



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

**MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL'S OPEN MEETING  
HELD ON MONDAY 10<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2016 AT 8.00PM  
IN LANGTON GREEN VILLAGE HALL**

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**PRESENT:** Cllr Milner – Vice Chairman, together with ten Parish Councillors and 40 parishioners.

**OFFICERS PRESENT:** Mr C May – Clerk, Mrs K Plunkett – assistant clerk.

**BOROUGH COUNCILLOR:** Cllr Stanyer

1. **Apologies for Absence** – Cllr Barrington-Johnson and Cllr Judy Price sent their apologies.
2. **Chairman's Introduction** – Cllr Milner opened the meeting by welcoming everyone. He presented the KALC Community Awards Scheme 2016 to Irene Smith in recognition of her many years of service managing the Langton Green Village Fete.

He said the meeting was timed to coincide with preparations for next year's budget and this was an opportunity for members of the public to advise the Council of their concerns. He said he had some subjects in mind for discussion but if points were not addressed then matters should be raised. He said that SPC is increasingly dependent on public goodwill in achieving many of its goals. He said that any offers of help would be much appreciated – for example, with the distribution of the Parish Plan. He said that volunteers are also needed for Speedwatch and anyone interested should give their contact details to Chris May.

3. **Finance** – Cllr Mrs Jeffreys said that it had been an unremarkable year for finance in SPC. However SPC now has a brand new pavilion. She praised the Langton Green Sports Community Association (LGSCA) who raised the finances through the FA and also through club fundraising events. She also thanked Cllr Mrs Lyle who has spent a considerable amount of time working on legal agreements and setting up the hall to be ready for hire. She said that SPC are hoping to hire out the building so that the costs of running it will be matched by income. Cllr Mrs Jeffreys said that Highways projects will be major items of expenditure going forward. For example there is the project of installing 20mph schemes around the Parish's primary schools and throughout Speldhurst village. The costs of this project are as yet unknown. She then spoke about the cap on local government spending which Central Government are imposing. So far SPC is not affected by this as it applies where precepts are over £500k and SPC's precept is less than £200k. However it may be that all Parish Councils are capped in the future and this would have a serious impact on many Parish Councils. The cap would be an increase of 2% and the cost of a referendum for SPC would be approximately £5k so the increase would not be worthwhile. SPC are joining NALC in opposing this cap.

Question: What is the rationale for the introduction of a cap on Parish Council spending?

Answer: Cllr Mrs Jeffreys suggested it could be to win votes as residents would be keen on lowering their Council tax bills.

Question: Reserves have increased from £109k last year to the current level of £227k which seems excessive.

Answer: The Clerk said that only half of this year's money has been spent and the level of expenditure for the remainder of the year is unclear as it will depend in part on the speed of progress with highways projects. He also explained that last year's reserves were distorted by £50k because the auditors had insisted that £50k was an investment rather than a cash deposit account.

4. **Highways** – Cllr Milner addressed the meeting; he is the chairman of the Highways Committee. He spoke of the Committee's general aim to have safer and slower driving in the Parish. He said it has been a frustrating process to date and even part-funding schemes have not sped up the process. The goal is to have 20mph zones outside the two primary schools and throughout the village of Speldhurst.

Cllr Milner also mentioned the ISS's in Groombridge and Ashurst which are not working properly and may have to be removed.

He said that the speed limit between Speldhurst and Langton Green is being addressed and SPC have police support for reducing the limit to 40mph for the whole stretch between the two villages.

Cllr Milner said that more volunteers are needed to run speedwatch sessions.

He said that SPC is considering installing village gateways as a further reminder to reduce speed. KCC are supporting this initiative and costings are currently awaited.

He said that all potholes should be reported to KCC as they are currently trying to fix as many potholes as possible.

He also spoke about parking problems and how it is not always easy to avoid parking on pavements. He said that parking is a problem outside Speldhurst Primary School. He highlighted people driving on pavements as another issue.

He said that on the Green in Groombridge granite sets will be installed to protect the green from erosion due to parking.

Question: (Simon Norton) Simon asked whether fixed interactive speed cameras needing to be replaced is a national issue or were SPC given faulty machines? He asked whether SPC can approach the manufacturer and ask them to accept responsibility. The cameras should last between 10 and 15 years but have only lasted 5/6 years.

Question: (Simon Norton) Simon said that there had been requests that the speed limit on Groombridge Hill be 40mph but at the time 50mph was granted with advice given that this limit can be reviewed in the future. He said that cycles and lorries or tractors on the hill are a danger and an accident is likely to occur.

Cllr Milner thanked Simon for his contribution to the Highways section of the Parish Plan.

Question: (Paul Bartlett) Paul said that some vehicles are parking so close to the pavement and this combined with many properties failing to cut back their hedges meant that walking on the pavements can be hazardous.

Question: A resident said that the road between Bidborough and Speldhurst had almost become a one way system due to overhanging trees.

Cllr Milner introduced Adrian Berendt (Chairman of 20's PLENTY TW) who spoke about the 20's PLENTY scheme in Tunbridge Wells. He said that over 15m people now live in streets with a 20mph limit and that the whole environment improves dramatically when this scheme is installed. He said that where there are two layers of government – the Parish Council and the Borough Council, implementing the scheme is difficult. KCC are not interested unless there have been fatalities or the area has a large proportion of residents considered unhealthy (this could be due to pollution or elderly or less able). He said that Speldhurst Parish residents should sign the online petition for 20'S PLENTY in Tunbridge Wells.

Adrian said that there is only a requirement to have one traffic calming measure installed for a 20mph scheme and this could be signs. The cost of implementing such a scheme can be as low as £3 per head.

5. **Air Traffic** – Cllr Barrington-Johnson leads the Air Traffic Committee. Cllr Milner read out an extract from the Parish Plan as a summary of recent activity in this area. He said that a decision on a third runway is imminent.

Question: A new dispersal programme should have come into effect mid-August. Is there evidence that this has happened?

Answer: Cllr Mrs Podbury said that there are several local groups working together but there does not seem to have been any improvement and aircraft are heard between 11pm and 5am. She said that a year has been given for improvements to be made but progress is very slow. She said that several villages have hired a noise monitor to get an accurate picture of aircraft traffic but the machine developed a fault when it was located in Speldhurst.

6. **Planning** – Cllr Mrs Horne said that the role of the Planning Committee is to use local knowledge to give feedback to Tunbridge Wells. She said the committee will need to be aware of the Parish Plan when making decisions.

She mentioned the Call for Sites by TWBC and the Committee will be working out the implications for the Parish.

Cllr Mrs Horne thanked all Parish Councillors on the Committee.

7. **Amenities** – Cllr Mrs Podbury said that the recreation ground at Langton Green is one of the largest and most expensive assets for SPC. She said that a recent play area inspection has identified the requirement for further maintenance work. She mentioned that the Groundsman, Len Cooper, does a terrific job and is very committed. She said that subsidence in the car park has been repaired and that the lines now need repainting. She spoke about Pocket Park in Speldhurst which requires significant maintenance and where a new tree is due to be planted in memory of Alan Passmore, who was a dedicated member of a team of volunteers maintaining local footpaths.

8. **The Pavilion at Langton Green** – Cllr Mrs Lyle said that the new pavilion is a fantastic new facility and LGSCA have done an amazing job getting the grant funding and raising £100k themselves. She said that a team is in place getting the pavilion ready for hiring and it is hoped that a café will soon be in place. Another resident questioned whether there are enough car parking spaces if there are large events at both the pavilion and the village hall. Cllr Mrs Lyle said that communication between the two facilities will be essential. She said that the pavilion only has capacity for 110 people.

The meeting closed at 9.15pm

CHAIRMAN