

Speldhurst Parish Council

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

MINUTES OF AN EXTRA ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 27th MAY 2009 at 11am IN THE COMMITTEE ROOM, SPELDHURST VILLAGE HALL

MEMBERS PRESENT: Cllrs. Soyke (Chairman), Mrs Hull, Mrs Paulson-Ellis, Mrs Podbury, Brown, Colley, Ellis, and Parker

OFFICER PRESENT: Pauline Lambell - Clerk

2225 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr. Mrs Jeffreys – holiday

Cllr. Mrs Waters – as it was half term she was looking after two children

Cllr. Langridge – holiday

Cllr. Stevens – looking after children

Cllr. Wheeler – business meeting

2226 DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL AND PREJUDICIAL INTERESTS : No declarations received

2227 DECLARATIONS OF LOBBYING : No declarations received

2228 AGREEMENT OF COUNCIL TO THE SIGNING OF THE ANNUAL RETURN FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2009 – The Clerk had met with the Monitoring Officer and was advised that the Borough Council are not insured to give legal advice. She had also been unable to contact the Internal Auditor. The Clerk agreed to sign the Annual Return.

2229 Clerk`s Annual Salary Award – 1st April 2009

It was unanimously agreed to increase the Clerk`s salary from Point 33 to Point 34 with effect from 1st April 2009. The Clerk advised that this did not include the annual cost of living increase which this year was being negotiated at 0.5%

2230 Clerk`s Expenses : BT Broadband and Home as Parish Council Offices

Cllr. Brown asked the Chairman if the situation was irrevocable because if it was then the Council should work towards as amicable an end as is possible.

The Clerk had received a letter from the Chairman stating that reimbursements for Broadband and an increase in Home as Parish Council Offices would not be made until the Clerk signed the new Contract. The Clerk felt that this was unjust and had asked for reasons for these decisions.

Cllr. Mrs Soyke stated that as this Extra Ordinary meeting had been called initially in order to sign the Annual Return forms, and only a small number of councillors were able to attend, she felt that this committee could not provide these answers without approval from the full Council.

Councillors stated that there was a quorum (5 required, 8 in attendance).

The Clerk clarified that she was currently paying £15.65 per month for Broadband connection and in the light of the Council's decision had made arrangements for this to be suspended from her private telephone line. The cost of Broadband to be connected to the Parish Council's business line would be approximately £25 per month plus a one off router charge of £79.

Cllr. Parker asked that the meeting be held in closed session but other Councillors felt that this was not necessary. Cllr. Parker stated that he felt the Council should be reimbursing the Clerk for these payments outside of signing a new Contract.

Cllr. Mrs Podbury stated that the Chairman's letter to the Clerk dated 19th May did not accurately state the decisions taken by the Council on 18th May. As far as she recalled the Council did not agree that these payments would be withheld until the Clerk signed a new Contract.

It was unanimously agreed to reimburse the Clerk for the Broadband connection for April and May and connect Broadband to the Parish Council's telephone line.

The Clerk further clarified that one room in her house was set aside purely as the Council office and that she was also storing 12 boxes of planning applications in her garage. It was further agreed to pay the Clerk's increase in Parish Council office at home expense from £80 to £140 per month, backdated to 1st April 2009.

2231 Resignation of the Parish Council Clerk

The question was asked again as to whether the situation was irrevocable. With so many questions unanswered the Clerk felt that it was. She also felt unable to sign the draft contract as presented to her especially Item 2c as the Clerk reports to the Council as a whole and not through one individual Councillor (including the Chairman).

2232 Items for Information

The Clerk confirmed the criteria for qualification of Well Being, and Councillors felt that although the Council wouldn't qualify they were interested in finding out more.

The Clerk was asked to leave the meeting and she thanked the Councillors for their time (11.30am).

The Council continued their debate and the Clerk was advised that the meeting closed at 12.30pm.

CHAIRMAN