

Local Government Act 1972



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

Minutes of the Full Council Meeting

held on Monday 7th November 2022 at 7.30pm in the Palmer Room, Langton Green Village Hall

MEMBERS PRESENT

Cllrs Curry (Chair), Barrington-Johnson, Ellery, Mrs Lyle (Vice-Chair), Rajah, Rowe, Scarbrough and Mrs Soyke.

OFFICERS PRESENT

Mrs K Neve, Clerk and Mrs K Harman, Assistant Clerk (minutes).

IN ATTENDANCE

There were no Borough or County Councillors in attendance. Apologies were received from Borough Cllr Sankey – prior engagement and County Cllr McInroy – holiday.

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were two members of the public present.

22/219 Covid Compliance

Those in attendance were free to decide whether to wear a mask according to their own wishes.

22/220 To enquire if anyone intends to record the meeting

The meeting was recorded by the Clerk for accuracy of the minutes. The recording would be deleted once the meeting minutes are signed off at the next Full Council meeting.

22/221 To accept and approve apologies and reasons for absence

Apologies had been received from Cllrs Norton (prior engagement), Turner (Covid-related) and Mrs Woodliffe (ill).

22/222 Disclosure of Interests

Cllr Mrs Soyke declared an interest in item 18 – Appointed Speldhurst Parish Council (SPC) Trustee to Ashurst Village Hall.

22/223 Declarations of Lobbying

There were none.

22/224 Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on 3rd October 2022

RESOLVED that the minutes, previously forwarded to Members were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

22/225 Public Open Session

Mr Guy Lambert, Langton Green Charitable Sports Association (LGCSA) Chairman was attending on their behalf. He confirmed his view that a thorough, impartial review of the management agreement should be carried out with representatives from both LGCSA and SPC, in liaison with the licensee and Building Manager and in a spirit of positive collaboration. He asked that the following matters be considered:

- Review panel membership
- Existing licence holder (café proprietor)
- Running costs
- Review of existing business model
- Existing legal framework.

He then went on to make the following points:

- He had been in contact with Greg Clark MP regarding energy price caps and grants towards energy costs and said that he is keen to help find ways to reduce the pavilion's overheads.
- He recommended an external agent is asked to obtain a current open-market licence rental figure.
- It is important to quantify the community's use of the pavilion to enable LGCSA and SPC to support them fully.
- He asked for administrative help to ensure due diligence is carried out.
- He asked that the Chair, Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) are on the review panel representing SPC.
- He gave some background on the size and intended usage of the boilers in the pavilion.
- He volunteered to be a member of the review panel.

The Chair thanked Mr Lambert for the information provided and the time he has so far dedicated to the matter. Cllr

Mrs Lyle responded with the following points:

- In general, there is broad agreement on the way forward.
- SPC acknowledges the substantial effort from LGCSA in their fundraising towards what is now an outstanding community asset.
- SPC will always strive to make the pavilion available to LGCSA as well as the community.
- A short-term extension to Easter had been discussed with the current café proprietor.

Mr Lambert thanked councillors for giving him the opportunity to speak and then left the meeting.

22/226 Borough and County Councillors' Reports

There were no Borough or County Councillors in attendance.

22/227 Chair's Report

The Chair said that he had just returned from holiday and had caught up on most matters however if anything was outstanding, he asked members to re-email him.

22/228 Clerk's Report

- The Clerk had attended the Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC) Finance Conference with the RFO on 19th October.

22/229 General Matters

New - Items arising since last Full Council meeting				
	Summary	Owner	Created	Status
56/22	Meeting with Cllr Barrington-Johnson and Mr Cornelius regarding LG carpark issues. <i>To be re-organised for November/December.</i>	Clerk	04/07/22	In progress

Ongoing

39/22	Look for new Internal Auditor and write to David Buckett expressing thanks for his work. <i>Letter to David Buckett sent. Contacted neighbouring parishes.</i>	Clerk/RFO	09/05/22	In progress
68/22	Programme of meetings for committees and WGs for '23.	Clerk	05/09/22	In progress
69/22	Liaison with Mr Martin Russell regarding the new position of Pavilion Manager.	Cllr Mrs Lyle	05/09/22	Complete
71/22	Obtain professional advice on energy efficiency at the pavilion.	Chair/Cllrs Rowe and Mrs Lyle	05/09/22	In progress
73/22	Vacancy candidate interviews.	Chair/Cllrs Mrs Lyle/Rajah	05/09/22	In progress
78/22	Talk to friends/neighbours in parish about cllr vacancies.	All councillors	03/10/22	Complete
79/22	Contact an individual with experience of IR35 to check Pavilion Manager contract.	Cllr Mrs Lyle	03/10/22	Complete
80/22	Send invitation to cllrs to view the SPC shared calendar.	Assist Clerk CB	03/10/22	Complete
81/22	Confirm details for attendance at Remembrance Sunday services in Ashurst, LG, Old Groombridge and Speldhurst.	Cllrs Mrs Soyke, Barrington-Johnson, Norton and Curry	03/10/22	Complete
82/22	Finalise and distribute e-newsletter.	Assist Clerk CB	03/10/22	In progress
83/22	Invite SPC app'nted LGVH trustee to attend council mtgs.	Clerk	03/10/22	Complete
84/22	Write follow up letter to County Cllr McInroy regarding funding for Ukrainian pupils at Speldhurst school.	Cllr Curry/Cllr Rowe/Clerk	03/10/22	Complete
85/22	Request County Cllr McInroy attend next Full Council.	Cllr Curry	03/10/22	Complete
86/22	Make donation to the Mayor's Toy Appeal.	RFO	04/11/22	
87/22	Include item on Finance Committee agenda regarding where the Accounts for Payment item should sit.	Clerk/RFO	04/11/22	
88/22	Extend Pavilion Café licence until 31/03/23.	Pav Man Cttee	04/11/22	
89/22	Confirm appointment of Pavilion Building Manager.	Pav Man Cttee	04/11/22	
90/22	Confirm SPC representatives on Pavilion Review and set up initial meeting.	Clerk	04/11/22	
91/22	Discuss Energy Contract for 2024 with Broker.	Chair	04/11/22	
92/22	Promote council vacancy.	All	04/11/22	
93/22	Set up meeting of APM WG and invite Cllr Norton to join.	Clerk/Chair	04/11/22	
94/22	Confirm appointment of Cllr Mrs Soyke as SPC Trustee for Ashurst Village Hall.	Clerk	04/11/22	
95/22	Send invitations for Christmas Reception.	Clerk	04/11/22	
96/22	Confirm with KCC Highways to start TRO for double yellow lines at Cobhams/Ferbies.	Clerk	04/11/22	
97/22	Purchase and installation of horse warning signs.	Highways WG	04/11/22	
98/22	Adoption of Amenities ToFR and update website.	Asst Clerk (KH)	04/11/22	
99/22	Update Highways ToFR to include Footpaths.	Highways WG	04/11/22	
100/22	Confirm with Landscape Services to start work on the installation of the path behind the ball net on LGRG.	Asst Clerk (KH)	04/11/22	
101/22	Instruct Quaife Woodlands to carry out action-only survey on trees in the parish.	Asst Clerk (KH)	04/11/22	
102/22	Start process of re-wilding Groombridge Green.	Env WG	04/11/22	

22/230 Finance Committee – Report by Cllr Ellery:

- a) **Report by the Chair:** A meeting of the Finance Committee had been held on 11th October (the draft minutes of which had been circulated), the main item for discussion at the meeting having been the 2023/24 budget.
- b) **Report on budget virements and request that the virements listed be approved:** There were none.
- c) **Report on interim payments made since the last meeting:** Unity Bank Acct: £458.88 NEST pension payment; £304.59 to pay Mastercard; £48.00 monthly salary admin; £272.82 Cloudy IT; £570 Agrifactors (last payment); £220.39 Veolia (recycling); £2,130.00 BeSure Emergency Lighting repairs; £26.28 BT mobile. Mastercard: £9.00 UTB card charges; £47.23* Van petrol; £24.00* LGRG garden sacks; £232.80* Defib battery.
- d) Decisions made under delegated authority are starred* above.
- e) It was **RESOLVED** to grant £100 to the Mayor's Toy Appeal.
- f) Initial budget discussions for 2023/24: The RFO had circulated a report on the budget discussions held at the Finance Committee. An increase of 6.7% was proposed which equates to £177,890. Members were asked for their views on this figure and the general view was that it is reasonable in the current climate however once the tax base was known, a clearer picture could be obtained. This increase wouldn't take into account the increased pavilion overheads which would result in a substantial deficit for the pavilion finances. The next meeting of the Finance Committee was to be held on 23rd November at which point the budget figure would be finalised and a recommendation made to Full Council to agree the precept.

22/231 Accounts for Payment – RESOLVED that the invoices as listed and verified by Cllr Rajah, be paid. The Clerk was asked to check the correct payee for payment reference MT2366. Cllr Ellery requested that the Accounts for Payment be included under the Finance Committee item on future agendas.

Payee Name	Reference	Amount £	Detail
Langton Green Charitable Trust	MT2366	23.13	Meeting Rooms
m:power accounting	MT2346	48.00	Salary admin
JLM Pest Control	MT2347	230.00	Pest Control LGRG & Pavilion Tate
Fencing Ltd	MT2348	235.69	Fencing LGRG
Cloudy IT	MT2349	272.82	IT services
Tivoli	MT2350	840.00	Canine Refuse collection
Viking Direct	MT2351	108.55	Stationery
Langton Green Charitable Trust	MT2352	50.00	Underlease
Streetlights	MT2353	26.52	Maintenance contract
Langton Life	MT2354	375.00	Bi-monthly advert
Sevenoaks District Council	MT2355	180.00	Pavilion Licensing
Treework	MT2356	552.00	Tree fell The Boundary, Langton
Green Charitable Trust	MT2357	36.13	Meeting Rooms
SLCC	MT2358	171.00	Membership KH
SLCC	MT2359	171.00	Membership CB
Kate Harman	MT2360	25.00	Expenses
C May	MT2361	23.40	Expenses
Catherine Barrett	MT2362	34.65	Expenses
Katie Neve	MT2363	27.00	Expenses
HMRC	MT2364	1,076.78	Tax & NI
N.E.S.T. Pension Scheme	DD	415.89	Pension payments
JS Facilities Management	MT2367	178.50	Pavilion cleaning
KCS Professional Services	DD	74.15	Photocopier
Employees	MT2365	4,500.52	Salaries
UK Debt Management Office	DD	2,511.60	PWLB repayment
Veolia	DD	213.68	Recycling
Total:		£12,401.01	

22/232 Planning Committee – report by Cllr Rajah:

A meeting of the Planning Committee had been held on 17th October when 23 applications had been considered, all with members agreeing to remain neutral. A query had been raised with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC) who had confirmed that an additional plot of land adjacent to site 231 was not designated for development.

22/233 Langton Green Recreation Ground (LGRG) – report by Cllr Mrs Lyle:

- a) **To receive a report from the Pavilion Management Working Group:** The café proprietor was not in a position to increase her licence fee. It was recognised by members that the café is run for minimum return, mainly for the benefit it offers to the community with regular events organised for parents, young families and the elderly in addition to providing local employment. Cllr Mrs Lyle had discussed the possibility of an extension to the licence until Easter as the upcoming pavilion overheads are currently unknown and to give the café proprietor certainty to book events for the coming months, and what measures could be taken to reduce electricity usage or increase revenue for SPC. It was **RESOLVED** that the existing pavilion licensee's contract be extended to 31st March 2023 subject to some amendments to the licence which Cllr Mrs Lyle would bring to the next Full Council meeting.
- b) **To confirm the contract of the manager for the Pavilion.** It was **RESOLVED** to engage Mr Martin Russell for services in relation to Pavilion Building Management with effect from 1st January 2023.
- c) **Update on the investigation into the energy efficiency of the boiler.** Investigations were currently underway to establish when the majority of energy is used in the pavilion with both the Groundsman and café proprietor taking daily meter readings, in an effort to calculate where savings can be made.
- d) **To consider who the SPC representation should be in the requested review of the operation and occupation of the pavilion.** It was **RESOLVED** that Cllrs Curry and Rowe be the SPC representatives on the review panel in addition to the RFO (for the initial two meetings only) and should it be necessary, Cllr Barrington-Johnson would replace Cllr Rowe on the panel from February 2023. In addition, the Clerk would provide secretarial assistance to the panel. Cllrs Mrs Lyle provided copies of the head lease, sub lease and management agreement for the Clerk to circulate.
- e) **To consider a blend and extend energy contract from 2024.** It was **RESOLVED** that the Chair would discuss this product with Energy Pal for further information and advice before the matter is considered further.

22/234 Vacancy on the Council

The co-option period for the vacancy had expired on 31st October 2022. Only one application had been received who would be interviewed w/c 7th November. Councillors were asked to speak to friends and family within the parish about the vacancy which would remain vacant until a new councillor had been co-opted.

22/235 Annual Parish Meeting 2022

Greg Clark MP had agreed to be the guest speaker at the APM on Thursday 18th May 2023 at 7/7.30pm. The APM would be held in Langton Green Village Hall as Speldhurst Village Hall was unavailable. A working group consisting of Cllrs Curry and Scarbrough and one other would work towards preparing for the meeting. The Chair would invite Cllr Norton to join the working group.

22/236 Appointed Trustee to Ashurst Village Hall – It was **RESOLVED** that Cllr Mrs Soyke would remain the SPC appointed Trustee for Ashurst Village Hall.

22/237 Procedures during a National Period of Mourning – It was **RESOLVED** to adopt the procedures carried out following the death of HRH The Queen.

22/238 December Full Council Meeting – It was **RESOLVED** to invite the following to the SPC Christmas drinks: councillors (including county and borough), ex-councillors who had resigned during the year as well as members of working groups.

22/239 Office hours over the Christmas period – It was **RESOLVED** to close the parish office from 23rd December to 2nd January inclusive, reopening on 3rd January 2023.

22/240 Working Group (WG) and other Reports: to include any meetings held since the last Full Council meeting, the draft minutes having previously been forwarded to all Members

- a) **Governance WG:** A meeting would be held on 9th November.
- b) **Highways WG:** Cllr Barrington-Johnson reported the following:
 - A meeting had been held on 2nd November.
 - Mr Ed Langridge had given a debrief of his meeting and walk around the parish with the West Kent Highways Improvements Programme Manager from Kent County Council (KCC).
 - The feasibility of double-yellow lines at the entrances to both Cobhams and Ferbies in Speldhurst had been agreed. KCC will now carry out a public consultation which would need to be part-funded by SPC. It was **RESOLVED** to spend up to £3K (I need to check if this was £1,500) towards a public consultation on double-yellow lines being installed at the entrances to Cobhams and Ferbies, Speldhurst.
 - The hazard of horse riders on public roads was discussed when two members of the public attended the Highways WG who ride horses regularly in the parish. The Highways WG were recommending four signs be put up at various hotspots around the parish reminding motorists to be wary of horse riders. Increasing the number of mirrors would be investigated further. It was **RESOLVED** to spend up to £100 on temporary road signs.
- c) **Amenities WG:** Cllr Mrs Lyle reported the following:
 - A meeting had been held on 7th October.
 - Amenities Terms of Reference: It was **RESOLVED** to adopt the Amenities Terms of Reference on recommendation of the Amenities WG. The reference to Footpaths would be removed.
 - Footpaths: It was **RESOLVED** that Footpaths would be removed from the Amenities WG and added to the Highways WG Terms of Reference when they were next reviewed.
 - Additional cost for a path behind the ball net on LGRG: It was **RESOLVED** to pay an additional £563.03 towards the installation of a path to run adjacent to the ball net on the LGRG.
 - Instruction for tree specialist to carry out survey on parish trees: It was **RESOLVED** to instruct Quaife Woodlands to carry out an action-only survey on the trees in the parish.
- d) **Air Traffic WG:** There was nothing to report.
- e) **Environment WG:** The Clerk reported the following:
 - A meeting had been held on 10th October.
 - Rewilding of The Green, Groombridge: It was **RESOLVED** in principle to rewild sections of Groombridge Green in an attempt to improve its biodiversity.
- f) **KALC:** The Chair advised the KALC AGM would be held on the 19th November in Ditton and if anyone wished to attend they should let the Clerk know.

22/241 Diary Dates – The following dates were noted:

- 9th November – Governance Working Group
- 14th November – Planning Committee
- 23rd November – Finance Committee
- 5th December – Full Council – SPVH – 7pm start
- 12th December – Planning Committee

22/242 Items for Information:

- Electoral System Consultation: an invitation had been received from TWBC to respond to a consultation which opens on 23rd November. It was agreed that the information would be advertised on SPC's social media, encouraging residents to respond.
- Response from KCC regarding funding for Ukrainian pupils: Councillors said that they were very disappointed with the response received from KCC which did not answer any of the questions raised in SPC's letter and inferred that in asking the questions, SPC were breaking the law.
- Boundary Commission review, Tunbridge Wells: this was on hold until TWBC had decided whether to change its electoral cycle.

There being no further items the meeting closed at 9.15pm.

Chair