brown and Milner have all been lobbied in respect of the local Needs Housing proposal. They have offered no comments or opinions. Cllr Wheeler declared that he had been extensively lobbied by email by a number of residents on Local Needs Housing.

11/043 MINUTES: The Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on **7th March 2011**, having previously been forwarded to Members, were approved and signed.

11/044 PUBLIC OPEN SESSION:

The meeting was adjourned.

Alison Thompson of English Rural Housing Association (ERHA) addressed the meeting. She explained that ERHA is a non-profit national organisation, part of a Government Agency, Homes and Communities and they specialise in rural local needs housing having built approx 300 such homes in Kent and 1,000 nationally. An independent survey was carried out in 2009 through Action with Communities in Rural Kent (ACRK) within the whole Parish which showed strong community support for such a project and since the Consultation Event in February 16 households have registered a preliminary interest in the properties. She explained the rural exception site policy for local needs housing where green belt land can be used and confirmed that this is the only way the project is viable because of the lower land price but it did not give any hope value to adjoining land. She explained that the proposed development on "Site 15", Langton Road, is for seven homes which can *only* be occupied by people having a connection with the parish and she confirmed that the proposed seven homes will all be rented. She said that many sites had been considered but this was the only one that had the backing of the TWBC Planning Department. She also confirmed that the project has to have the backing of Speldhurst Parish Council to continue.

Cllr John Davies and Cllr David Jukes spoke of their concerns over highways issues. Alison Thompson stated that ERHA consider it is possible to create a safe access and any traffic calming associated with this may benefit the village overall and are consulting Kent Highway Services (KHS) to look at ways to improve the access.

A resident spoke about the road and highways being a big issue and asked about the wording of the original survey. Cllr Mrs Jeffreys responded that the original survey was based on 'need' for local needs housing and not on the 'siting' of it. She confirmed that only Speldhurst is currently eligible and not any other villages in the parish and Cllr Wheeler stressed that this is the only site that TWBC will endorse.

Cllr Mrs Hull stated that the survey indicated that a large percentage of residents wanted housing for young villagers and that all sites, other than this site, have been refused by TWBC. She reiterated that the Committee had pursued numerous options to keep the development within the village envelope, and had consistently spoken against the use of Green Belt, but all options had been turned down by TWBC for various reasons and this exception site is the only one that has been endorsed.

A resident stated that many villagers were unaware of the details of the proposal and as a result he is carrying out a petition. Cllr Wheeler said that Local Needs Housing has been a Committee and on Full Council Agendas and minuted since February 2010 and asked about the nature of the petition, the information given and the questions asked. They advised that although they themselves are against the project they are trying to be as objective as possible. They confirmed that they have not finished collecting signatures as yet.

A resident asked if ERHA would consider sending out another survey now that the site had been identified. Cllr Langridge suggested a leaflet drop in the parish with all the points for and against.

Cllr Brown asked if a cast iron guarantee could be given that the houses would all be for rental and not changed at a later date. Alison Thompson said this could be done. A resident asked about the rental calculations for the properties. Alison Thompson stated that the rent for a 3 bed property local needs property would be in the region of £110.00/week.

A resident asked if thought had been given to the impact on the school, doctors, traffic etc. Cllr Wheeler advised that a large proportion will probably already live in the village so the impact should be minimal.

One resident said that he felt that location was important and that this development was more appropriate in Langton or Rusthall.

Cllr Langridge recommended residents to go and have a look at other ERHA schemes.

Sarah Lewis confirmed that TWBC do not have plans for any further local housing needs surveys.

Cllr David Jukes reported that the road servicing the Northfields bungalows had been resurfaced today.

Cllr John Davies asked how the double yellow lines by Speldhurst Surgery would be enforced. Cllr Brown said he has met the Enforcement Officer and there were 10-16 new warden posts being advertised. It was confirmed that once the new parking restrictions were in place that additional visits would be requested.

A resident asked if there any further measures that can be taken to stop traffic driving on grass verges because the verges in Southfields for example was terrible. Cllr Mrs Hull advised that she is looking into 'The Big Tree Plant' which may enable trees to be reinstated on some verges. Cllr Mrs Jeffreys advised that the Parish Council has been trying to get Contractors to carry out reinstatement but it is proving very difficult.

Cllr John Davies and the Clerk have reported the large pothole in Southfields to KHS.

The public open session closed at 8.34pm and the meeting was re-opened.

11/045 LOCAL NEEDS HOUSING

Cllr Wheeler reported that ERHA have requested confirmation from the Speldhurst Parish Council that they continue to support the project at this stage on this site and confirmed that there is no other site available.

It was **AGREED** by 11-0 that the Parish Council continue to support the project subject to feedback from ERHA, more consultation including possible questionnaires and more feedback from residents.

11/046 FINANCE COMMITTEE – Report by Cllr Parker

- i) Cllr Parker reported that there had been six email decisions by the Finance Committee. The Committee agreed that in future the Clerk's overtime would be dealt with and agreed prior to the meeting by email. They agreed to buy 13 hi-visibility vests with the SPC logo on the back for £95.58, to purchase and install two collapsible posts for the land in front of the cottages by the Old Watson Hall, to give a grant of £500.00 to Tunbridge Wells Citizens' Advice Bureau, to pay KCC (KCS) £1,762.00 plus VAT for the past year's Langton Green playground inspections and to renew the contract with A1 Garden Services.
- ii) The Governance Committee have recommended that the Parish Council consider placing an amount of funds on deposit to gain a fixed rate of interest. It was **AGREED** by 11-0 that the Clerk look into this and report back to Full Council. Cllr Jukes recommended he speak to Lee Colyer as part of that investigation.

11/047 ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT – Invoices verified by Cllr Brown

<u>Date Paid</u>	<u>Payee Name</u>	<u>Cheque Ref</u>	<u>Amount Paid</u>	<u>Transaction Detail</u>
11/04/2011	South East Water	067	£16.80	Water Bill LG

11/04/2011	Prestige Web Marketing	068	£45.00	Pavilion Maintenance 3 months
11/04/2011	BT PLC	069	£30.66	Mobile
11/04/2011	KALC	070	£1,248.00	Annual Subscription
11/04/2011	Speldhurst Village Hall	071	£115.71	Meeting rooms Jan-Mar
11/04/2011	C Worcester	072	£67.00	LGRG Maintenance
11/04/2011	El Parido	073	£216.00	APM Boards
11/04/2011	Donaldson West	074	£1,300.00	Land Transfer Fees
11/04/2011	Rymans	075	£43.13	Stationery
11/04/2011	RIP Cleaning Services	076	£129.60	Canine refuse
11/04/2011	KALC	077	£4.00	4 Good Cllr Guides
11/04/2011	Mr L Cooper	078	£100.00	Groundsman
11/04/2011	HMRC	079	£603.34	NI & Tax
11/04/2011	M Flemington	080	£400.95	Salary
11/04/2011	M Flemington	081	£77.00	Expenses
11/04/2011	C May	082	£1,196.45	Salary
11/04/2011	Mr C May	083	£260.66	Expenses
11/04/2011	HMRC	084	£20.24	Underpayment 2010-11
11/04/2011	M R Lawrence	085	£180.00	Mowing Roopers
19/04/2011	EDF Energy	DD	£105.60	LG Pavilion - Electricity
20/04/2011	BT PLC	DD	£108.32	Telephone Bill
			Total Payments	6,268.46

11/048 HIGHWAYS REPORT

Cllr Langridge reported that the Parish Council signs that have already been put up in several locations are considered to be a success and that additional signs will be put up. Speedwatch will be set up again next month and the Committee are still trying to find a location for this in Speldhurst.

He advised that the KHS speed review programme (now shelved) recommended the reduction of speed limits from 60mph to 50mph approaching Groombridge and Ashurst and they had been advised that KHS had no funds for these improvements. He advised that the Clerk was going to get confirmation from the Director of KHS that this was the case and if confirmed he advised that the Highways Committee supported financing this at a cost of approx £6-7,000.00. He asked Councillors to consider this proposal and confirmed that there are sufficient funds in the budget to do so. This was **AGREED** by a vote of 10-0 with one abstention. **Clerk to write to John Burr.**

11/006 ENHANCEMENT OF THE LAND OUTSIDE THE OLD WATSON HALL

The Clerk reported that Tate Fencing had installed collapsible posts but that had encountered a problem because they were too high for cars to pass over them. Tate Fencing had advised that they would adjust them next day. There had been no update from Monson Engineering regarding progress on the main build.

10/008 PARISH COUNCIL WEBSITE:

The Clerk advised that he was only updating one website at present and it was **AGREED** to put in place an automatic link from the old website to the new website.

2249 PARISH COUNCIL OFFICE:

Further to the minutes of 7th March, when Councillors agreed that the Clerk would investigate if any savings could be made from the carried forward year end figure, it was **AGREED** that the PWLB application would be for a loan of £65,000.

Cllr Mrs Jeffreys reported that the building contracts are ready for signing.

11/049 LOCAL SCHOOLS

The barrier extension outside Speldhurst School is due to be installed soon.

Cllr Brown is attending a meeting at Langton Green School on 5th May in respect of the Environment Committee.

Cllr Mrs Jeffreys is unable to attend the meeting but will give him details of any further matters for discussion.

Cllr Mrs Podbury reported that Langton Green School have submitted a planning application for 2 new classrooms.

County Cllr John Davies advised that he is supporting the application as it provides for 10 additional pupils and doesn't impact on residents in any adverse way. He stated that there is also an increase in pupil numbers of 10 at St Pauls School, Rusthall and more Teaching Assistant time.

11/050 CONSIDERATION OF A REQUEST FROM ST MARY'S CHURCH, SPELDHURST FOR A CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS THE RENOVATION OF THE CHURCH CLOCK

After discussion the Clerk was requested to ask the Church if they obtained any other quotes than just the one referred to in their letter.

11/051 CONSIDERATION OF A REQUEST FROM LGSC FOR IMPROVEMENTS TO THE PAVILION AT LANGTON GREEN

Cllr Mrs Soyke suggested that it should be policy that where volunteers carry out work the Parish Council pay for the materials. It was **AGREED** to allow LGSC to build storage cupboards in the pavilion.

11/052 QUEEN ELIZABETH II FIELDS CHALLENGE

The Clerk has emailed many other Parish Councils regarding this matter. Only Capel Parish Council has made any progress and report that they have decided to refer to the residents.

11/053 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:

There was no written report. Cllr Mrs Jeffreys thanked everyone involved in the Annual Parish Meeting.

11/054 COMMITTEE REPORTS

- i) Governance Committee – The Virement Policy was **AGREED**.
- ii) Planning – Cllr Mrs Podbury reported that two planning applications in respect of Speldhurst School projects were considered at the Planning Committee meeting held on 5th April and had been recommended for approval.
- iii) Parish Vision – Cllr Mrs Podbury recommended that there is no need to continue with a Committee for Parish Vision. Action points will be dealt with by other relevant Committees and she proposed a six monthly update in the village magazines. Cllr Mrs Jeffreys thanked all Committee members for their hard work in what had been a very successful project.
- iv) Amenities – The Clerk reported that the damaged verge and posts at the entrance to Furzefield Avenue does not belong to Highways and it was **AGREED** that this should be repaired and the posts replaced possibly with white painted rocks when the development at The Grove is completed. Cllr Mrs Soyke would investigate where the stones could be purchased. It was noted that The Grove sign was illegal.
- v) Footpaths – Cllr Milner reported that the stream in Shadwell Wood is being cleared and further tree guards have been cleared. He hopes to arrange for the refuse lorry to collect further guards. The broken stile at Poke Hill Farm will be mended. Derek Robinson would like to put up shelves in the storage container for storage of smaller tools – estimated cost £150.00 – this will be put forward for approval at a future meeting or by email decision.
- vi) KALC – Cllr Brown thanked Cllr Mrs Hull for attending the meeting on 10th March and referred Cllrs to her report.
- vii) Local Needs Housing – Cllr Wheeler advised that there was nothing further to report after the extensive discussions at the start of the meeting.
- viii) Environment – Cllr Brown reported that a Committee meeting was held on 30th March and meetings are to take place with Speldhurst and Langton Green Schools. Consideration was given to a Parish Council stall at Speldhurst and Langton Green Fetes but it was felt to be too late to arrange anything for this year.

11/055 OTHER MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF 7th March 2011: There were none

11/056 CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED

- i) Letter dated 10th March from Pauline Lambell requesting that her letter be read out at the APM. This request was declined because no business is transacted at that meeting but she was advised that it would be considered at this meeting. Cllr Mrs Jeffreys had drafted a reply which had been circulated to Members and it was **AGREED** to send it.

- ii) Email from Direct Technical Services advising that there will be a 3% increase in the annual charges from 1st April. (DTS repair our street light)
- iii) Oast to Coast magazine (Spring 2011)
- iv) Audit Commission have appointed a new auditor – Jackie Bellard
- v) Letter received from Sevenoaks District Council dated 1st March – they have adopted their Core Strategy Development Plan Document
- vi) Came Insurance – Spring Newsletter
- vii) Letter from KCC re Try Angle Award presentation evening 8th July at the Angel Centre, Tonbridge.
- viii) Letter from Transport Direct dated 25th March – Transport Direct is a comprehensive, free to use online journey planner which includes access to all forms of transport, maps, real time information and ticket purchase. It is a Department of Transport initiative and they want to include information about car parking facilities. Does SPC approve DfT's use of car parking information published on our website? It was decided that there was no information on the website and the **Clerk was requested to inform them accordingly.**
- ix) Email from kdconsultation (a KCC member) who are assessing the historic value of farmsteads in Kent and guidance on Kent Downs AONB farmsteads.
- x) Kompan are launching a new Playground Funding Support Service. **To be sent Cllr Mrs Podbury who would forward it to the Speldhurst Recreation Committee.**
- xi) Sir Thomas Smythe's Charity have written (letter dated 23rd March) to advise that Rev Michael Gentry's term as a Smythe Trustee has recently come to an end. Rev Gentry has confirmed that he is willing to continue in his role as Trustee. **The Clerk was asked to write and confirm his re-appointment.**
- xii) Email from Emily Attewell requesting a link from our website to www.lifecoach-directory.org.uk. **The Clerk was asked to email advising that no link would be available.**
- xiii) Request from Woodland Trust for money to save Ancient Woodlands. **The Clerk would refer this to the Finance Committee.**
- xiv) Letter from Barclays Bank advising that they are delighted to inform us that any charges will be debited monthly instead of quarterly.
- xv) Letter from TWBC advising that the Core Strategy Review consultation is likely to take place between 16 May and 24 June. The Chairman is invited to attend a presentation on the Core Strategy Review on Monday 9 May at 2pm
- xvi) Broadleaf magazine from Woodland Trust
- xvii) Letter from Mr Ponsford dated 8th April addressed to the Chairman requesting information on what planning application approval was required for the container; his opposition to using Green Belt for LNH and what Freedom of Information model we follow and requesting copies of a number of documents. **The Clerk would reply.**

11/057 DIARY DATES

- i) Thursday 7th April – Children from Marchiennes at Langton Green Primary School
- ii) Monday 18th April – JTB Meeting – 6.00pm Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
- iii) Thursday 5th May – Borough Elections and AV Referendum – no Parish Council elections
- iv) Monday 16th May – **Annual Meeting of the Parish - Ashurst**
- v) Wednesday 25th May – Finance Committee meeting – Ashurst meeting room (upstairs)

11/058 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION:

Cllr Pendleton reported that the dead Oak tree on Groombridge Hill is to be removed on Sunday 17th April and will involve a road closure. He also reported that where the other Oak tree fell recently the road safety barrier is damaged. **The Clerk to report to KHS.**

Cllr Langridge asked if he can put a poster for the Church Concert on Parish Council land by the Village sign. This was **AGREED**. He also asked if there could be an additional dog waste bin in Langton Green. This will be considered by the Amenities committee at their meeting in May.

Cllr Mrs Jeffreys thanked Cllr Mrs Paulson-Ellis and Cllr Wheeler for their time and hard work given to the Parish Council and wished them farewell.

There being nothing further to discuss the meeting closed at 9.44pm

CHAIRMAN