

Local Government Act 1972



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

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING

Held at 7.30 pm on Tuesday 7th April 2026 in Ashurst Village Hall.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Cllrs Curry (Chair), Barrington-Johnson, Cleaver, Dickens (Vice Chair), Ellery, Leach, Farley.

OFFICERS PRESENT

Helen Chater (HC) Clerk and Alison Dry (AD) Parish Council Administrator (Minutes).

IN ATTENDANCE

Borough Cllr Sharratt was in attendance. Apologies had been received from County Cllr Moreland and Borough Cllr Sankey.

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Four members of the public were present.

60/26 TO ENQUIRE IF ANYONE INTENDS TO RECORD THE MEETING

The Chair advised that the Clerk and Administrator had commenced an audio recording to assist with the accuracy of the minutes. Attendees were reminded that recordings may be requested via Freedom of Information.

61/26 TO ACCEPT AND APPROVE APOLOGIES AND REASONS FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Cllrs Norton, Tarricone and Turner (holiday) and Cllr Littlefield due (parental duties). It was Resolved to accept the apologies.

62/26 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest.

63/26 DECLARATIONS OF LOBBYING

There were no declarations of lobbying.

64/26 MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 3RD MARCH 2026

It was **RESOLVED** to approve that the minutes, previously forwarded to Members, be confirmed as a correct record and would be signed by the Chair at the end of the meeting.

65/26 PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

No members of the public wished to speak.

66/26 BOROUGH AND COUNTY COUNCILLORS' REPORTS

Cllr Jayne Sharratt reported:

- Her appointment as Women and Girls Champion for Violence Against Women and Girls
- Ongoing work to improve safety and security in communications.
- A new initiative includes the development of a Domestic Abuse Housing Policy as housing services are often the first point of contact for individuals seeking support.
- Securing of additional funding for the Langton Green end of the cycle path potentially enabling a new pedestrian crossing near the school.
- Completion of the Local Government Reorganisation consultation; implementation details are awaited, expected Summer 2026.
- Introduction of new geographic arrangements by Government in other parts of the country, with the right of intervention reserved.
- The Tunbridge Wells Literary Festival, taking place in May.
- A community event scheduled for Sunday 3 May, 10.00 am – 5.00 pm
- Local elections will take place on 7th May 202
- Cllr Alex Britcher-Allan is not standing for re-election.

A correction was noted to Cllr Sankey's previous report: Cllr Sharratt is a member of the Asylum Seeker and Migration Working Group, not Cllr Britcher-Allan. The Group is reviewing its structure to encourage greater interaction. The report was **noted**.

County Council Update – Cllr Moreland (read by the Clerk)

Short Focused Inquiry into Water Outages

The inquiry is ongoing. Some parish councils have reported non-receipt of the questionnaire; the Chair confirmed receipt.

Langton Green – Rusthall – Commons Active Travel Route

Additional funding has been secured to progress design work.

Community Transport Scheme – Ashurst

Progress is currently stalled due to insufficient volunteer drivers. Parish assistance may be required to support recruitment.

Borough Council Update – Cllr Sankey (read by the Chair)

The Crowborough Camp. Asylum Seekers & Refugees Working Group (meeting held 1 April)

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council convened the first meeting of the new cross-party Working Group. With the purpose to establish consistent processes and guidance for Councillors to respond to resident enquiries.

Cllrs Sharratt and Sankey are members.

Agreed actions to be developed:

- Formal flow chart outlining how the Home Office engages with the Council on potential accommodation sites.
- Clear guidance for councillors on handling resident enquiries
- Operational update on the Crowborough site (from the Community Safety Officer):
- Current occupancy: just over 240 residents.
- Transport arranged by the Home Office, mainly to Crawley where support services are available.
- Protest activity has decreased; none scheduled over Easter.
- Capacity remains capped at 540; average stay approximately 80 days.

- No recent public order or criminality issues reported.
- Regular visits by local authority and police continue.
- Nearby residents invited to organised site visits; feedback positive.
- Limited wider impact observed for Tunbridge Wells.

Summary:

Site operating steadily with gradual increase in occupancy and no significant concerns at present.

Next Working Group meeting scheduled for end of April unless urgent issues arise.

The Pig at Groombridge

- A recent petition has raised concerns about a perceived slowdown in development at Groombridge Place.
- Several residents contacted the council; discussions held with the planning officer, the petitioner, and the applicant.
- Applicant previously wrote to the Council thanking officers for support and confirming next steps lie with them.
- Project remains active and is progressing.
- Additional elements are being considered (confidential at present) and are thought to be positive.
- Overall reassurance that the scheme continues to move forward.

67/26 LANGTON GREEN RECREATION GROUND (LGRG)

To receive an update on the progress of the Independent Review for the Pavilion.

- The chair confirmed that the current operators of Langton's Café had signed the 6th-month extension to the hire agreement.

To consider the final bid document.

- The chair confirmed the final bid document had been approved by Langton Green Community Sports Association. It was **RESOLVED** to approve the bid document for circulation to interested parties.

To consider granting delegated authority to the Pavilion Review Working Group to respond to questions from potential providers.

- It was **RESOLVED** to delegate authority to the working group to respond to bidder enquiries going forward.

Situation update on Leather Jackets.

The Chair gave an overview of LGCSA's report and a letter from Agrifactors, which had previously been circulated to Councillors in the folder:

- Evidence shows the nematodes have successfully halted the leatherjacket larvae. Early signs of new grass germination is visible.
- The weather has been favourable; further warm and wet conditions are needed for recovery.
- The recovery effort is progressing better than expected.
- Approximately three-quarters of the Rec remains unplayable for football.
- Ashurst Place area remains in good condition.
- Recovering areas must remain closed for some time, even under best-case scenarios.

Financial Position

- LGCSA is facing increased costs due to relocating April and May activity to Bennett School (£100/hour).
- Loss of expected income from Saturday morning café as a result of disrupted use of the Rec.
- All-girls fiesta planned for 6–7 June has been cancelled, resulting in significant financial loss.
- A reduced Langton Green teams-only event is still planned for 30–31 May, using undamaged areas, to mitigate losses.

- Future financial planning now assumes additional leatherjacket prevention treatments will be required in mid-May and early September to avoid recurrence next season.
- The overall financial situation remains challenging, following four months of weather-related washouts.
- Concerns have been raised about long-term viability of providing winter recreational opportunities if such conditions become the norm

Energy

There had been no recent updates from E.ON regarding the promised site visit. LGCSA follow-up action to be taken.

68/26 CLERK'S REPORT

The report circulated in the Councillors' folder was noted. Key points included

- **Approval** of carry-over of unused annual leave due to staffing pressures.
- Booking of a Councillor to attend the NALC Annual Conference.
- CPR training scheduled for 6 May. Offered to Councillors and LGCSA first
- Completion of year-end accounts.
- **Approval** to publicise links to agendas and minutes via Facebook.
- Safety concerns at Winstone Scott Avenue reported to relevant authorities.
- Approval of event signage for Groombridge May Fair.
- B2Runners request to hold a fun run around the Pavilion. LGCSA have been included in the decision-making considerations. **Approved**
- A request received from Groombridge to place event signage for the Groombridge May Fair on Old Groombridge Green. **Approved**

69/26 GENERAL MATTERS

These had been previously circulated to councillors in the folder.

	Existing	Owner	Created	Status
13/26	Assess grass roots approach to mobile speed cameras.	Chair	02/02/26	In progress
15/26	Complete staff appraisals.	Clerk/Chair	02/02/26	Complete
18/26	Review IT and WhatsApp policies at next Fin & Gov meeting. This needed further work so was deferred to Full Council April	Fin & Gov Cttee/Clerk	02/02/26	In progress
20/26	Remove and add bank signatories.	Clerk	02/02/26	Complete
21/26	Circulate County and Borough Cllr reports and Community Hub update to councillors.	Clerk	02/03/26	Complete
22/26	Confirm extension of short-term hire agreement.	Clerk	02/03/26	Complete
23/26	Progress pitch repair with LGCSA.	Clerk	02/03/28	Complete
24/26	Circulate APM timetable and layout to councillors.	Clerk/Admin	02/03/26	Complete
25/26	Sign lease for Speldhurst Chapel and return to Solicitors.	Clerk/Cllrs Curry/Dickens	02/03/26	Complete
26/26	Publicise the Great British Spring Clean.	Admin	02/03/26	Complete

The Chair queried item 13/26 but confirmed he would consult with the Chair of the Highways Committee to complete this action.

70/26 COMMITTEE AND WORKING GROUPS (WG) AND OTHER REPORTS

a) **Highways Committee**

No meeting since 23rd February 2026.

b) **Amenities Committee**

No meeting since 23rd March 2026.

- The Clerk reported that Cllr Turner had asked the Council to consider allowing NaturePlus to install a board promoting their work on the flower meadow, as a quid pro quo for the work they had carried out. It was agreed that a reasonable-sized board may be installed for one year, covering the full seasonal cycle of the meadow.
- Councillors were asked to consider installing a path to the basketball court entrance, which becomes muddy during bad weather.

Quotes received:

Capel Fencing – £2,714

Elm Fencing – £2,055

The quotes are not like for like so will be investigated and reported back to Finance and Governance Committee 27th April. The need to create a pathway was acknowledged and **approved**.

c) **Environment Working Group (EWG)**

The next meeting would be held on Wednesday 29th April.

d) **Gatwick Airport**

It was **Resolved** that a revised letter regarding Gatwick Airport be sent subject to agreed amendments.

e) **KALC**

The Chair reported that he had been nominated as the new parish member of the Tunbridge Wells Audit Committee. The role doesn't carry voting rights but includes responsibility for monitoring conduct and issuing sanctions where appropriate.

71/26 FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 March 2026 were noted. Reports on budget monitoring, interim payments, policy approvals, insurance, and delegated authority were received and approved where required
Cllr Cleaver had been appointed as the new Chair

- a) All Interim Payments made since the last meeting were **approved**

Unity Trust Account:

Date Paid	Payee Name	Reference	Amount paid £	Transaction Detail
10/03/2026	BT PLC	DD	28.64	Office mobile
16/03/2026	Unity Trust Mastercard	Transfer	327.78	To take Unity card to zero balance
11/03/2026	N.E.S.T	DD	651.19	Employee pensions
11/03/2026	Octopus	DD	872.18	Pavilion Electricity
31/03/2026	Unity Trust bank	DD	0.30	Bank Charges
31/03/2026	Unity Trust Bank	DD	11.50	Bank Charges

Unity Trust Mastercard

Date Paid	Payee Name	Reference	Amount paid £	Transaction Detail
25/03/2026	TV Licensing	MC519	174.50	TV License for Pavilion

- b) To note decisions made under delegated authority. There were none.
- c) To confirm the council's compliance with the Internal Auditor's recommendations regarding compliance with Assertion 10 of the Practitioners Guide consideration and evidence of a successful test of back-ups by Cloudy IT. Screenshots of successful backs were in the folder for Councillors. The Chair confirmed he was satisfied with the position and there were no further comments. The Clerk confirmed that the Deputy Clerk had completed the fixed asset register which was now fully up to date.
- d) Budget Virement Policy previously in folder. **Approved**
- e) To note the transfer of funds between accounts. No transfers had been made since the last meeting.
- f) To consider the increased insurance premium to cover the revised reinstatement value for the Pavilion. The Chair reported that the insurance valuation had increased, likely due to rising material costs and inflation. Two comparable quotes had been received, and it was agreed that it would be inappropriate to underinsure the Council's assets. Additional premium to cover the new valuation, **approved**
- g) The Chair reminded Councillors of their responsibility to read, review, and understand all council policies, noting that members may be personally liable if they act outside agreed policy. He also offered to run an IT training session on Microsoft 365 for any Councillors who would find this helpful.
- h) To consider an increase in the LGRG pitch maintenance contribution. Quotes for the regular mowing contract were reviewed. It was noted that Agrifactors continue to offer good value for money for all the additional services they provide; 3 additional contractors have been invited to quote. The review is being undertaken as part of due diligence, and it was agreed with LGCSA that there is no issue with seeking updated quotes.
- i) To consider authorising the Deputy Clerk to sign and issue council and committee agendas on behalf of the Clerk whenever necessary. **Approved** in accordance with Local Government Act 1972 schedule 12, it was agreed that the requirement be formally recorded and incorporated into the Council's Standing Orders.
- j) To note Speldhurst Chapel Build Project Final Report which had been circulated in the folder previously.
- k) To consider the approval of updated policies; Park Benches, Signs on Council Land, Weed Control Policy and Winter Weather. **Approved**
- l) To consider the approval of IT, Whatsapp and AI (Artificial Intelligence policies). **Approved**

72/26 ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT

It was **Resolved** to approve the accounts for payment as checked and signed off by Councillor Barrington-Johnson

73/26 UPDATE ON VACANCIES ON THE COUNCIL

No new appointments were reported; expressions of interest continue to be pursued

74/26 ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2026

An update was received in arrangements for the event scheduled for 13th April 2026. The agenda will be available on the website and on the notice boards.

75/26 PLANNING COMMITTEE

An update was received on current planning matters including Burrswood, Ingleside (Speldhurst), and Newlands. The updates were noted.

76/26 DIARY DATES

The following meeting dates were noted:

- 13th April – Annual Parish Meeting (7pm)
- 20th April – Planning Committee

- 27th April – Finance & Governance Committee
- 5th May – Annual Statutory Full Council (**TUESDAY**)

77/26 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

Councillors noted the following correspondence:

- KALC News April 2026
- Funding towards a new kitchen at Speldhurst Village Hall was discussed. The grant application will be resubmitted.
- Clerk to speak with Langton Green Primary School re crossing warning lights near Langton Green Primary School:

No further items were raised, and the meeting ended at 8:29 PM.

Chair