



Speldhurst Parish Council

Working for the whole community

NEWSLETTER



We have a rule that Chairmen serve a maximum five-year term. So, at our May Full Council Meeting Neil Barrington-Johnson stepped down as Chairman of the Parish Council

after 6 years at the helm – he stayed on an extra year because of Covid. We thanked Neil for his many contributions, particularly during the past year when he committed much of his time to help us through the challenges of conducting parish business during a pandemic. His calm manner,

kindness and good judgement have been much appreciated at a difficult time. Neil will remain as a Parish Councillor.



At the same meeting, Dave Pate, who has lived with his family in the Tunbridge Wells area since 1988 and in Speldhurst since 2016, was elected Chairman. A former Chief Inspector with Kent Police, Dave has already put his many years of policing experience to good use as Chair of the Highways Committee. He very

much looks forward to serving Speldhurst Parish as Chairman of the Council.



Finally, we also have a new Vice-Chair. Katrina Lyle is a Langton Green resident and has been a Parish Councillor since 2015. To date, Katrina's legal and financial acumen

have been invaluable as Chair of the Finance and Governance Committees. We feel most fortunate that she has agreed to take on this new role.

Joy Podbury - A big thank you



Joy Podbury stepped down from all council activities in May. Joy was a Parish Councillor since her co-option in 2005 and was extremely active, chairing most committees during

her time. She led the first Parish Plan in 2010 and attended many meetings on your behalf. She spent the last 6 years as a Borough Councillor representing Rusthall and the last year as Mayor of Tunbridge Wells. We will miss her contributions and sense of humour and wish her a happy retirement from her duties.

Following Joy's retirement, we are in the process of co-opting a new Parish Councillor.

A new Parish Clerk

Our Parish Clerk Chris May is retiring later this year after a highly productive twelve-year stint. During this time Chris has been a driving force in modernising the parish council and we are extremely grateful for all his hard work. While we plan to say a proper thank you and goodbye nearer the time, we have now recruited a worthy successor. Her name is Katie Neve and she joins us from Tunbridge Wells Borough Council. Here is Katie to tell us a bit more about herself:



"I've worked at TWBC for over 35 years, 29 years as Mayor's Secretary. I love to dance, and enjoy spending time with family and friends, gardening and walking. I look forward to joining the SPC team and serving the community."

Katie joins us in the office in late June, where Chris will hand over his Clerking role over several months. Chris will remain as Responsible Financial Officer for the time being.

Precept 2021

In view of the current situation with Covid-19, the impact on families, and in many cases incomes, the council felt it inappropriate to increase the precept this year. However, one of the consequences of this pandemic is that more households or families are experiencing hardship and are being granted exemption or discount from paying council tax (of which the precept forms part). The number of properties in our parish on which the precept is levied has therefore reduced, as is the case in many other parishes this year. This means that the same level of precept for Speldhurst Parish is shared between fewer households so it will still look like a slight increase for those households which do pay.

Despite the council's static income (or lower income in inflation-adjusted terms), we will seek to deliver the same level of service for parish residents and will continue to work hard on your behalf.

Don't be Idle

"Did you know that every minute a car is left idling it creates enough pollution to fill 150 balloons? That is why we're asking everyone to switch off their engines if they are going to be stationary for more than a minute."

**Tunbridge Wells Borough Council,
Local Magazine, Spring 2020**

TWBC have run an anti-idling campaign for some time as part of their target to improve air quality around Tunbridge Wells. We would like to add our own plea to take note of the new banners in the car park at LGRG asking drivers to switch off their engines when stationary. So next time you are idling on the school run, over a takeaway coffee or after a dog walk, picture those pollution-filled balloons and SWITCH OFF!

Public Meetings

While committee meetings are once more required to take place in person, the Covid-19 situation remains uncertain. So we have made our Amenities, Governance and Highways Committees working groups for a six-month period, enabling us to meet by zoom and reducing the risk of face-to-face contact. All meetings - remote and face-to-face - will still be open to the public. See our website or get in touch to find out how to attend.

Council Office & Staff

Staff will make a phased return to office working over the next few months, however, if you would like to visit us in person, please call first to make an appointment. You can of course always call us on 07760769513* or email clerk@speldhurstparishcouncil.gov.uk.

**This is our mobile number. Due to reduced office hours, we won't always be able to check for messages on our landline answerphone.*

Environment Working Group (EWG)

Improving air quality is one of several issues the re-established Environment Working Group will address as part of its charter to improve and protect the parish environment. Cllr John Turner will Chair the group and – having led a global sustainability taskforce in his professional

career – brings the perfect combination of experience and enthusiasm to the role. Made up of Parish Councillors and Members of Public, the EWG has now laid out some clear ideas of what it aims to achieve, so look out for further updates and ways you can be involved.

Langton Green Recreation Ground

We are all happy to see the barriers down around the rec in Langton Green, with residents young and old taking advantage of the open space and longer days. Please, when you visit, pick up and dispose of any litter or dog mess, and use the rec with consideration for others of all ages.

SPC is investigating what further solutions could be implemented to minimise the standing water in the swales (ditches) after heavy rainfall - in the meantime be aware that these can be muddy and/or full of water!

Autumn Open Meeting - Save the date

Unfortunately, for various Covid and non-Covid related reasons, we had to cancel our Annual Parish Meeting in May. It was not a decision we made lightly, as this event is a great opportunity for residents and Councillors to meet and discuss local matters. We plan to hold our Autumn Open Meeting on 18th October on the same Community Policing theme, with the same Speaker, and hope you will join us then instead.

A message from the SPC Highways committee

If you or anyone you know is involved in a road traffic accident in Ashurst, Langton Green, Old Groombridge or Speldhurst, please tell us about it. It is vital that we have up-to-date information about road traffic accidents in Speldhurst Parish, which we then use as evidence when approaching Kent Highways about implementing traffic calming measures.

In other news, Speedwatch sessions have re-started in Langton Green and Speldhurst and we are working with the Speedwatch Co-ordinator at Kent Police to establish

additional Speedwatch sites in Old Groombridge and Speldhurst. Speedwatch works in ways you might not have considered; firstly, as a deterrent, secondly, any drivers caught speeding more than once in a Speedwatch area are contacted by the police. And finally, Speedwatch data can be used to persuade local authorities of the need for traffic calming. So, a big thank you to all the Speedwatch Volunteers who are helping us tackle this critical issue. If you would like to join them, please get in touch.

SPC's Highways Committee meets regularly to address road safety in the parish. Meetings are open to the public, with a dedicated open session where you can speak about concerns or issues it is important for us to have an open dialogue with residents so that we can do our best to help improve local roads. We lobby Kent Highways - the authority responsible for our roads - on your behalf, acting as a voice for the parish. To read our recent meeting minutes, visit the Council Minutes page at www.speldhurstparishcouncil.gov.uk.

Speldhurst Parish Council

David Pate (Chairman)
Katrina Lyle (Vice-Chair)
Neil Barrington-Johnson
Richard Ellery
Ed Langridge

Trevor Myles
Kim Rajah
Alan Rowe
Benjamin Scarbrough
Julia Soyke

John Turner
Millie Woodliffe

This newsletter can be viewed on our website; hard copies will also be distributed at local shops in Speldhurst Parish.

All enquiries to the Parish Clerk;
Chris May on 07760 769513 or at
clerk@speldhurstparishcouncil.gov.uk