

**Local Government Act 1972**



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

**Minutes of the Full Council Meeting**

**Held on Monday 6<sup>th</sup> February 2023 at 7.30pm in the Committee Room, Speldhurst Village Hall**

---

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Councillors Curry (Chair), Barrington-Johnson, Dooley, Ellery, Norton, Rajah, Scarbrough, Soyke and Tarricone.

**OFFICERS PRESENT**

K Neve, Clerk and C Barrett, Assistant Clerk (minutes).

**IN ATTENDANCE**

County Cllr McInroy and Borough Cllr Sankey were in attendance. Apologies had been received from Borough Cllr Willis.

**MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

There was one member of the public present.

**23/23 Covid Compliance**

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

**23/24 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.

**23/25 To accept and approve apologies and reasons for absence**

Apologies had been received from Cllrs Lyle (away), Rowe (away) and Turner (Covid-related).

**23/26 Disclosure of Interests**

The following declared an interest in item 14 regarding Speldhurst Chapel: Cllrs Curry and Ellery – they had been in communication with Mr Pinnell and Mr Perkins regarding the project. Cllr Ellery was a shareholder in the Speldhurst Community Shop Ltd.

**23/27 Declarations of Lobbying**

There were none.

### **23/28 Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> January 2023**

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

### **23/29 Public Open Session**

The Member of the Public in attendance did not wish to speak.

### **23/30 Borough and County Councillors' Reports**

County Cllr McInroy reported the following:

- The proposed budget for 2023-2024 was scheduled for discussion that week. Savings would be made from a number of areas, most notably a 7% reduction in headcount across Kent County Council (KCC) and a reduction in members' grants. The plan was to rebuild reserves over the next two years. With community services likely to be affected there were a number of public consultations in place and County Cllr McInroy recommended viewing these on the KCC website. KCC would try to save £6million a year by rationalising services, letting go of the buildings used to house them and using outreach buses instead. For example, the services provided by Harmony Children's Centre in Rusthall would still be provided even if the building that housed them was not there. County Cllr McInroy stressed that the county council did not want to take these measures but that they were unavoidable. He would report back after the budget had been finalised.

Borough Cllr Sankey reported the following:

- The Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC) budget was currently being finalised, and Borough Cllr Sankey would report back on the details.
- Borough Cllr Sankey proposed cycle path had been granted money for a feasibility study, and he was pleased to note that this was a result of cross party working. A route had been identified by a Rusthall resident, predominantly across the commons between Langton Green and Tunbridge Wells. The path would start alongside Rusthall common, along to Mount Ephraim on the right-hand side, down to Church Road. Cllr Dooley asked where the path would start, and Borough Cllr Sankey replied that the work was likely to be done in stages, with the path on Mount Ephraim being completed first. Cllr Ellery asked who would get priority at the side road crossings, and Borough Cllr Sankey said that this level of detail would be included in the work of the design feasibility study, but that the laws laid out in the Highway code would of course be followed.

### **23/31 Chair's Report**

- The Chair reported that the Pavilion Review was progressing. The working party were currently looking at the question of rates relief. The approach so far had been to keep costs neutral between Speldhurst Parish Council (SPC) and Langton Green Community Sports Association (LGCSA), but Cllr Curry said that costs would be inevitable in the future, with an increase of approximately £6,000.
- Progress was being made on planning for the Annual Parish Open Meeting and The Chair would give a further update at the next Full Council.
- Staff appraisals had been scheduled, and the Chair asked anyone who had not already done so to provide feedback by 12<sup>th</sup> February 2022.
- There were multiple councillor vacancies to fill at the May elections. It was **RESOLVED** that Cllrs Barrington-Johnson, Dooley, Ellery, Rajah and Tarricone would hold informal discussions with interested candidates to gauge suitability and interest, then encourage those who were still keen to put themselves forward for nomination. It was agreed that if there were more nominees than spaces, those who were unsuccessful could be co-opted onto committees and working groups as members of public.

**23/32 Clerk's Report**

The Clerk reported the following:

- A positive first report had been given by the new Internal Auditor with a few recommendations for consideration by the Governance Committee. The Auditor was impressed with the robust systems in place.
- TWBC was asking town and parish Councils to identify small scale community projects in their localities and submit proposals for UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) Community Grants funding of up to £3,500 by Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> February 2023. The Pocket Park Project would be submitted, and the Clerk asked councillors to advise her of others.
- Greg Clark MP had forwarded a letter received from the Minister for Schools about funding for Ukrainian Students. Both Langton Green and Speldhurst Primary Schools had confirmed that they had now received this funding from KCC.
- County Cllr James McInroy had passed on information about a Community Transport grant. However, the parish council was not in a position to be able to run a bus service.
- The date of the Annual Statutory Full Council meeting would traditionally have been on the 1<sup>st</sup> Monday of May however, as this year there were Bank Holidays on the first two Mondays, it had been moved to Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> May and this was as recommended by the Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC).
- The KALC Elections Bulletin had been included in the councillors' folder, including the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) guidance on Annual Council Meeting Dates For Councils With Elections And The Coronation Bank Holiday. Monday 8<sup>th</sup> May will be an additional bank holiday to mark the coronation of HM King Charles III. The 2023 local election date is Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> May and councillors would ordinarily take office on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> May. NALC's view was that councillors should now take office on Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> May, making the relevant 14-day meeting period for the purposes of paragraph 7 (2) of Schedule 12 to the Local Government Act 1972 Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> May inclusive.

**23/33 General Matters**

<b>New – Items arising since last Full Council Meeting</b>				
	<b>Summary</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Created</b>	<b>Status</b>
<b>10/23</b>	Start informal discussions with potential candidates interested in standing as Parish Cllrs at May elections.	Cllrs Barrington-Johnson, Dooley, Ellery, Rajah & Tarricone/Clerk	060223	TBA
<b>11/23</b>	Appoint Dyno-Rod to mend broken pipe in drain outside Pavilion. Ask them to confirm how they thought the pipe had been damaged.	Clerk	060223	TBA
<b>12/23</b>	Email KALC Award nominations to Chair by 28/02.	All Cllrs	060223	TBA
<b>13/23</b>	Write first version of Spring Newsletter.	Assist Clerk (CB) to liaise with Cllrs Norton/Tarricone	060223	TBA
<b>14/23</b>	Invite QVH Trustees to a future FC meeting.	Clerk	060223	TBA
<b>15/23</b>	Request KCC to replace SID post in Groombridge and chase insurance company for reimbursement.	Clerk	060223	TBA
<b>16/23</b>	Submit response to SE Water Consultation.	Cllr Turner/Clerk	060223	TBA
<b>Ongoing</b>				
	<b>Summary</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Created</b>	<b>Status</b>
<b>71/22</b>	Obtain professional advice on energy efficiency at the pavilion.	Chair/Cllrs Rowe and Mrs Lyle	05/09/22	In progress <b>Closed</b>

82/22	Finalise and distribute e-newsletter.	Assist Clerk CB	03/10/22	<b>Complete</b>
89/22	Confirm appointment of Pavilion Building Manager.	Pav Man Cttee	04/11/22	On hold
93/22	Set up meeting of APM WG and invite Cllr Norton to join.	Clerk/Chair	04/11/22	<b>Complete</b>
97/22	Purchase and installation of horse warning signs.	Highways WG	04/11/22	In progress
99/22	Update Highways ToFR to include Footpaths.	Highways WG	04/11/22	On Agenda <b>Closed</b>
102/22	Start process of re-wilding Groombridge Green.	Env WG	04/11/22	In progress <b>Closed</b>
103/22	Follow up to find out when remaining grant money for Ukrainian students would be paid by central government. <i>Response received. Emailed Schools to find out current situation. They have received funding.</i>	Cllr McInroy	05/12/22	<b>Complete</b>
104/22	Chase up on the possibility of funding for a parish-run school bus. <i>Response received. Community Bus Service Grant available. SPC not in a position to run service themselves.</i>	Cllr McInroy	05/12/22	<b>Complete</b>
105/22	Respond to South East Water Consultation.	Cllr Turner	05/12/22	<b>Complete</b>
1/23	Write to county and borough councillors asking for their attendance at meetings and a briefing report.	Clerk	09/01/23	<b>Complete</b>
2/23	Notify TWBC of SPC's precept.	Clerk/RFO	09/01/23	<b>Complete</b>
3/23	Replace heating system at Pavilion.	Cllrs Curry/Lyle	09/01/23	In progress
4/23	Nomination for the KALC Award to the Clerk.	All Cllrs	09/01/23	Delegated To Chr/Clrk <b>Closed</b>
5/23	Response to Kent Fire & Rescue and ask residents to ask if they are interested in attending fire safety talk.	Asst Clerks (KH/CB)	09/01/23	<b>Complete</b>
6/23	Notify LGVS of permission for Bird and Bat Boxes at LGRG.	Asst Clerk (KH)	09/01/23	<b>Complete</b>
7/23	Information pack on funding for Speldhurst Chapel Project for circulation to councillors.	Chair	09/01/23	<b>Complete</b>
8/23	Meeting to be held on Speldhurst Chapel Project.	Clerk/Chair/RFO	09/01/23	<b>Complete</b>
9/23	Trial weed control April-Sept without use of glyphosate.	Env WG	09/01/23	In progress

### 23/34 Finance Committee – Report by Cllr Ellery

- a) There had not been a meeting of the Finance Committee since the last Full Council meeting.
- b) Report on budget virements: There were none.
- c) Interim payments made since the last meeting:  
Unity Account: £25.92 BT mobile.  
Mastercard: £10.00\* Accident enquiry £3.00\* Land Registry enquiry.  
 Cllr Ellery commented that the BT mobile phone bill seemed high. The Clerk had raised this with the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) and would keep him updated.
- d) Decisions made under delegated authority are starred \* above.
- e) It was **RESOLVED** to approve of the Terms of Reference.
- f) It was **RESOLVED** to approve the renewal of the council's authority to use Direct Debits and Bank Transfers (BACS) for the next two years. The current list of Direct Debits is below:

Name	Frequency	Last Paid	Amount
BT Cobra DD – Mobile	Monthly	29/12/22	£25.92
Castle Water- Pavilion	Monthly	28/12/22	£50.63
Data Protection	Annually	04/08/22	£35.00
EDF – Pavilion Electricity	Monthly	20/01/23	£1,721.00
KCS – Photocopier	Quarterly	28/12/22	£67.66
Lloyds Bank Corporate - Mastercard	Monthly	17/01/23	Variable
Main BACS BT	Quarterly	14/12/22	£174.42
National Employment – Pensions	Monthly	22/12/22	£421.74
Npower Commercial – Street lights	Annually	26/04/22	£29.10
Public Works Loan	6 monthly	28/11/22	£2,511.60
Rentokil Initial – Pavilion	Annually	28/12/22	£132.82
Veolia ES (UK) Ltd	Monthly	28/12/22	£238.96

- g) It was **RESOLVED** to approve Cllrs Curry and Norton as new signatories for Unity Bank.
- h) It was **RESOLVED** to authorise the transfer of money from Unity Bank to bring the balance within the limits of the Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS) - £35,000 to Nationwide Building Society and £10,000 to Cambridge Building Society.

### 23/35 Accounts for Payment

It was **RESOLVED** that the invoices as listed below and checked by Cllr Tarricone, be paid.

Payee Name	Reference	Amount £	Detail
m:power accounting	MT2401	48.00	Salary admin
Cloudy IT	MT2402	272.82	Monthly support
Kate Harman	MT2403	25.00	Expenses
Commercial Services Trading Ltd	MT2405	523.48	LG maintenance
Commercial Services Trading Ltd	MT2404	273.12	Groombridge maintenance
M R Lawrence	MT2407	600.00	LG maintenance
Katie Neve	MT2406	24.80	Expenses
Viking Direct	MT2408	77.98	Stationery
April Skies Accounting	MT2409	393.30	Internal Audit
KALC	MT2410	44.40	Training
Viking Direct	MT2411	58.40	Stationery
Prestige Plumbing Services	MT2412	235.20	Pavilion – survey
Performance Dire Protection Ltd	MT2413	437.66	Pavilion – annual fire Ext
Dyno-Rod	MT2414	276.00	Pavilion – blockage
N.E.S.T. Pension Scheme	DD	585.31	Pension payments
HMRC	MT2415	1,917.96	NI & Tax
Employees	MT24168	4,711.79	Salaries
EDF Energy	DD	1,721.00	Pavilion – electricity
Castle Water	DD	50.63	Pavilion - water
<b>TOTAL PAYMENTS</b>		<b>£12,276.85</b>	

**23/36 Speldhurst Chapel Project** – to receive an update

The RFO had submitted a report outlining his concerns about taking out a large loan over a long period which was not in the council's best interests. This report had been circulated. The Chair said that he agreed with the RFO's concerns and further work would be done to find a solution.

**23/37 Planning Committee**

Report by Cllr Rajah: A meeting had been held on 16<sup>th</sup> January. 8 applications were considered and the committee had agreed to remain neutral on all of them.

It was agreed not to change the Committee's Terms of Reference (ToR) relating to the Environment Working Group's request, although alternative amendments had been made. The ToR would be presented at the next relevant meeting.

**23/38 Langton Green Recreation Ground (LGRG)**

- a) **Update on the investigation into the energy efficiency of the boiler** – The Chair reported that a number of plumbing companies had now presented solutions and quotations for replacing the boiler. A former parish councillor with experience of managing similar projects continued to advise on the replacement.
- b) **Update on the Pavilion Review** – This had been covered in the Chair's report.
- c) **To confirm SPC's contribution to the Agrifactors' maintenance contract** – The Chair asked councillors for their feedback on the following options:
  - Increase contributions in line with the precept.
  - Increase contributions by 5%.
  - Increase contributions from £6,300 to £6,800 as allocated in the budget.

Cllr Norton asked the justification for this increase, and the Clerk replied that Agrifactors had put their prices up by 10%. Cllr Barrington-Johnson noted that LGCSA had asked the parish council to increase its contribution in line with inflation, as this would benefit their contribution. It was **RESOLVED** to increase the contribution from £6,300 to £6,800 as allocated in the budget.

An additional point of interest relating to the Pavilion was that it had been necessary to call out Dyno-Rod as the outside drain was blocked mainly with blue hand towels and sanitary products. Notices were already in place inside the toilets, but further notices had now been introduced. Whilst clearing the blocked drain, Dyno-Rod discovered there was damage to the drainpipe which needed mending before it collapsed. Dyno-Rod had quoted £450 + VAT for this work. It was **RESOLVED** to approve this amount, and to ask Dyno-Rod to confirm how they thought the pipe had been damaged.

**23/39 Annual Parish Meeting 2023 – Update:** This had been covered in the Chair's report.

**23/40 Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC) Community Awards Scheme 2023** – To consider nominations for 2023: The deadline for nominations was 28<sup>th</sup> February 2023. It was **RESOLVED** that councillors would email nominations directly to the Chair before this date.

**23/41 Spring Newsletter** – To consider items for the newsletter

The Assistant Clerk (CB) reported that the Spring Newsletter would again go out as an E-newsletter. The main topic would be the precept and Cllr Ellery had written a first draft. Cllr Norton agreed to draft a piece on Highways, and the Assistant Clerk would write about the forthcoming elections. Cllr Tarricone volunteered to write a piece on sustainability and the environment. It was **RESOLVED** that a draft newsletter would be put together in time for councillors to feedback at the next Full Council.

**23/42 Elections May 2023** – to provide an update

The Clerk reported that updates and reminders about the compulsory photo I.D. and the deadline for applying for a free Voter Authority Certificate would be shared via the usual media channels. TWBC had provided information for candidates and agents which the Clerk had forwarded to councillors.

**23/43 Coronation Weekend** – To consider how to mark the event

Cllr Tarricone volunteered to look into how to mark the event and would liaise with the Clerk.

**23/44 Queen Victoria Hospital (QVH) NHS Foundation Trust** – to consider submitting a response to the Governors in relation to services provided by the QVH. It was **RESOLVED** to request a visit from QVH to talk to councillors about the services they provide.

**23/45 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 was scheduled for 27<sup>th</sup> February.
- b) **Highways WG** – Report by Cllr Norton
  - **To consider a replacement Speed Indicator Device (SID) post** – Cllr Norton reported that authority was sought to replace the SID post in Groombridge which had been recently knocked down. It was **RESOLVED** to authorise KCC to replace the SID post at a cost of up to £1,000 and to pursue the insurance company for reimbursement.  
Cllr Norton reported that he had met with members of the working group who were Langton Green residents, in order to identify the priorities of the village for the Highways Improvement Plan (HIP). He planned to do the same with members living in the other parish villages.
- c) **Amenities WG** – A meeting was scheduled for 20<sup>th</sup> February. Delegated authority had been given to carry out fencing works at The Green at Old Groombridge and the quotation had been circulated for information.
- d) **Air Traffic WG** – There had not been a meeting since the last Full Council. Cllr Barrington-Johnson had attended a virtual briefing by Gatwick Airport about a UK wide airspace change project. A consultation on this matter was likely to take place in 2024. The slides were to be shared and Cllr Barrington-Johnson would forward to councillors.
- e) **Environment WG** – A meeting had taken place on 24<sup>th</sup> January.  
It was **RESOLVED** to adopt the Environment Policy.  
After some discussion it was **RESOLVED** to approve up to £100 towards the cost of a noticeboard to be installed at Pocket Park for the purpose of educating residents about the range of biodiversity in the park.  
It was **RESOLVED** to approve up to £100 towards weeding knives and vinegar as part of the Glyphosate-free weed control trial at LGRG.  
These items would be discussed in further detail at the Amenities Working Group meeting.  
It was **RESOLVED** to approve the working group's proposed response to South East Water's Water Management public consultation.
- f) **KALC** – There was nothing to report.

**23/46 Diary Dates** – The following dates were noted:

- 13<sup>th</sup> February – Planning Committee
- 20<sup>th</sup> February – Amenities Committee
- 27<sup>th</sup> February – Governance Working Group
- 6<sup>th</sup> March – Full Council
- 7<sup>th</sup> March – Highways
- 20<sup>th</sup> March – Finance Committee

**23/47 Items for Information:**

The Chair reported that he had read about a new Round-Up weed control product that was Glyphosate-free.

There being no further items the meeting closed at 8.40pm.