

Speldhurst Parish Council

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

MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, 16th MARCH 2009 at 7.45pm IN THE VILLAGE HALL, ASHURST

PRESENT: Cllrs. Mrs Jeffreys (Chairman), Mrs Paulson-Ellis, Mrs Podbury,
Mrs Soyke, Mrs Waters, Brown, Colley, Ellis, Parker and Stevens

Borough Councillor David Jukes

Courier Reporter

2 residents from Ashurst arrived for Agenda item 12 (Ashurst Village Play Area)

2180 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:

Cllr. Mrs Soyke – Personal & Prejudicial – Agenda Items 12 (Ashurst Village Play Area / Registering of Common Ground) – may benefit from the area

Declarations of Lobbying : No declarations were received

2181 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr. Mrs Hull – holiday

Cllr. Langridge – holiday

Cllr. Wheeler – called to an emergency business meeting

2182 MINUTES: The Minutes of the Meeting held on 16th February 2009, having previously been forwarded to Members, were approved and signed.

2183 ITEMS FROM THE PUBLIC – The meeting was adjourned. There were no items from the public and the meeting was re-opened.

2184 AGENDA ITEMS

2185 Finance Committee – Report by Cllr. Mrs Soyke

The Committee had agreed, via email, the sum of £100 for the removal and installation of two new benches at the Langton Green Recreation Ground – benches being donated by the Rural Society as part of their 50th Anniversary.

The Committee had agreed that David Crundwell should be contacted regarding the insured value of the Pavilion to see if this could be lowered to reduce the insurance premium (to reduce the sum insured by £50,000 would save £100 per annum). David's advice was that it would be extremely dangerous to reduce the sum insured. The Committee had taken this advice and agreed to accept the Allianz sum insured value of £224,193.57.

Cllr. Mrs Soyke advised that the interest on the `high` interest bank account for the three months to the beginning of March 2009 had fallen dramatically to £10.86. This compared to £80.20 for the period September – December (although we held higher balances) and £795.99 for the period June – September (when the balance was considerably higher.)

2186 Internal Auditor – report from the Clerk

The Clerk had met with Kevin Funnell, internal auditor, on 4th March 2009 this was an interim audit, following up from his first visit on 10th November.

The Auditor was very positive; his only point to action was the checking of the payroll. Councillors agreed that this would be checked quarterly.

2187 Highways Report – including land at Cobhams and junction sign advising of Barden Road

The Clerk had met with her Liaison Officers from Kent Highway Services and also a Senior Highway Engineer (see report attached).

The Clerk would contact Highways regarding the junction sign.

Safe Pedestrian pathway beside A264 – Ashurst – Cllr. Stevens requested that Jonathan Bibby is kept up-to-date with progress.

Cobhams – the Clerk had checked the ownership of the strips of land either side of Cobhams. It was agreed to contact the land owners to ascertain their views on the tarmacing of these strips for additional car parking in the village.

Cllr. Mrs Podbury advised that an article in The Times stated that the National Speed Limit was due to change to 50mph next year.

2088 Rural Bus Service – see attached report. Cllr. Parker expressed disappointment that Arriva had made this decision without consultation with village residents to ascertain whether they would use such a service.

2188 Groombridge Bus Stop and Overgrown Hedges

The Clerk had met with Metrobus regarding the out of date bus timetable which was displayed on the Parish Council's notice board in Groombridge and agreed to supply a new bus timetable. Metrobus also advised that a bus stop sign may be erected and they would seek approval from The Crown Inn. During the meeting Metrobus advised that a bus stop `pole` would also be placed on the opposite side of the road designating the bus stop. Councillors expressed concern at the siting as it is extremely dangerous and a request would be made to consider moving it very slightly down the road (opposite the entrance to The Crown's car park).

The Clerk was asked to contact Kent Highways regarding the overgrown conifer hedge as this restricted pedestrian view.

2148 Parish Plan – including 2074 Parish Council Questionnaire

7 Councillors and the Clerk had met with Victoria Lawson from Action with Communities in Rural Kent (see attached report).

It was agreed to set up a committee (Cllrs. Colley, Langridge (to represent Old Groombridge), Mrs Podbury and Mrs Soyke) who would report back to the May meeting.

2137-1 Speaker for AGM – County Councillor Keith Ferrin had agreed to be guest speaker. The Clerk would arrange for six advertising posters. Cllr. Mrs Jeffreys and Stevens would arrange the setting up of the Village Hall early evening.

The Clerk asked if the Chairman could provide an overview of the Council's achievements so that these can be given out with the Financial information. Cllrs. Mrs Paulson-Ellis and Mrs Soyke were asked to provide an electronic copy of their report to the Clerk.

1825-3 Ashurst Village Play Area / Registering of Common Ground – Decision by Council

Cllr. Mrs Soyke had provided the Council with the results of the village survey and also the recommendations of the Village Committee. Cllr. Mrs Soyke advised that should the village decide that they wanted a play area, no committee within the village could take on the commitment should the Parish Council decide not to take over responsibility.

Cllr. Mrs Soyke then left the room.

A lengthy discussion took place and it was agreed that not enough information was known for the Council to make an informed decision, particularly on the maintenance cost and insurance liability. The Council noted that the proposed wild area would be adjacent to a maintained area. The village would need to accept that Council approval would need to be requested for any work or erection of any item on the land. The Council also acknowledged the concerns of Maria Cook, Play Area Consultant; remote location for a play area, considerable earth moving would be needed and the possible removal of a telegraph pole.

The Village Committee would be invited to come back with more details and cost implications.

2028-3TWBC Affordable Housing Needs Survey

The report had been received and the Clerk would copy and send to Councillors. It was agreed to arrange a meeting with Richard Hall, Action with Communities in Rural Kent before the May meeting.

Cllr. Mrs Jeffreys had attended a recent meeting on Rural Housing and reported that we should be searching for suitable land.

2189 Parish Council Surgery – 9th March 2009

Attended by: Cllrs. Mrs Paulson-Ellis, Brown, the Clerk, PCSO Ray Nuttall and Borough Councillor David Jukes (for a short while) – no residents

PCSO Nuttall brought the following to the Parish Council's attention.

A speed survey was carried out outside the Langton Green Recreation Ground on 5th March between 2.40m – 3.45pm:

Total of 42 vehicles
25 travelling 30mph or less
15 between 35-39mph (these vehicles were given verbal warnings)
2 were travelling at 40 and 41 mph (both issued with fixed penalty tickets).

Following concerns from Speldhurst residents regarding the increased traffic through the village, PCSO Nuttall was on duty in Speldhurst on 9th March between 8.15am and 9.15am. There was significant improvement in the way drivers behaved with his presence.

Parents had asked for an update on the making up of the pathway from Barden Road to the Village Hall. The Parish Council agreed to delay any decision until after the re-surfacing of the Barden Road footpaths.

An Ashurst resident had asked for an update on the speeding traffic through the village.

A resident in the unadopted road leading to 20-24 Northfields had expressed concerns with regard to residents parking. Borough Councillor David Jukes advised that he had also been contacted and would be dealing with this.

Since the Surgery, further Speed Safety Checks had been undertaken in Langton Green during school time as per PACT Priority. 3 Fixed Penalty Notices and 8 Verbal Warnings were issued and in Groombridge one verbal warning was given.

2149 Merging of Footpaths and Recreation Ground Committees and 2150 Appointment of a Parish Council Highways Committee

A lengthy discussion took place with the following being agreed; the Footpaths and Recreation Ground Committees would continue to operate separately. Councillors felt strongly that they wished to be kept informed on all Highway matters and that these should be dealt with by full Council – no committee would be set up.

2137-4 Lampington Row

- i) Street enforcement, resident parking permits or restricted parking – the Clerk was waiting for feedback from TWBC.
- ii) Letter to parents of Langton Green Primary School expressing concerns of parking in Lampington Row and encouraging parking in the Recreation Ground – letter once the Lampington Row safer crossing is installed.

2190 Land in front of the former Watson Hall – in the ownership of the Parish Council

It had been brought to the Council's attention that as there is no designation between what is path and what is road cars either park in the way so pedestrians have to walk out in the road or cars drift over into the path as they drive toward The Hare.

As this is a Conservation Area the Clerk was asked consult with the Conservation Officer. Cllr. Mrs Paulson-Ellis suggested that we should keep Mr Page informed (owner of The Forge).

2191 Matters for Updating from the Minutes dated 16th February 2009

2134 Black Lion House – The Clerk had sent a letter expressing disappointment.

2152-6 Ferbies Twitten – TWBC had advised that although this was not adopted by TWBC they sweep clean on a 30 day cycle. Cllr. Stevens advised that he had spoken again to Mrs Quarterman and despite assurances from TWBC this area was still not being cleaned – the Clerk would make further enquiries to TWBC.

The Clerk would also request that as this Twitten is used by disabled residents with scooters could appropriate barriers be installed.

2192 Correspondence Received

1. KALC – Clerks Information Day on 19th May 2009
2. KCC – Commons Act – Seminar on 14th May in Maidstone
3. Speldhurst resident concerned that now enforcement lines have been placed on Barden Road with Speldhurst Hill a considerable number of vehicles use the footpath as if it was

part of the road generally mounting the pavement at Speldhurst Hill and rejoining the road outside Churchyard Cottages. A request for protective bollards on the footpath from Speldhurst Hill junction to Yew Tree Cottage. The Council considered that the footpath would possibly be too narrow for bollards and the Clerk would consult with Kent Highway Services.

4. TWBC – I have received a copy of the National Census of Local Authority Councillors 2008 on behalf of the Standards Committee – handed to Cllr. Mrs Jeffreys.

2193 Parish Council Chairman`s Report

Cllr. Mrs Jeffreys reported on various meetings :

Guest Speaker at the Speldhurst Village Society`s AGM. With the retirement of the Chairman, Ron Fisher, the future of The Village Society was uncertain.

Local Development Framework. Next consultation was due in April.

War Memorials – request for information on people who have died since World War 2 and have a connection with the Borough – note please in village magazines.

TWBC now have `a Borough entry sign`. The one for Speldhurst has been suggested at the entrance to the Borough after Fordcombe. No signs in other areas to save street clutter.

Unemployment in the Borough up from 300 to 900 in recent months.

`Cory` has been successful in its bid for the Borough`s waste contract.

2194 COMMITTEE REPORTS

Planning – Cllr. Mrs Paulson-Ellis reported on the meetings of the Planning Committee held on 23rd February and 11th March 2009, the Minutes having previously been forwarded to all Members. The applications for both Holmewood House School and Bradleys Mill should be heard at the Western Area Planning Committee on 1st April.

As the meeting had reached its 2 hour mark Councillors were asked if they wished to continue.

Recreation Ground – Cllr. Ellis reported a big improvement in the upkeep of the Recreation Ground and A1 Services had been attending on a regular basis.

The Clerk had chased TWBC for the small litter bin to be placed by the recycling bins.

The Football Club had reported problems with the cold water supply at the Pavilion and there could be a cracked water pipe.

Footpaths – Cllr. Stevens asked that the Clerk chase Kent Highway Services about the cutting back of the laurel hedge at Hatton Trust, Febries.

Working party on 10th March had replaced a stile at WT95, Stone Cross.

Aygarth Farm – please could we contact Borough Councillor David Jukes about the conifer hedge.

KALC – Nothing to report.

2194 DIARY DATES

3rd April – Marchiennes School visiting Langton Green Primary School – all welcome

4th April – Rural Society Anniversary Ball – tickets available

16th April – West Kent Neighbourhood Watch AGM 7pm

20th April – Annual Parish Meeting, Speldhurst 7.15pm for 7.30pm – Guest Speaker County Councillor Keith Ferrin, Cabinet Member for Highways.

2195 ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT – MARCH 2009

1.	Speldhurst Village Hall	£ 15.00	Hire of Hall
2.	Kent County Council	£ 1,023.78	Visual Inspections of Play / Teen Areas
3.	Kevin Funnell	£ 105.00	Interim Audit
4.	Martyn Lawrence	£ 200.00	Weekly tidy of LGRG – Jan – March 2009
5.	Husson UK Ltd	£ 977.50	Grass Matting - LGRG
6.	RIP Cleaning	£ 101.20	Canine Refuse
7.	Teambase	£ 160.99	Stationery
8.	LG Charitable Trust	£ 31.62	Hire of Hall
9.	Sussex Association of Local Councils	£ 207.00	Legal & Finance Day – 2 Councillors and the Clerk
10.	Speldhurst Village Hall	£ 5,000.00	Agreed grant – Entrance doors
11.	Administration and Expenses :	£ 2,109.42	
12.	Husson UK Ltd	£ 2,395.34	Retention of play and teen equipment (cheque dated 31 st March 2009)
13.	St Mary`s the Virgin Speldhurst	£10,000.00	Agreed Grant – repair to roofing (cheque dated 31 st March 2009)

TOTAL **£22,317.85**

2196 ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT – APRIL 2009

The following amounts are due for payment on 1st April 2009

1.	Allianz Insurance plc	£3,196.31	Annual Insurance
2.	Ashurst Place Residential Home	£ 350.00	Annual Field Rental

2163 Clerk`s Request for Consideration to be given by the Parish Council for Nomination to the Pension Scheme and Re-negotiation of Clerk`s Contract of Employment

The Clerk left the room whilst the Council debated.

The Clerk was invited back into the meeting. The Clerk was informed that no decisions had been reached and an Extra Ordinary Meeting would be arranged.

2197 Items for Information - Two diary dates were given (see 2194 above)

The meeting closed at 11.10pm

CHAIRMAN