



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

## **NOTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY HELD ON MONDAY 2<sup>ND</sup> APRIL AT 8.00PM IN SPELDHURST VILLAGE HALL**

There were 10 Councillors and two Clerks in attendance along with Borough Cllrs Atwood, Stanyer and Jukes and KCC member for TW West John Davies

There were 39 groups and organisations represented and about 100 people in attendance

Parish Council Chairman Cllr Mrs Jeffreys opened the meeting and announced that the format of the Annual Parish Meeting had changed and said that it was to be a community event and not a Parish Council event. She referred everyone to the brochures of village activities that have been produced and were available this evening and thanked everyone in the Parish who has participated. She thanked Cllr Mrs Podbury and Cllr Langridge for their hard work in helping her to set up and run this first Annual Parish Assembly.

Cllr Mrs Jeffreys then introduced the evening's speaker, Cllr Bob Atwood – Leader of Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, Member for Rusthall and resident of the Parish.

Cllr Atwood started by saying he has been a Tunbridge Wells Borough Councillor since 2008 and Leader since 2011. He outlined the recent history of Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, the aspirations and challenges for the future, the difficulties of balancing the budgets and the uncertain vision of 'Localism'.

His initial aims had been to improve engagement with the public, back benchers and KCC and to reassure people about the future of the Town Hall. He then said he wants to rid the Town of the "grot spots" – the cinema site, old hospital and the supermarket site by the station. He said that planning consent had now been applied for to demolish the cinema site and he hoped to announce this soon. The old hospital has been sold to Berkeley Homes but their planning submission is not yet through.

He has formed a Town Plan Panel to suggest improvements to the town and has appointed a cabinet member for rural areas. TWBC are also concentrating on improvements such as the A21, the infrastructure on North Farm and broadband improvements in rural areas. Here he mentioned the recent sad death of Kevin Lynes, KCC member for Tunbridge Wells East and offered his condolences to his family.

He then spoke about the budgetary constraints that the Council is under. As well as a reduction in government funding, income from most regular streams such as parking and planning applications is down.

He was pleased to have been able to see Rusthall establish a Parish Council and said that Parish Councillors are the unsung heroes and thanked Speldhurst Parish Council and all the participants for this fabulous display of community activities.

Cllr Mrs Jeffreys thanked Cllr Atwood for his interesting and informative talk and said 'all Parish Councillors will relate to his vision of not being at all certain what the future holds'.

Cllr Mrs Jeffreys said that a few of the evening's stallholders wished to address the meeting and introduced Mr Mike Wheeler of Ashurst and Blackham Sports Association.

Mr Wheeler explained that Ashurst and Blackham Sports Association is a sub-committee of the Ashurst McDermott Village Hall Trust. When the former village sports field which had been out of use for 6 years was put up for auction in 2011 the Trust and the residents of the 182 houses within Ashurst and Blackham, together with a contribution from the Trust, raised the £150,000 required to purchase the pavilion, 5.5 acres of land and 1,000 yards of fishing rights. Following the purchase 1,000 volunteer hours were put in to make the site fit and ready for the first sports activities. They are now actively letting the sports field, have a premises licence, have set up a fishing club, will be holding social events including a Diamond Jubilee event and hope to bring back the Ashurst Raft Race, in order to raise funds to assist with the maintenance of the property. He thanked the Parish Council for their grant for the new pavilion roof and said that all Parishioners will be welcomed to any of the events.

Cllr Mrs Jeffreys said that Langton Green Sports Club are planning improvements to the pavilion and will be holding an Open Meeting about this in the near future.

Cllr Mrs Jeffreys introduced Ivan Goodsell of Speldhurst Recreation Ground Committee.

Mr Goodsell explained that they are planning to replace and extend the Speldhurst playground and increase the age range up to 10/12 years. The cost will be in the region of £100,000 - £120,000. He said that the Committee is very grateful for the support of the Parish Council and they are also carrying out fund-raising linked to the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. The plan is to raise funds and complete the work over a 12- 18 month timescale. A resident asked about the basketball area. Mr Goodsell answered that the survey sent to all residents of the village confirmed that this is well used and so will remain.

Cllr Mrs Jeffreys thanked all the speakers, all the residents who attended and all Parish Councillors for their hard work.

The meeting closed at 9.05pm

Chairman