



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

Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on Monday 12th April 2021 at 7.30pm
Conducted online via Zoom electronic communication

MEMBERS PRESENT

Cllrs Barrington-Johnson (Chairman), Mrs Soyke, Mrs Lyle, Mrs Woodliffe, Pate, Ellery, Rowe, Turner, Scarbrough, Rajah, Langridge and Myles. Cllr Mrs Podbury joined the meeting at 8.20pm.

OFFICERS PRESENT

Mr C May – Clerk and Mrs K Harman – Assistant Clerk

IN ATTENDANCE

Apologies had been received from County Cllr McInroy and Borough Cllrs Ms Willis and Stanyer.

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were two members of the public present.

21/066 Welcome by the Chairman

Cllr Barrington-Johnson welcomed everyone to the meeting.

A minutes silence was then held in remembrance of HRH Prince Philip The Duke of Edinburgh

It was agreed that SPC's condolence book for HRH Prince Philip would be online due to the restrictions of the pandemic and that it would link into TWBC's condolence book.

21/067 To enquire if anyone intends to record the meeting

No-one present intended to record the meeting.

21/068 To accept and approve apologies and reasons for absence

There were none.

21/069 Disclosure of Interests

Cllr Mrs Lyle declared an interest in 21/075h) - grant request from Langton Green Primary School - she is a Governor at the school.

21/070 Declarations of Lobbying

There were none.

21/071 Minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 1st March 2021.

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

21/072 Borough and County Councillors' Reports

Cllr Mrs Soyke reported that she had been advised by an officer at TWBC that she was unable to continue in her role as Borough Councillor with immediate effect. Councillors agreed it was a very unsatisfactory way to treat an outgoing member who had contributed so much to the Borough Council for so many years.

21/073 Public Open Session

There were two members of the public present – Mr Garry Saunders who did not wish to speak but was attending to receive an update on parish news and one other who also did not wish to speak.

21/074 Clerk's Report

The Clerk reported the following:

- a) Staff hoped to start working in the office after the Easter break following a risk assessment and it was envisaged that initially no more than two clerks would be in the office at any one time.
- b) An appeal had been raised by the landlord of the Speldhurst Community Shop and Post Office against the Community Right to Bid application. This was being reviewed by a TWBC committee.
- c) The Finance Committee had made a recommendation to Full Council that Cloudy IT should be employed to improve IT efficiency once satisfactory clarification had been received regarding SPC's data should it wish to cancel the contract at a later date, and confirmation regarding SPC's existing Microsoft 365 licence. The clerk had clarified these points, but councillors expected to see a contract. He was asked to forward a copy of a contract to Cllrs Rajah and Ellery before the initial payment to Cloudy IT is made. Cllr Mrs Lyle thanked Cllr Rajah for progressing the project.

21/075 Finance Committee – Report by Cllr Mrs Lyle

- a) A meeting of the Finance Committee had been held on 29th March and draft minutes were circulated.
- b) Report on budget virements: It was agreed at the Finance Meeting to recommend to Full Council that a transfer be made to the pavilion EMR account for £10,000. For bookkeeping purposes this was made in the previous financial year, so the request to Full council was in effect retrospective. **RESOLVED** that the virement made for £10,000 into the Pavilion RRIM account in the financial year ending 31st March 2021 be approved.
- c) Report on interim payments made since the last meeting: there were none.
- d) Report on decisions made under delegated authority: there were none.
- e) Cllr Mrs Lyle thanked the clerk for his hard work finalising the mandates for bank signatories and the clerk requested that the signatories were detailed in the minutes:
 - Unity Trust Bank: Cllrs Barrington-Johnson; Mrs Soyke; Mrs Lyle, Mrs Woodliffe and Rowe.
 - HSBC: Cllrs Barrington-Johnson; Mrs Soyke; Mrs Lyle, Rowe and Mr C May (Clerk).
 - Hampshire Trust Bank: Cllrs Barrington-Johnson; Mrs Lyle, Rowe and Mr C May (Clerk).
 - Cambridge Building Society: Cllrs Barrington-Johnson; Mrs Soyke; Rowe and Mr C May (Clerk).
- f) **RESOLVED** to contribute up to £15,000 to jointly fund with KCC the reduction in speed limits from 50mph to 40mph on the A264 towards Ashurst and on the B2110 towards Groombridge, on the recommendation of the Highways Committee. Cllr Pate and the clerk were thanked for their hard work and perseverance achieving results on this project.
- g) **RESOLVED** to purchase a mini-SID at a cost of £3,000 with data collecting capability on the recommendation of the Highways Committee.
- h) **RESOLVED** to grant £10,000 to Langton Green Primary School, on the recommendation of the Finance Committee, to purchase and winter-proof a yurt for the community's use to enable the provision of wellbeing support and care services.

- i) **RESOLVED** to grant £10,000 to Speldhurst Primary School towards outside play equipment and that the money is paid when the project is to commence.

Cllr Ellery followed up on a request made at a recent Finance Committee meeting for the clerk to compile a grant register to enable the parish council to be fully transparent with grant awarding information. The Clerk said that it was a project that would be completed when time allowed.

He also advised members that Speldhurst Village Hall anticipated applying for a grant for a contribution towards refurbishment of the toilet facilities.

21/076 Accounts for Payment

RESOLVED to pay the invoices as listed with the exception of Cloudy IT which would be paid once Cllrs Ellery and Rajah were content their contract with SPC was satisfactory:

Payee Name	Ref.	Amount £	Detail
ACRK	SO	80.00	Annual Membership
Knockout Print	MT1985	76.80	Road signs
Cloudy IT	MT1986	1,596.00	Set up/training/support
M R Lawrence	MT1987	170.00	Mowing
M R Lawrence	MT1988	180.00	Mowing
Dave's Computer Repairs	MT1989	56.25	IT support
KALC	MT1990	1,944.00	Annual membership
Simon Goacher	MT1991	463.90	Payroll services
C May	MT1992	142.90	Expenses
Employees	MT1993	3,905.49	Salaries
N.E.S.T. Pension Scheme	MT1994	175.80	Pensions
EDF Energy	DD	322.00	Pavilion - electricity
Castle Water	DD	30.00	Pavilion water
Veolia	DD	172.60	Recycling
Total:		£9,315.74	

21/077 Langton Green Recreation Ground (LGRG)

- a) Cllr Mrs Lyle reported on behalf of the Pavilion Management Committee. Works were underway by the Groundsman to maintain the exterior of the pavilion and the café proprietor had started providing a takeaway service.
- b) Approval of SPC Pavilion Ltd accounts: **RESOLVED** that the accounts for 2018-2019 were ratified and the accounts for 2019-2020 be approved.
- c) Traffic management and the installation of grid matting to alleviate parking: this matter was progressing however there was currently nothing to report.
- d) Improvements to the pathway from Lampington Row to the LGRG: this matter was being dealt with jointly with the rubber matting installation. It was anticipated that both projects would progress soon with something to report at the next meeting. Whilst the dryer weather had alleviated the problem for the time being, it was hoped that a longer-term resolution could be achieved by September.
- e) Drainage project update: there was nothing to report.

Cllr Mrs Podbury joined the meeting at 8.20pm.

21/078 Future Meetings of the Council

- a) The Government's dispensation to allow electronic meetings ends on 6th May. It was therefore **RESOLVED** to bring forward the date of the Annual Statutory Meeting of the Parish from Monday 10th May to Wednesday 5th May to enable the meeting to be held by video.

- b) The Chairman explained that there was currently an appeal to the High Court for a ruling to allow virtual meetings to continue and it was hoped this could be achieved. There was much discussion between members regarding the parish council's options to hold public meetings legally whilst respecting all individual's wishes regarding attending meetings in person, should the ruling not be obtained. It was **RESOLVED** that the Chairman would investigate the timings of the high court ruling and that the June Full Council meeting would in principle be deferred to allow time for a considered decision on how to hold meetings to be made.
- c) It was **RESOLVED** that a response to the Government's consultation on remote meetings be delegated to the Governance Committee and noted that SPC supports the need to continue to allow the flexibility of being able to use electronic meetings after the 6th May deadline.

21/079 Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Local Plan

The clerk advised that the pre-submission consultation was live and the Chairman said that it was an opportunity for new comments to be made whilst all comments made in the last consultation were still valid.

21/080 Parish Council Vehicle

The clerk advised that the electronic vehicle obtained on a trial basis from KCC was unsuitable for the council's needs and had therefore been returned. A more suitable vehicle had been offered however it was agreed that it would not be sensible to participate in the trial again in the short term and the clerk was asked to inform KCC that SPC may be interested in trialling an electric van at some point in the future when a replacement van was being investigated.

21/081 Vacancy for Clerk's Position

The clerk updated councillors on the current position and it was hoped a recommendation to fill the post would be made by the working group at the May meeting.

21/082 Annual Parish Meeting

There were uncertainties regarding the format of the meeting which was awaiting a decision on virtual meetings being extended and also the provisionally booked speaker, Matthew Scott, Police and Crime Commissioner, being re-elected. A decision would therefore be delayed until the beginning of May once more information was known.

21/083 Newsletter

A draft newsletter had been circulated which councillors commended. The clerk made a recommendation that the publication of the newsletter be delayed for a month so that information on the new chairman and new clerk could be included.

21/084 Chairman's Report

- The Chairman advised members that it was Cllr Mrs Podbury's last meeting with SPC. He went on to thank her on behalf of the parish council for all her hard work and commitment during the last 16 years and said that she would be greatly missed. Cllr Mrs Podbury responded by saying that whilst her term had involved a lot of hard work, she had enjoyed her time with SPC. Elections would be on the 6th May and she would remain as Mayor with non-voting rights until the 26th May.
- The Parish Chairmen's meeting had contained a briefing on the TW agreement which was now in place and he had circulated a summary. He said that it was now particularly important to identify applications which could potentially be contentious so that the parish council could act if necessary.

21/085 Committee Reports to include any Committee Meetings held since the last Full Council Meeting, the Draft Minutes having been previously forwarded to all Members.

- a) **Governance:** Cllr Mrs Lyle advised that there had not been a meeting since the last Full Council meeting however a meeting was planned for 26th April to review the AGAR.
- b) **Planning:** Cllr Ellery updated members on the decisions made at the last planning committee meeting which was held on the 15th March. He reported that he was unwell and could not attend the meeting and site visit, which had been held jointly with Rusthall Parish Council (RPC,) regarding the recently granted application at Jockey Farm which both PCs had objected to. He asked Cllr Barrington-Johnson to report who said that SPC and RPC had agreed to jointly write a letter to Greg Clark MP. He had also attended a recent presentation on the Local Plan by TWBC with the clerk, who was asked to enquire when the recording would be circulated so that members could watch it. Councillors agreed that the meeting with Martin Homes regarding Burrswood in Groombridge on 27th April would be hosted by SPC to allow members of the public to attend via zoom electronic communication.
Planning application 21/00674/TPO Little Stonewall, Speldhurst Road Langton Green, Tunbridge Wells was considered. Decision: Remain neutral, leave to Tree Officer.
- c) **Highways:** Cllr Pate said that work was underway on the Highways Improvement Plan (HIP). He thanked Cllr Langridge for his work putting up speed signs around the parish which were proving to be effective. **RESOLVED** that the Terms of Reference for the Highways Committee be adopted.
Cllr Mrs Podbury advised that the PCSO had attended the RPC meeting and he had said that the police would attend Speedwatch sessions with them. The Clerk said that a Speedwatch session held last week on Langton Road had reported 85 cars travelling above the speed limit. He said that Cllr Pate had reported this to CSU who had engaged with the Police. Councillors agreed that they would welcome the PCSO working alongside the SPC Speedwatch team.
- d) **Amenities:** Cllr Rowe advised that a meeting had been held on the 27th March primarily to discuss issues relating to The Green at Langton Green. Further investigations were being undertaken to clarify SPC's responsibilities regarding maintenance works in that area.
- e) **Air Traffic:** There was nothing to report.
- f) **Footpaths:** Cllr Langridge advised that the operating procedures for carrying out repairs to footpaths and stiles had been changed by KCC due to insurance liabilities. Parish councils were now being asked to be the 'eyes and ears' only in reporting works required however they were no longer able to carry out repairs themselves. It was agreed that a backup plan would be needed to ensure repairs are actually done because councillors felt it unlikely that KCC would have the funds to do so themselves.
- g) **Environment Working Group:** Cllr Turner said that public membership of the working group was currently being established and it was hoped a meeting would be held in May. He had attended a training session on the Green Agenda for local councils and was now hoping to be able to calculate SPC's energy footprint.
- h) **KALC:** there was nothing to report.

21/086 Covid Compliance

Cllr Mrs Lyle suggested that LGCSA should be asked to carry out a risk assessment for their use of the pavilion. Cllr Mrs Woodliffe said that she was the Covid Officer for LGCSA and would ensure the request is actioned. The clerk said that the football club had new goal posts which were too big to fit in the containers and were therefore being tethered to prevent them from being stolen. Councillors clarified that SPC's insurance liability did not cover the football club's equipment and that it would be up to LGCSA to ensure they were fully protected.

RESOLVED that the meeting continue after 9.30pm by all members.

21/087 Items for Information:

- Cllr Rowe advised that a Speldhurst resident was spearheading installation of fast speed broadband into the village and that residents could sign up without obligation to receive further information. Cllr Rajah advised that he had recently successfully obtained the service for Stockland Green residents and offered advice if required.

There being no further items the meeting closed at 9.39 pm.

Chairman