

**Local Government Act 1972**



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

# Minutes of the Full Council Meeting

Held at 7.30 pm on Monday 3rd November 2025 at Speldhurst Village Hall

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## **MEMBERS PRESENT**

Cllrs Curry (Chair), Rowe (Vice-Chair), Cleaver, Ellery, Leach, Littlefield, and Turner.

## **OFFICERS PRESENT**

K Neve (KN) Clerk, A Dry (AD) Administrator.

## **IN ATTENDANCE**

County Cllr Moreland was in attendance (arrived late due to traffic). Borough Cllrs Sankey and Sharratt had sent apologies.

## **MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

There were no members of the public present.

## **25/214 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.

## **25/215 TO ACCEPT AND APPROVE APOLOGIES AND REASONS FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies received from Cllrs Norton (holiday), Tarricone (work commitments), Farley (unwell) and Dickens (family commitment). All Borough Councillors were also unable to attend

## **25/216 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

Councillors' ongoing disclosures were noted:

Cllrs Curry, Ellery, and Rowe had shares in the Speldhurst shop and post office.

## **25/217 DECLARATIONS OF LOBBYING**

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

## **25/218 MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 6TH OCTOBER 2025**

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

## **25/219 PUBLIC OPEN SESSION**

The Chair confirmed that as there were no members of the public present, he would open and close the session. However, should anyone arrive, he would reopen it to allow them to speak.

## 25/220 COUNTY AND BOROUGH COUNCILLOR REPORTS

These had been supplied in their absence. The Clerk spoke briefly about County Cllr Moreland's report highlighting:

- Kent County Council (KCC) had published its draft strategic business case for Local Government Review (LGR). This would be discussed at the Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation Cabinet Committee today.
- Kent Fire and Rescue Service was currently consulting on Council Tax. The consultation was open to the public and was available here: <https://www.kent.fire-uk.org/news/kfrs-invites-views-council-tax-plans>.
- The public engagement process for ascertaining the viability of a community transport scheme for Ashurst had been opened. He had put a link to a questionnaire on Speldhurst's and Langton Green's Facebook pages. Leaflets had been delivered to Ashurst yesterday and was due to be delivered to Stone Cross.
- The Pig at Groombridge – No further update on this currently.

The Clerk also reminded councillors of the 12<sup>th</sup> November deadline for the consultation on safer walking, wheeling and cycling routes for which the local plans were going to Tunbridge Wells Borough Council on 10<sup>th</sup> December.

## 25/221 LANGTON GREEN RECREATION GROUND (LGRG)

An update from the Community Hub had been circulated.

Cllr Curry reported that the Pavilion Review Working Group had recently met with representatives of the Langton Green Community Sports Association (LGCSA); the meeting had been positive and constructive. The review committee was asking key questions prior to proceeding to full review.

**Hire Agreement:** Our external independent advisor, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council's (TWBC) Corporate Property Manager, had confirmed that an hourly hire arrangement would not be viable for a commercial property agent, which the property is restricted to by its lease/sublease. LGCSA had been asked if they wished to amend the existing hire agreement before undertaking this tender process. They indicated they did not, so it would remain unchanged, and the process would be undertaken by LGCSA and SPC directly.

**Building and Grants:** No structural changes were required, but both parties were exploring grant opportunities for projects such as solar panels and kitchen refitting, in line with existing KCC programmes.

**Tender Document:** Cllr Dickens had provided a draft tender template to assist with defining the space and framing key questions. The document would be developed jointly with LGCSA.

**Communications:** Cllr Curry intended to provide regular updates via the Speldhurst Parish Council (SPC) website and would report further at the Full Council meeting on 1st December. He was also meeting Chris Allen (LGCSA) later this week to progress the draft document.

**Financial Considerations:** Both parties are aware of the need to closely monitor the full running costs of the building against projected revenues.

**Current Tenants:** In response to Cllr Ellery, Cllr Curry confirmed concern over the current tenants' financial position and expressed a wish to support them. Their short six-month lease limited their ability to invest.

**Water Heating and Showers:** There was discussion regarding the high cost of the water heating loop. LGCSA would approach the Football Association (FA) to explore changes that could reduce costs by approximately one-third. LGCSA confirmed that the showers were not often used apart from the cricket club and could potentially be removed. All members supported this proposal, noting possible lease-related delays.

**Solar Panels:** In response to Cllr Cleaver, Cllr Curry reported that Cllr Dickens had useful contacts regarding solar panel installation. Chris Allen (LGCSA) was investigating potential funding through the FA's programme, which would be the preferred, lower-cost option.

At this point in the meeting, Cllr Curry returned to County Cllr Moreland, who had just arrived. County Cllr Moreland requested that SPC share details of the community transport scheme from Ashurst, which he was helping to establish and which had been posted on Facebook with a QR code the previous day. Cllr Curry suggested including the information in the Ashurst Parish Magazine and on SPC social media. County Cllr Moreland also confirmed that KCC had published its draft strategic Plan.

## 25/222 CLERK'S REPORT

The Clerk confirmed that she and the Deputy Clerk had attended the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) Autumn Conference, where discussions included council reorganisations and tier models. She advised that the Deputy Clerk would be attending the Annual Clerks' Conference in November, as she herself would be unavailable.

The Clerk reminded councillors of the Grand Opening of the Speldhurst Community Shop and Post Office at Speldhurst Chapel on Saturday 8th November, noting that several local stalls would also be present as part of the event.

She further advised that there were only two possible dates for the 2026 Annual Parish Meeting—30th March and 13th April—and it was agreed that, due to Easter, 13th April would be the preferred date.

The Clerk also reminded councillors that the next Full Council meeting at Langton Green Village Hall would start at the earlier time of 7.00 pm to allow for Christmas drinks afterwards at the Pavilion.

Finally, she confirmed she would email councillors during the week to request nominations for the Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC) Awards 2026, as none had yet been received.

## 25/223 GENERAL MATTERS

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

Ref	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	In progress
41/25	Establish review process for Community Hub.	Pav WG	06/05/25	In progress
43/25	Establish Pavilion Licence Committee and confirm ToFR.	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	In progress
56/25	Write to solicitors regarding Pavilion. <b>To be closed.</b>	Clerk/Cllr Rowe	07/07/25	<b>Closed</b>
70/25	Compile a list of potential dates for the Annual Parish Meeting.	Clerk	01/09/25	In progress
71/25	Confirm renewal of grounds maintenance contract.	Clerk	06/10/25	<b>Complete</b>
72/25	Pay donation of £100 to Mayor's Toy Appeal.	Clerk	06/10/25	<b>Complete</b>
73/25	Confirm new electricity contract and given notice to current contract in time for end of term.	Clerk/Curry Curry	06/10/25	<b>Complete</b>
74/25	Transfer funds from Unity to savings accounts.	Clerk	06/10/25	<b>Complete</b>
75/25	Email the Clerk before 15 <sup>th</sup> November with anticipated items of expenditure in 2026, to be factored into Finance & Governance budget-setting meeting.	Committee Chairs	06/10/25	<b>Complete</b>
76/25	Email nominations for 2026 KALC award.	All Councillors	06/10/25	In progress
77/25	Meet to discuss 2026 APM.	Chair and Clerks	06/10/25	<b>Complete</b>
78/25	Arrange a date to meet with LGCSA representatives re. pavilion review.	Chair & Clerk	06/10/25	<b>Complete</b>

79/25	Post/email letter relating to The Pig planning application to the relevant borough councillor, with CC's, as per Cllr Norton's request.	Clerk	06/10/25	Complete
	<b>New</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Created</b>	<b>Status</b>
80/25	Circulate County and Borough Cllr Reports.	Clerk	03/11/25	
81/25	Share Consultation on Ashurst Bus Service.	Administrator	03/11/25	
82/25	Confirm date of APM as 13 <sup>th</sup> April 2026.	Deputy Clerk	03/11/25	
83/25	Update Terms of Reference, committee membership and Policy on Use of Council Land on website and cllrs' folder.	Clerk	03/11/25	
84/25	Accept quotation for treeworks at LGRG if no further acceptable quotations are received.	Deputy Clerk	03/11/25	
85/25	Update Little Birches Nursery and LGVH of outcome of Little Birches Nursery garden proposal.	Clerk	03/11/25	
86/25	Update Internal Financial Control System on website and cllrs' folder.	Clerk	03/11/25	
87/25	Confirm Ashurst Village Hall Trustee.	Clerk	03/11/25	
88/25	Respond to request for Defibrillator at Speldhurst Chapel.	Deputy Clerk	03/11/25	
89/25	Send link to Cllr Ellery for KCC solar panel scheme.	Cllr Turner	03/11/25	

## 25/224 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 8<sup>th</sup> December.
- b) **Amenities and Environment Committee** – Report by Cllr Turner. A meeting had been held on 23<sup>rd</sup> October which included the following discussions:
  - **To consider having a separate Amenities Committee and Environment Working Group.**  
Cllr Turner had put forward a motion to re-establish a separate Amenities Committee and a Environment Working Group. **RESOLVED** to approve the re-establishment of a separate Amenities committee and Environment Working Group.
  - **To consider the Terms of Reference for the Amenities Committee and the Environment Working Group and make any necessary amendments.**  
**RESOLVED** to approve the amended Terms of Reference for the Amenities Committee and Environment Working Group.
  - **To confirm the membership of the Amenities Committee and the Environment Working Group.**  
It was confirmed that Cllr Norton was stepping down from the Amenities Committee due to his other parish council commitments and Mr K Howes (MoP – Member of Public) would no longer be part of the working group as of January. **RESOLVED** to approve the updated committee membership.
  - **To consider the quotation for tree work to be carried out round the boundary of the recreation ground.**  
Cllr Turner confirmed that a quotation had been received for £750 + VAT. He asked councillors to consider authorising up to this amount, as further quotations had been sought and once received, he would select the cheapest provider. **RESOLVED** to authorise a spend of up to £750 for tree work at the Langton Green Recreation Ground (LGRG).
  - **To consider the amended Policy for Use of Council Land.**  
Cllr Turner advised that he had received a request for the use of fireworks at the LGRG during a Diwali celebration which the committee had rejected and recommended to include prohibition of fireworks in the policy. **RESOLVED** to approve the updated Policy for Use of Council Land.
  - **Nursery Extension Proposal – Langton Green Village Hall**  
Cllr Turner reported that several emails and discussions had taken place regarding a proposal to extend the Little Birches Nursery with a garden at the rear of Langton Green Village Hall. Members noted that there had

been considerable discussion and some opposition from the Langton Green Village Hall representatives. Following consideration, it had been agreed that the Council would not support any proposal for the nursery extension at this stage, as it would constitute a commercial use of Council-owned land, which was deemed inappropriate. Members also noted that the area identified for the garden was a public open space owned by SPC and leased to LGCSA. Agreeing to its use for a private, commercial purpose may constitute a disposal of public land which the council did not consider appropriate or consistent with its responsibility to the community. It was therefore agreed that SPC would respond to Little Birches Nursery to advise that the Council was not inclined to support the proposal. No vote was required, and the matter was noted for awareness only.

- **Alan Ford Memorial – Pocket Park**

Cllr Turner confirmed that there would be a memorial tree planting with a plaque in Pocket Park at 1pm on Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> November. He invited all members of the Council to attend if they were available and stated that he was aware of 4 members of the public who would be attending. The Administrator had previously confirmed that she would attend and take pictures for the family who may not be attending.

- **Groombridge Green**

In response to Cllr Cleaver's enquiry on the status of the mowing on Groombridge Green, Cllr Turner reported that a total of 17 responses had been received from residents regarding the management of Groombridge Green. The great majority had expressed a preference to continue with the current approach, though many suggested that a managed wildflower or "flower meadow" area would be preferable to simply allowing the grass to grow.

Members discussed the feedback and noted that a wildflower meadow was currently being developed in Pocket Park through the Nature Plus initiative. It had been agreed that the Council would monitor the success of this scheme through the forthcoming growing season before considering any similar project for Groombridge Green. In the meantime, it had been agreed that Groombridge Green would return to the regular mowing schedule for the next season. The situation would be reviewed in autumn next year, taking into account the success of the Pocket Park project, available funding, and community interest. Residents would be advised accordingly.

- c) **KALC** – Cllr Curry reported that he had recently met with neighbouring Parish Chairs including Penshurst, Rusthall and Bidborough and had discussed the potential withdrawal of discretionary services by KCC in light of ongoing discussions surrounding Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).

It was reported that KCC was reviewing its provision of discretionary services, including street sweeping, litter picking, litter bin maintenance, and grass verge mowing. Compared to other Kent parishes, this parish was relatively unexposed to KCC-managed assets, as it did not have facilities such as public toilets, car parks, or libraries.

Neighbouring parishes appeared to be in a similar position, with the exception of Rusthall Parish, which was in the process of adopting a playground from Tunbridge Wells Borough Council. Cllr Curry noted that the only discretionary service that may be considered for potential future management by the Parish Council was grass verge mowing.

Cllr Curry advised that Penshurst Parish Council currently operated a shared mowing arrangement with several nearby parishes under a single contract, with approximately 80% of costs being met by KCC and the remainder locally funded to achieve a higher maintenance standard. Penshurst was due to renegotiate this contract.

It was noted that:

- There were currently no confirmed plans for KCC or TWBC to withdraw services prior to any local government reorganisation.
- Should discretionary services be withdrawn, parish councils may come under pressure to assume responsibility for maintaining them, funded through an increase in the parish precept.

- Under current legislation, parish councils have no obligation to take on such services but may choose to do so if there is clear public demand and sufficient financial provision.
- The parish council would adopt a reactive approach, considering each case on its individual merits rather than proactively taking on additional services.
- Any decision to assume new responsibilities would be subject to public consultation and a full assessment of costs and resourcing implications.
- Cllr Curry would continue to attend relevant meetings with neighbouring parish and would keep councillors informed for any developments.

## 25/225 FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Cllr Rowe reported that there was no substantive update since the previous meeting held on 1<sup>st</sup> October; the Finance and Governance Committee Minutes had been circulated.

It was noted that the primary focus over the coming month would be preparation for the next meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> November at which the draft budget for the 2026/27 financial year would be presented and considered. Committee Chairs had been asked to submit any comments or input ahead of that meeting.

- Councillors noted the detailed budget reports.
- Report on interim payments made since the last meeting.

### Unity Trust Current A/c

Date Paid	Payee Name	Reference	Amount Paid £	Transaction Detail
14/10/2025	The PCC All Saints Church, LG	MT3038	1,000.00	Grant - Churchyard Maintenance
14/10/2025	Baby Umbrella	MT3039	200.00	Grant - Parenting Support
14/10/2025	3 Counties Grounds Maintenance	MT3040	523.20	Grounds Maintenance Contract
14/10/2025	Chris Allen	MT3041	*480.60	Decorating Material - Pav
14/10/2025	R Young Heating & Plumbing	MT3042	* 212.00	R Young Heating & Plumbing
14/10/2025	M R Lawrence	MT3043	380.00	Mowing and Strimming
14/10/2025	Bracketts	MT3044	600.00	Valuation of Speldhurst Chapel
14/10/2025	Capel Groundcare	MT3045	704.40	Swing Seats for Playground
14/10/2025	Langton Green Charitable Trust	MT3046	50.00	Underlease Payment
14/10/2025	Kidman's Ltd	MT3047	*16.68	Stihl Bushes
14/10/2025	Langton Green Charitable Trust	MT3048	35.63	Room Hire
14/10/2025	Langton Green Charitable Trust	MT3049	175.36	Office Electricity for Quarter
14/10/2025	Paul Curry	MT3050	44.10	Travel Expenses
14/10/2025	Mayor's Toy Appeal	MT3051	100.00	Mayor's Toy Appeal Donation
15/10/2025	HMRC	MT3055	6,194.79	VAT Claim (Incorrect)
16/10/2025	Unity Trust Mastercard	CreditCard	237.74	To bring balance to zero
17/10/2025	Ashford Security	MT3052	*438.42	Battery Pack for Fire Shutter
17/10/2025	Mulberry & Co	MT3053	192.00	Quarterly Payroll
17/10/2025	Cloudy IT	MT3054	42.29	IT Services – New User
20/10/2025	N.E.S.T. Pension Scheme	DD	775.27	Staff Pensions
20/10/2025	Castle Water	DD	34.30	Pavilion Water
23/10/2025	CCLA Public Sector Deposit Acc	Transfer	40,000.00	From Unity to CCLA
23/10/2025	Nationwide BS 35 dn	Transfer	60,000.00	From Unity to NWBS
28/10/2025	Veolia	DD	312.98	Waste and Recycling
31/10/2025	KCC (KCS)	DD	126.95	Photocopier

**Unity Trust Mastercard**

Date Paid	Payee Name	Reference	Amount Paid £	Transaction Detail
02/10/2025	Unity Trust Bank	DD	9.00	Monthly Credit Card Charge
15/10/2025	KALC	MC492	*168.00	Clerk's Conference
15/10/2025	Amazon Business	MC493	*28.99	Weed Killer
15/10/2025	Amazon Business	MC494	*15.68	Photocopying Paper
15/10/2025	Amazon Business	MC495	*27.02	Velcro Tape Batteries Duct Tape
15/10/2025	Amazon Business	MC496	*6.64	Mouse Mats
15/10/2025	Amazon Business	MC497	*2.80	Safety Goggles
15/10/2025	Amazon Business	MC494	-7.84	Refund for Damaged Paper
17/10/2025	Royal British Legion Poppy Shop	MC491	100.00	Donation for Wreaths
21/10/2025	Go Outdoors	MC490	*55.00	Go Outdoors
28/10/2025	Amazon Business	MC498	*27.50	Headphones
29/10/2025	Langton Green Service Station	MC499	*58.47	Fuel

- c) Councillors noted decisions made under delegated authority, starred above.
- d) It was **RESOLVED** to approve the amended Internal Financial Control System.
- e) A previous resolution had been made for the transfer of funds between accounts as required. Any transfers that took place would be reported to the Finance and Governance Committee.

**25/226 ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT**

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

Date Paid	Payee Name	Reference	Amount Paid £	Transaction Detail
04/11/2025	Elm Fencing Ltd	BACS	7,909.20	Steel Bollards for Car Park
04/11/2025	Sevenoaks District Council	MT3062	180.00	Premises Licence
04/11/2025	KALC	MT3063	12.00	Training - Accessibility
04/11/2025	Streetlights	MT3064	28.94	Street Lighting Maintenance
04/11/2025	Helen Chater	MT3065	21.60	Travel Claim
04/11/2025	Katie Neve	MT3066	52.20	Travel Claim
04/11/2025	Alison Dry	MT3067	6.57	Travel Claim
04/11/2025	Agrifactors (Southern) Ltd	MT3068	840.00	LGRG Pitch Maintenance
04/11/2025	Tivoli	MT3069	162.20	Canine Waste Removal
10/11/2025	BT PLC	DD	28.64	Office Mobile
11/11/2025	Talk Talk Business	DD	69.17	Broadband Off/Pav & Phone Off
20/11/2025	HMRC	MT3070	1,976.31	Income Tax and NI
20/11/2025	EDF Energy	DD	909.16	Pavilion Energy
26/11/2025	UK Debt Management Office	DD	15,338.38	Speldhurst Chapel PWLB
27/11/2025	UK Debt Management Office	DD	2,252.90	Office PWLB
28/11/2025	Hugo Fox	DD	11.99	Website

#### **25/227 APPOINTEE TO ASHURST VILLAGE HALL**

To consider the SPC appointed trustee to the Ashurst Village Hall Trust. **RESOLVED** that Cllr Tarricone be reappointed as the Parish Council's representative Trustee to Ashurst Village Hall Trust.

#### **25/228 SUGGESTED OFFICE HOURS OVER THE CHRISTMAS PERIOD**

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the closure of the office from Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2025 to Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> January 2026 inclusive. It was noted that staff would monitor emails during this period as necessary, and this was acknowledged and appreciated.

#### **25/229 UPDATE ON VACANCIES ON THE COUNCIL**

The Clerk reported that there remained two vacancies on the Council. There were two potential candidates which she had followed up with via email.

#### **25/230 SPELDHURST CHAPEL**

Cllr Curry provided an update on the Speldhurst Chapel project. An initial enquiry had been received regarding a defibrillator installation, and following clarification, it had been confirmed that the Chapel Project group intended to fund and install the defibrillator and cabinet, register it with emergency services (999), and may request use of the Council's Groundsman for ongoing checks.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Council would support the proposal in principle, permitting the Groundsman to assist with routine maintenance. The Chapel Project would be responsible for all installation and replacement costs (e.g., pads and batteries).

It was noted that the site was in close proximity to the existing defibrillator at the Village Hall, and Members agreed that any future Council-funded units should prioritise locations with greater coverage needs.

Members were invited to attend the Chapel opening event on Saturday; Cllr Curry had sent apologies due to a prior commitment and the Clerk and Administrator said they were intending to attend and would take appropriate images for social media and the website

#### **25/231 PLANNING COMMITTEE**

Cllr Curry reported on the meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> October; the minutes had been circulated. There had been one application of note which had related to a Grade II listed property where the current owner had sought to replace a UPVC door previously installed over an existing barn-style door. The committee had expressed appreciation that the original barn-style door had been retained and raised no objection to the proposed replacement.

#### **25/232 DIARY DATES**

The Clerk confirmed the following meeting dates:

- 17<sup>th</sup> November - Planning Committee
- 24<sup>th</sup> November - Finance and Governance Committee
- 1<sup>st</sup> December – Full Council at the earlier start time of 7.00pm
- 8<sup>th</sup> December - Highways Committee

#### **25/233 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

Councillors noted the following correspondence:

- Department for Transport ACP-2018-60 - Gatwick Redesign of departure and arrival routes and procedures (FASI)
- Communication re London Gatwick's London Airspace South Airspace Change ACP-2018-60
- GACC Newsletter
- Gatwick Airport Email
- CAGNE Email and October Bulletin
- KALC News (October)
- Local Councils Explained - Cllr Cleaver said it was an useful document and recommended that councillors read it.
- Rural Matters Police Update
- High Weald National Landscape - October eNews
- Thank you letter from Mayor's Toy Appeal
- Annual Policing Survey

Cllr Ellery reported on his attendance at the Speldhurst Village Hall Trustees meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> October. The Trustees were considering upgrading the kitchen facilities and may submit a future grant request. They were also exploring options for solar panel installation to reduce electricity costs. Cllr Turner suggested they contact Kent County Council for information on the countywide solar panel group-purchase scheme and would forward the link.

Cllr Turner stated that the works being carried out at Pocket Park, had generated positive engagement and interest from local residents.

The Clerk reminded councillors that following the next Full Council meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> December there would be a Christmas drinks reception for councillors, staff, MoPs on working groups as well as Borough and County Councillors to be held at Langton's Café in the Pavilion for drinks as a thank you for their time and commitment to the parish council.

With nothing further to discuss, the meeting closed at 8:15pm.

**Chair**