

Speldhurst Parish Council

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

MINUTES OF A FULL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, 1st MARCH 2010 at 7.30pm IN THE ASHURST VILLAGE HALL

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

OFFICER PRESENT: Chris May, Clerk

County Councillor John Davies
Borough Cllr David Jukes

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Cllr Mrs Hull (holiday) Cllr Brown (funeral)

10/037 DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL AND PREJUDICIAL INTEREST:

Personal – Cllr Mrs Soyke – Ashurst Village Play Area – resident of Ashurst (1825-3). Cllr Mrs Waters – her children attend the school (10/042i)

Personal & Prejudicial – Cllr Mrs Soyke - 10/044vi) footpath near her house. The Clerk - 10/042iv) approval of his overtime.

10/038 DECLARATIONS OF LOBBYING: No declarations were received

10/039 MINUTES: The Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on 1st February 2010, having previously been forwarded to Members, were approved and signed.

10/040 PUBLIC OPEN SESSION – Cllrs Davies and Jukes were asked if they would like bring to the attention of the Council any matters. Cllr Jukes said that he had attended a meeting at TWBC last week where precepts were discussed and it was noted that Speldhurst had a high precept this year.

10/041 GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE - Report by Cllr Jeffreys

- i) Cllr Mrs Jeffreys said that the Committee had reviewed the Standing Orders of the Council and these had been circulated to all Members for comment. Cllr Mrs Hull had asked for clarification regarding confidentiality and she was happy with the response. Cllr Mrs Jeffreys asked for the new Standing Orders to be approved. This was voted on and it was unanimously **RESOLVED** to adopt them.
- ii) Cllr Mrs Jeffreys referred Members to the minutes of the meeting and there were no questions. She added that an accurate population count of the Parish of 4,880 had been established and had the figure been over 5,000 it would have implications on the cost of the insurance policy.
- iii) The annual Council insurance was due for renewal at the end of March and Allianz had sent in a proposal which included a 10% increase over last year to £3,535.22. The clerk had approached Aviva via a broker and had received a quote of £3,004.94 or £2,854.69 if taken on a three year option. The policy did include a £250 excess on every claim but there were other benefits such as Public Liability Indemnity Limit increasing to £10,000,000. Members were asked to vote on whether to accept the new policy from Aviva and it was unanimously **RESOLVED** to agree to the three year deal being offered.

10/042 FINANCE COMMITTEE – Report by Cllr Parker

- i) Cllr Parker referred to the minutes of the meeting held in February and spoke of the decision of the Committee to support the Speldhurst School Outside Classroom Project but not yet commit any amount to the scheme. Following a 4-2 vote the Committee felt that it would be in a better position to understand the needs of the School/PTA after it had completed its two main fund raising events this year and would then

discuss funding to the Council. Cllr Davies said that he had supported the project financially from his Councillor's fund and he urged the Council to support it. Following discussion and information from the clerk that the PTA were happy to leave the amount "open" the Council supported the recommendation of the Finance Committee.

- ii) The Committee had supported a request from the Smiley Faces (Speldhurst Toddler Group) for a grant for £100 towards a hands free microphone.
- iii) Future Accounting – The clerk had brought it to the attention of the Finance Committee that there was no provision for replacement of assets in the accounts of the Council. The Finance Committee recommended in the next financial year (2011-12) that a reserve is started, which could amount to as much as £21,500p.a.
- iv) Approval of payments of overtime to the Clerk – the Clerk left the meeting. He had provided detailed figures of his hours to Members prior to the meeting and the overtime was approved by Council. He was asked to rejoin the meeting.
- v) Precept pamphlet – The precept was now in the public domain since the meeting last week at TWBC and the pamphlet was basically ready for printing. Council **RESOLVED** to approve the expenditure of a maximum of £300 on 250 copies of the pamphlet which would be left at Village Halls, Post Offices, and other places where the public could take one. It would also be available on the website, on the notice boards and a supply would be with the Clerk who would also email copies to residents if they so wished.

10/043 ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT –February 2010 – Invoices verified by Cllr Parker

Haymarket Publishing Ltd	£119.00	Planning Magazine	786
RIP Cleaning Services	£103.40	Dog Bins	787
LGCT	£18.00	Hall Hire	788
NALC	£939.41	Leadership Academy	789
BT PLC	£29.79	Mobile	790
354 Print	£782.42	PV Questionnaires	791
Ryman	£56.97	Stationery	792
M R Lawrence	£120.00	LGRG Ground clearing	793
C Worcester	£124.00	Installing Ashurst Notice Board	794
Mr C May	£1,302.46	Salary	795
HMRC	£680.06	NI & Employees NI & tax	796
Mr C May	£216.80	Expenses	797
Speldhurst Mother & Toddler Group	£100.00	Smiley Faces Grant - microphone	798

Total **£4,592.31**

10/044 HIGHWAYS REPORT – The Clerk had written to Kent Highways Services with a number of outstanding issues and had requested a meeting to follow up the one last September. The Clerk had circulated a report to all Councillors prior to the meeting which included updates on a number of Highways issues.

- i) Parking restrictions in Speldhurst – we are still awaiting a timetable for action. This will be included for discussions at the meeting.
- ii) 2190 Langton Green – Land outside the old Watson Hall – It was decided to contact another contractor for a quote.
- iii) Speldhurst Traffic Survey 2009 – This will be included for discussions at the meeting.
- iv) 2213 Groombridge Hill – nothing further to report. This will be included for discussions at the meeting.

- v) Ashurst ISS – The Road Safety Team were expected to report in February 2010. This will be included for discussions at the meeting.
- vi) Cllr Milner had made contact with Jonathan Bibby about the footpath at Ashurst and he would re-investigate the issue.
- vii) Salt bins – The Clerk explained that he had written twice to KHS and again by email advising them of the experiences of the villages during the two recent heavy snowfalls and again requesting more salt bins. He still had not received an answer or an acknowledgement. Cllr Davies said that he would contact the KHS direct to ensure an answer was sent. He also said that KHS was spending £1million on mending pot holes in April. Cllr Mrs Soyke requested a new salt bin for Stone Cross corner.

10/008 PARISH WEBSITE AND LOGO – Cllr Pendleton confirmed that Arrowscape had quoted a figure of £1,000 to set up the website, which was twice what was advised. He had made further investigations and found a company based in Uckfield called Prestige Web Marketing (www.prestigewebmarketing.co.uk) who would design a site for the Council for £450 (50% up front) and £25 pm for as many updates as necessary. They would also train a Clerk or Assistant for £250 and afterwards the £25pm would not be payable. The Council would also get a referral payment for any other Council that decided to use them based on our website.

It was **RESOLVED** to employ the company and to approve the costs as outlined.

Cllr Langridge had outlined his idea for the headed paper and Members had been circulated with a copy. There was a discussion on the merits of the address and other information being at the bottom of the page rather than on the right hand side as suggested and this was voted on. The information would be on the right hand side and this carried by 6-5.

1825-3 ASHURST VILLAGE PLAY AREA – Registering of Common Ground – Cllr Mrs Soyke reiterated what had been outlined in the Finance Committee Minutes that Ashurst was seriously considering whether ownership of the land should be claimed by Ashurst rather than the Parish Council taking responsibility for it. In this case it would need to be fenced and cleared and, if there were no claims from legitimate owners within twelve years, then the land could be claimed by a body in Ashurst, which would most likely be the Ashurst McDermott Hall Trust. The need for the addition of play equipment could be re-assessed after twelve years. Cllr Mrs Soyke was communicating with the residents of Ashurst via the Broadsheet, and asking whether they supported this idea, or whether they did not wish Ashurst to try and gain ownership of the land. She would report back at the next Parish Council meeting. If the residents wish to go for ownership, the clearing and fencing costs are estimated at about £8,000 including VAT, and she hoped that the council might make a contribution. Cllr Mrs Jeffreys said that the sum already allocated for the original project would stay there until May when a decision would be sought from Council.

10/009 ASHURST NOTICE BOARD – The notice board had been installed and was up outside the hall. The Clerk said that he noticed that it was a bit damp inside and he felt that the back should be more waterproof. This would be monitored.

2249 PARISH OFFICE – There was nothing to report.

10/010 INSTALLATION OF WIFI IN PARISH VILLAGE HALLS – The Clerk had been able to register the request for more information on this and he had only three responses - it was clear that this was not something that was nation-wide at this time, however one of the contacts was in Rotherfield and he would contact them to find out more about the security.

Action – Clerk to contact Rotherfield Village Hall

10/029 ASSISTANT CLERK – Cllr Mrs Jeffreys said that the Governance Committee had checked the pay scale that was to be advertised and agreed it was correct. The advert would go out at the end of March in the April editions of the local magazines and broadsheets. It would also appear on the notice boards and on the website. The Clerk had been in contact with Marden PC and Loose PC who both employ assistants and had their job descriptions and the questions they asked the interviewees. Cllr Mrs Jeffreys and the Clerk would meet to compile the questions and the Clerk asked the Council if he could join the panel of interviewers as a voting member. It was **RESOLVED** that on this occasion he could do so.

Cllrs Mrs Jeffreys, Mrs Soyke and Langridge applied to join the panel and Cllr Mrs Podbury thought that a member from Speldhurst should be on the panel. It was decided to ask Cllr Mrs Hull on her return if she would be willing to join the panel.

The three people who made the short list for Clerk would be advised that the position was available and when a short list of candidates was made these would be circulated to Members.

Cllr Jukes said that we could use the Head of HR at TWBC, Val Green, if we thought she could be of help.

There was a discussion on whether the Assistant should be on a long or short term contract i.e. six month roll over and it was thought that the six month probationary period within the standard contract would be sufficient to protect the Council's position.

10/030 AGM – Cllr Mrs Jeffreys reminded **all** Chairmen of Committees that they would be required to make a report at the meeting. She would meet with the Chairmen of Finance and Parish Vision before to discuss their reports.

Cllr John Davies said that he was looking forward to giving his talk about his experiences as Chairman of the KCC. Cllr Langridge would organise the 6 signs this year advertising the event, he would borrow the boards from Cllr Pendleton (who needed them back quickly after the event) and would send costs to the Clerk. They would be put up 14 days ahead of the meeting and be advertised on the website and notice boards.

Cllr Mrs Hull would purchase of wine and soft drinks.

10/045 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT – Cllr Mrs Jeffreys thanked Cllr Mrs Soyke for attending the meeting on February 3rd of Parish Council Chairmen in her absence and also for her detailed written report that had been circulated to all Members prior to the meeting. She said that in future she would submit a written report.

10/046 COMMITTEE REPORTS

- i) Planning – Cllr Mrs Podbury referred Members to the Minutes of the meeting held on 8th February and said that it had been mentioned that Cllr Stanyer had called in the Groombridge Farm Shop application to the Western Planning Meeting. A number of Cllrs had attended a Planning Information meeting at the Town Hall today and it had been useful. TWBC said that the number of applications had dropped by 8%. She added that a meeting had been arranged with Fiona Strachan of TWBC on March 18th to discuss the problems that were encountered using the planning website.
- ii) Parish Vision – Cllr Mrs Podbury thanked everybody for helping with the delivery and pick up of the questionnaires. She said that the response rate for the whole Parish could be as high as 60%. Cllr Mrs Soyke had started applying for a grant, which is £250 and then another £250 is possible at a later date.
The PV Committee recommended an 8 page brochure based on the same format as the questionnaire which would cut costs and that 500 copies be printed and left at strategic places for pick up by interested parties. The Council discussed this and it was **RESOLVED** to distribute a brochure to **ALL** households and the additional cost of the printing added to the PV budget.
- iii) Recreation Ground – Cllr Ellis said that he was hopeful of appointing a Groundsman. KCC Landscapes were still having a problem acquiring the oak posts for the bollards in the car park. The Clerk had written to the Sports Club advising them that we were investigating the cost of having the pitches drained but the first quote was about £28,000-£35,000.
- iv) Footpaths – Cllr Milner had written a detailed report for Council which had been circulated to Members. It was **RESOLVED** to site the container in part of the small turning-area just before the main gridded grass parking area. All other details were agreed.
- v) KALC - There was nothing to report. The local KALC meeting has been moved to 18th March.
- vi) Environment – There was nothing to report.
- vii) Local Needs Housing – Cllr Wheeler reported on the site visits in Speldhurst with TWBC Officers on 12th February and it was reiterated that the Committee wanted to exhaust all brown field site possibilities before the use of Green Belt was considered. He then reported on the meeting on 19th February with the two RSLs – ERHA and Circle Anglia. The Committee had unanimously agreed to recommend ERHA who had more experience in small rural housing developments and a better design of housing. It was **RESOLVED** to inform TWBC that the Council would use English Rural Housing Association.

10/047 OTHER MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF 1st FEBRUARY 2010 – Cllr Mrs Podbury and the Clerk would meet on 18th March to view the new possible access to The Twitten (Breakstones Lane). The Clerk had contacted the Access Officer Nick Green who had also supplied some ideas.

Lene Beynon would now put the new "Love where we live" sign at a new site further from the bend towards Fordcombe.

10/048 CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED

- i) Letter dated 27th Jan from NSPCC raising awareness of their helpline and requesting that we advertise their helpline in our magazines and websites.
- ii) Letter dated 30th January from Benjamin Hatcher offering Tree and Garden Services
- iii) Email dated 5th February from Playdale advertising their playground equipment
- iv) Letter from Marshalls, Landscape consultants advertising their ability to develop front garden areas.
- v) Letter from Sevenoaks District Council notifying the LDF Consultations.

- vi) CPRE membership due for renewal £29.00 It was **RESOLVED** to renew the membership. **Action** - The Clerk was requested to ask for clarification on how many years an area needed to be fenced before ownership can be claimed.
- vii) Parish News
- viii) Protect Kent – Diary update for 2010
- ix) KALC Power of Well Being on March 15th
- x) SLCC Day long course in Haslemere for Councillors and Clerks on 29th March on employment legislation
- xi) Sky Birds of Prey – display team for Fetes
- xii) Littlethorpe of Leicester – hardwood bus shelters
- xiii) Wicksteed playscapes
- xiv) Email from Sarah Cheadle dated 10th February – Parent Representative for the Village Nursery School in Langton Green (copy attached) requesting use of the playing fields on the LGRG on Saturday May 1st 1.30pm -4pm for fundraising. There is no cricket or football. It was **RESOLVED** to allow them use of the field subject to them obtaining appropriate insurance and carrying out a risk assessment.
- xv) Email dated 24 Feb from Kingsfords Solicitors requesting having a link from our website to their website. It was **RESOLVED** not to allow a link.
- xvi) Email dated 22nd Feb from Paul Harvey regarding costs of running the SPVH – asking users not to turn up the heating or use lighting that is not required
- xvii) Email dated 27th Feb from Philippe Vanderghote, Consultant to the Community of Zonnebeke. He is a consultant for Ypres and is preparing to improve living conditions in small communities with 50% funding from the EU Commission – would we want to participate? A) are we a small community and b) we would have to fund the other 50%. He has emailed a number of Parish Councils. No action taken.
- xviii) Email via Trevor Palmer from Marchiennes regarding our relationship since Gerry Colley resigned as co-ordinator. (copy enclosed) **Action** - Cllr Mrs Jeffreys to discuss with Trevor Palmer.
- xix) TC Advertising Gifts – a note advertising their company addressed to Unions and Local Authorities.
- xx) Open Space magazine Spring 2010

10/049 DIARY DATES

Thursday 4th March – Chairmanship Training Day

Thursday 4th March – Clerk lunch with other Clerks in Kent

Monday 8th March – 7.30pm Planning Meeting

Monday 8th March – 12th Friday – Cllr Mrs Jeffreys on holiday

Saturday 13th March – KALC Planning Day

Thursday 18th March – KALC meeting

Saturday 10th April – Thursday 22nd – Clerk holiday

Monday 12th April – Annual Parish Meeting at Speldhurst Village Hall

Monday 10th May – Annual Meeting of the Parish Council at Langton Green Village Hall

10/050 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION – Cllr Langridge said that there was going to be a big article on the Parish Council in the Langton Life in the April edition. The LGRS was considering landscaping the entry points in to Langton Green.

Cllr Milner said that the TW half marathon had been very inconvenient for road users.

Cllr Mrs Podbury said that the cars parking on the corner of Smallbrook Farm were creating a more dangerous bend.

Cllr Mrs Waters said that the post box near Bradleys had become a bog. Cllr Mrs Podbury would discuss this with the owners of the land.

Cllr Ellis said that the car park at the LGRG was in need of a road sweep.

There being nothing further to discuss the meeting closed at 10.05pm

CHAIRMAN