



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

**MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON MONDAY, 6th FEBRUARY 2012 at 7.30pm
IN LANGTON GREEN VILLAGE HALL**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Cllrs Mrs Jeffreys (Chairman) Mrs Hull, Mrs Podbury, Mrs Soyke, Brown, Hemming, Langridge, Milner, Parker, Owen, Pendleton and Woodward

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

County Councillor John Davies and Borough Councillor Robert Attwood

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC: There were twenty two members of the public present.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Cllr Mrs Jeffreys read out an email from Cllr Ringrose tendering his resignation due to business commitments. Cllr Mrs Jeffreys thanked him on behalf of all Councillors for his work for the Parish Council.

12/120 DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL AND PREJUDICIAL INTEREST:

There were none.

12/121 DECLARATIONS OF LOBBYING:

Cllr Mrs Hull, Cllr Mrs Podbury and Cllr Mrs Soyke have been spoken to by residents about Local Needs Housing.

12/123 MINUTES:

The Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on **9th January 2012**, having previously been forwarded to Members, were approved and signed as a true record.

12/124 PUBLIC OPEN SESSION:

The meeting was adjourned at 7.34pm

Cllr Mrs Jeffreys advised that the public open session would be limited to 30 minutes and asked who wished to speak.

Joanna Horne of Speldhurst asked what will happen to the land if the Local Needs Housing project does not go ahead. Cllr Woodward advised that the land has not yet been purchased so it would remain in the current landowner's ownership.

Graham Smith-Tilley of Speldhurst referred to the survey conducted by the Save Our Green Belt Group which was against the development, the second Consultation Day which came out against, the Local Needs Housing Committee meeting which recommended rejection of the project to Full Council and asked how a Cllr could now vote for the project? Cllr Mrs Jeffreys stated that it was a Committee recommendation which is not binding on Councillors and each Councillor makes their own decision at Full Council.

Sana Smith-Tilley of Speldhurst stated that they are not opposed to Local Needs Housing itself but to building on the Green Belt and any future precedents this might set. She didn't think English Rural Housing Association (ERHA) dealt adequately with the Green Belt issue during consultations. She added that the group had a lot of support in the village which was concerned about the future of the site.

Philip Tew of Speldhurst said he wanted to re-iterate the views of Mr and Mrs Smith-Tilley and that in his view the Parish has rejected the proposal.

Chris Ponsford of Langton Green said that there is a vacancy on the Parish Council and called for an election to be held which would coincide with the TWBC election in May 2012. Cllr Mrs Jeffreys confirmed that if ten Parishioners write to TWBC an election will be called.

Alan Marriott of Speldhurst said he is concerned that building on the Green Belt for Local Needs Housing will set a precedent for future development. Cllr Woodward replied that all Rural Exception sites are 'one-offs' and Cllr Mrs Jeffreys added that any future planning applications from developers would be treated entirely differently.

Verity Clarke of Speldhurst made reference to earnings thresholds in the Local Needs Housing project and said that people should move out when they earn over a certain amount.

The public open session closed at 7.50pm

12/125 LOCAL NEEDS HOUSING:

- i) Cllr Woodward referred to the Minutes of the Local Needs Housing Committee meeting held on 23rd January 2012 and read out the salient points.
Cllr Mrs Jeffreys read out in full a letter sent to her by James Taylor, Deputy Chief Executive/Development Director of English Rural Housing Association following the decision of the Local Needs Housing Committee to recommend to Full Council that the development should not proceed.

- ii) Cllr Mrs Jeffreys invited Cllr Woodward as Chairman of the local Needs Housing Committee to start the discussions.

Cllr Woodward said that at the Committee meeting on 23rd January he chose not to express his views or to vote having heard fellow members speak against the proposals and now wanted to put the record straight. He said that he supports the proposed development because he believed the need is established; the site has been agreed; rural exception sites are allowed by legislation; the level of negative reaction to the proposal increases the closer you come to the site and that it is a minority.

Cllr Mrs Soyke said that having attended a Cabinet meeting the previous week it was clear that rural areas would have to take more housing in the future as TWBC has to build 6,000 houses by 2026. She said it was inevitable that Green field sites would be built on and feared that if this small development was not allowed a possibly larger development could be imposed on the village by TWBC in the future. She stated that on balance she would support the proposal, but with stronger local connection and tenancy criteria.

Cllr Mrs Hull said it is government policy at all levels to engage with the public and reflect their views which the committee did. She said that the letter from ERHA is contradictory and that they have known that the project was not going to be "rubber stamped".

Cllr Langridge stated that his understanding was that Councillors would not support the proposal if the majority was against and called for a referendum to hear from the majority.

Cllr Milner supported a referendum, he believes the ERHA letter misrepresents the ERHA/SPC consultative process, that there are important facts missing from the information provided by ERHA and there should be a further stage.

Cllr Mrs Podbury said she is in favour of local needs housing however she has serious concerns about the highways issue and believed the Council should not support the scheme until it had all the facts and opinions. She supported a referendum.

Cllr Parker stated that SPC do not know the views of the silent majority within the parish. He would ask for a parish-wide referendum but with identification for responses from each village. He accepted there is a need for the housing and there is no point reviewing all the original sites.

Cllr Brown reviewed the process. He said that building on the Green Belt is a massive issue and he was not satisfied with some of the responses from ERHA. He did not support the project as it stands without a review of certain criteria including the tenure terms. Cllr Woodward supported the renegotiation of some of the terms.

Cllr Hemming said he thinks ERHA have been evasive in answering SPC's questions and concerns, that this proposal opens the door to further building on the Green Belt and that it should not go ahead.

Cllr Owen stated that a referendum would have to be advisory and not mandatory and therefore it might not actually help. He noted that CPRE is not against rural exception sites and he is satisfied there is a need for the housing, but he is not satisfied with the traffic calming measures. He dislikes the tone of ERHA's letter and is concerned that Speldhurst School is already oversubscribed. However on balance he would vote in favour of the scheme.

Cllr Pendleton stated that he doesn't think a referendum would solve anything and that he is marginally in favour of the scheme.

Cllr Mrs Jeffreys reminded Councillors that Local Needs Housing cannot be built within the 'village envelope', that Bradleys site is not an option, that a referendum could only be advisory and not compulsory and that twenty people who have already expressed an interest qualify on housing need and local connection criteria.

After further discussion the proposal that 'The recommendation of the Local Needs Housing Committee be overturned and further concerns raised by Councillors be investigated before a decision is made by Full Council' was voted on and **AGREED** by 8 votes in favour, 2 against with 2 abstentions.

12/126 FINANCE COMMITTEE – Report by Cllr Parker

- i) Cllr Parker reported that there has not been a Committee meeting since the last Full Council meeting. The next meeting is on Monday 20th February.
- ii) Cllr Parker reported that there had been nine email decisions by the Finance Committee. The annual subscription to ACRK of £65 was approved and it was agreed to pay this by standing order; it was agreed to spend a maximum of £100 on screen hire for the Annual Parish Assembly plus a returnable deposit of £100; the cost of £80 to add a Broadband page to the website was agreed; a donation of £12 to include postage costs to Ashurst Broadsheet was agreed; the cost of £280 for annual maintenance of the Parish Office CCTV was approved; the cost of £10 per week for a cleaner for the Parish Office was agreed; the Clerk's overtime of 10.5 hours was approved; it was agreed to renew the Planning Magazine by direct debit saving £18 per annum (cost £101) and it was agreed to purchase 3 new "Minute Books" at a cost of £75 each to maintain the Council's records.
- iii) An email has been received from Speldhurst Recreation Ground Committee asking the Parish Council for a letter of intent to support the Playground upgrade plans. This was discussed and **AGREED. The letter confirming Speldhurst Parish Council's intent to support the project both morally and financially (quoting no amount) will be sent by the Clerk.**

12/127 ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT – Invoices verified by Cllr Hemming

<u>Payee Name</u>	<u>Cheque Ref</u>	<u>Amount Paid</u>	<u>Transaction Detail</u>
EDF Energy	DD	165.00	LG Pavilion Electricity
V J Coomers (Builders) Ltd	304	297.60	Parish Office carpentry work
Samknows Limited	305	864.00	Broadband White Boxes
BT PLC	306	30.00	Mobile
RIP Cleaning Services	307	189.00	Dog Bins
St Martin's Church, Ashurst	308	12.00	Ashurst Broadsheet
Viking Direct	309	118.07	Stationery
HMRC	310	611.55	Tax and NI
C May	311	1,208.57	Salary
C May	312	109.01	Expenses
M Flemington	313	400.95	Salary
M Flemington	314	49.50	Expenses
L Cooper	315	100.00	Groundsman duties
Prestige Web Marketing	316	60.00	Annual website hosting
Prestige Web Marketing	317	80.00	Website
St Martin's Church, Ashurst	303	4,500.00	Broadband Page Grant
RIP Cleaning Services	318	151.20	Dog Bins January
Speldhurst	319	2,320.80	Grant re Audio

Village Hall

System

Total Payments 11,267.25**12/128 HIGHWAYS REPORT – Report by Cllr Mrs Podbury**

Cllr Mrs Podbury reported that the double yellow lines in Speldhurst have been installed at long last; a full report is awaited from Kent Highway Services on Stone Cross and that South East Water have admitted that the leak in Leggs Lane is coming from one of their hydrants which they will fix as soon as possible.

The Clerk reported that the KHS Steward system is working very well and that a good working relationship is being established with Jonathan Dean who is planning to put articles in the Village Magazines. He reported that snow ploughs had been clearing side roads in the Parish and that KHS had dealt with the first snow fall well. He added that some maintenance work was being deferred because of budget pressures.

12/129 DIAMOND JUBILEE / OLYMPIC EVENTS AND GRANTS:

The eight applications which have been received will be considered at the Finance Committee meeting on 20th February. Cllr Mrs Jeffreys has received an email from the Lord Lieutenant of Kent regarding planting of a Jubilee tree. A possibility is a Jubilee tree in the Pocket Park at Speldhurst which will be considered by the Amenities Committee.

12/130 LOCAL SCHOOLS:

Cllr Mrs Jeffreys referred to her written report of the meeting she, Cllr Brown and the Clerk had attended at Langton Green Primary School on 19th January. The proposal to donate an award to both Langton Green and Speldhurst Schools for a child doing voluntary work was discussed and **AGREED. Cllr Mrs Jeffreys to discuss with both schools.**

12/131 LGRG SPORTS PAVILION:

The Clerk attended a meeting between the Sports Club and the FA on Tuesday 10th January. The Club are now likely to consider a smaller scheme utilising the existing building and this will be considered in setting the budgets for the next financial year (2013/14). He is waiting confirmation.

12/132 BROADBAND REPORT – Report by Cllr Woodward

Cllr Woodward advised that the Broadband White Box Event is taking place at Langton Green Village Hall on Saturday 18th February at 2.30pm to distribute the boxes. He advised that the Broadband group has taken the lead in a bid to DEFRA on behalf of five Parishes for faster BB services to rural areas including Speldhurst, Penshurst, Cowden, Hever and Leigh Parishes.

12/133 ASHURST FLAGPOLE:

After discussion it was **AGREED** in principle that Speldhurst Parish Council will take responsibility for the flagpole subject to further information and details. TWBC may contribute to the replacement costs as part of their Heritage Assets Project.

12/134 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:

Cllr Mrs Jeffreys reported that plans for the Annual Parish Assembly are progressing well.

The Clerk's and Assistant Clerk's staff appraisals were carried out in January and that they had both passed.

They would both be entitled to a spinal point increase in April and that their hours would increase by five each per week and this should eliminate the need for any overtime. It was decided that the Assistant Clerk would attend a WWYC Course when a local one is available and that the Clerk need not complete the coursework because the course held no qualification. The Council would consider the Clerk taking a CiLCA course when Government policy was more defined.

12/135 COMMITTEE REPORTS:

- i) Governance Committee – Cllr Pendleton referred to his written report and to the Complaints Policy which was proposed for adoption. Due to time constraints Cllrs were advised to email any proposed amendments to the Clerk and it will be on the Agenda for approval at the Full Council meeting on 5th March.
- ii) Planning – Cllr Mrs Podbury referred to the minutes of the meeting.
- iii) Amenities – Cllr Milner reported that there will be an Amenities Committee meeting held soon.
- iv) Footpaths – Cllr Milner referred to his written report. He also advised that shrubs are to be planted to screen the container at LGRG car park and this will be discussed at the next Amenities Committee meeting. He advised there was wood available at the pocket park.

- v) KALC – Cllr Brown referred to Cllr Mrs Hull's written report on the recent KALC meetings
- vi) Environment – Cllr Brown referred to the Environment Policy that has been circulated to all Councillors which was **AGREED** and adopted.

12/136 OTHER MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF 9th JANUARY 2012:

12/013 – TWBC Policy Framework – Strategic Compass; Community Projects – there had been a problem responding to the report and the deadline had been missed.

12/104 – No response has been received yet from TWBC regarding deferral of the Ward Walks.

11/196 - The possibility of converting the light on Groombridge Green to solar is progressing.

11/211 - The Clerk is still awaiting a further letter from Town and Country Housing Association regarding the provision of off-road parking for their tenants in Northfields, Southfields and St Mary's Lane, Speldhurst.

11/230 – The Clerk advised that Tate Fencing will carry out installation of bollards at the junction of Barden Road and Furze Field Avenue when a report from EDF has been received..

The Application to the Big Tree Fund and the Parish Footpath Map are both progressing.

12/016 – The Clerk advised that it would cost approx. £100 to post the Newsletters to outlying properties in rural Speldhurst.

The Langton Green litter patrol will take place on 9th March.

12/137 CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED:

- i) Hospice in the Weald "The Hospice News" Winter 2011/2012
- ii) ROSPA leaflet on Playground inspections
- iii) Email dated 12th January from Wealden District Council regarding the Wealden Local Development Framework
- iv) Email dated 16th January from Wealden District Council regarding the Wealden LDF Strategic Sites DPD and Sustainability Scoping Report
- v) Copy of a letter dated 16th January from Kent County Council to Mr Michael Bright of Genista, Stonewall Park Road regarding mirrors on the highway
- vi) Letter dated January 2012 from Rolin regarding business cleaning and janitorial supplies
- vii) Letter dated 17th January 2012 from All Saints Church, Langton Green asking for a grant towards replacement of the Church heating system (**to be referred to the Finance Committee**)
- viii) Running IMP Brochure of Diamond Jubilee Mementoes and Party Products
- ix) Letter dated 18th January from Councillor Elizabeth Thomas Mayor of Tunbridge Wells thanking the Parish Council for their donation to the 2011 Christmas Toy Appeal
- x) Email dated 19th January from TWBC street naming and numbering confirming that Royal Mail will accept Langton Green Recreation Ground in the Parish Council address but require Winstone Scott Avenue in the address as well
- xi) Advertising leaflet dated January 2012 from Susan Adams for Diamond Jubilee fund-raising printed notecards
- xii) Email dated 20th January from British Trust for Conservation Volunteers with leaflet from Kent Adult Education regarding Kent Heritage Trees Project Events and Day Workshops
- xiii) Email dated 24th January from Applause Outdoors regarding performances for outdoor events in the Diamond Jubilee and Olympic year (passed on to both fete committees)
- xiv) Brochure from Applause Outdoors as above
- xv) Notice of modification Order dated January 2012 from KCC Countryside access in respect of footpath WT82 south of Leggs Lane
- xvi) Email dated 25th January from ACRK with an entry pack for 'The Rural Community of the Year'
- xvii) Email dated 26th January regarding Big Lottery Fund 'Our Village SOS' National Conference on Monday 27th February in Birmingham
- xviii) Document dated January 2012 from Shoreham Parish Council – 'Representations to Kent County Council in respect to consultation procedure on the minerals and Waste Development Framework
- xix) Letter dated 26th January from TWBC regarding Local Heritage Assets: Consultation on draft supplementary planning documents 30th January to 11th March 2012 (copied to Cllrs) **To Amenities Committee – Cllrs to email details of Heritage Assets in the Parish to the Clerk.**
- xx) Letter from Tunbridge Wells and District Citizens Advice Bureaux regarding the provision of CAB Advice Services in Paddock Wood (copied to Cllrs)
- xxi) Letter dated 27th January from TWBC re Building Regs 2000 – enclosing a certificate for the completion of the work re our office – **to be kept with the deeds**
- xxii) Email from Jennie Paulson-Ellis regarding Rusthall Medical Centre (she is vice-chairman of the Patients' Participation Group) asking for any Cllrs that are patients to complete a survey and any help with their Website
- xxiii) Email from KALC re Review of Household Waste Recycling Centres in Kent **To Environment Committee**
- xxiv) Email from a company called Fantastic Fireworks offering deals re Jubilee celebrations

- xxv) Email from KALC regarding KCC reducing energy costs by turning off some street lighting as KALC has been asked to co-ordinate a reply on behalf of its member Councils by **Friday 2nd March**. The KALC Executive Committee appears to be against this on crime and safety **To Highways Committee**
- xxvi) ACRK Rural Community of the Year Competition 2012 application pack
- xxvii) Speldhurst Village Hall – thank you letter for the grant awarded re the purchase of audio Equipment
- xxviii) Email from Woodland Trust re free trees that can be planted within the community
- xxix) Mayor's Invitation to the Assembly Hall – Sunday 26th February at 3pm re "Children supporting Children"
- xxx) KCC letter dated 1st Feb – Development and Infrastructure – Creating Quality Places – Consultation Document. KCC is revising its approach to services including education, adult social care, libraries, community learning and youth services. Consultation document ends 24th April

12/138 DIARY DATES:

- Monday 13th February – Planning meeting – Council Office 7.30pm
- Saturday 18th February – Broadband Forum – Langton Green Village Hall – **2.30pm**
- Monday 20th February – Finance meeting – Council Office 7.30pm
- Monday 5th March – **Full Council Meeting** – Ashurst Village Hall

12/139 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION:

Cllr Mrs Soyke reported that there had been another recent accident at Stone Cross.
Cllrs Owen and Hemming complimented the Groundsman for the clearing snow on the footpaths at the LGRG car park on 5th February.
Cllr Mrs Hull reported that two Burrswood signs have been put up on the green at Groombridge without Parish Council approval. **The Clerk to investigate.**
Cllr Parker reported that a traffic warden has been in Langton Green and is going to issue tickets for cars parked more Than 50cms from the kerb.
Cllr Brown advised that with regret he is resigning as a Parish Councillor with effect from the close of the meeting.
Cllr Mrs Jeffreys thanked him on behalf of all Councillors for all his hard work for the Parish Council.

There being nothing further to discuss the meeting closed at 10.15pm

CHAIRMAN