

Local Government Act 1972



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

MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING

Held at 7.30 pm on Monday 2nd February 2026 in the Committee Room at Speldhurst Village Hall.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Cllrs Curry (Chair), Rowe (Vice-Chair), Cleaver, Ellery, Farley, Leach, Littlefield, Norton and Turner.

OFFICERS PRESENT

K Neve (KN) Outgoing Clerk and H Chater (HC) Incoming Clerk (Minutes) and A Dry (AD) Parish Council Administrator.

IN ATTENDANCE

County Cllr Moreland, Borough Cllrs Sankey and Sharratt were in attendance.

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were five members of the public in attendance.

21/26 TO ENQUIRE IF ANYONE INTENDS TO RECORD THE MEETING

The meeting started at 7.30pm and the Chair advised that the Clerk and the Administrator had started audio recordings which would be used to ensure the accuracy of minutes, and that anyone who wished to speak should consider that their voice may be recorded and that the recording could be requested via freedom of information.

22/26 TO ACCEPT AND APPROVE APOLOGIES AND REASONS FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Cllr Tarricone (work) and Cllr Dickens (family commitments).

23/26 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

The Clerk declared an interest in the item regarding staffing matters.

24/26 DECLARATIONS OF LOBBYING

No declarations of lobbying were made.

25/26 MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 5TH JANUARY 2026

Councillors **RESOLVED** to approve that the minutes, previously forwarded to Members, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair. It was agreed that the Chair would sign the minutes as a correct record at the end of the meeting unless objections were raised. No objections were raised.

26/26 CO-OPTION OF NEW COUNCILLOR

The candidate, Mr Neil Barrington Johnson (former councillor and Chair) left the room and the Chair recommended that he be co-opted to the parish council. It was **RESOLVED** to co-opt the candidate who then returned to the room, signed the Declaration of Office Book and took his seat. Cllr Barrington-Johnson was assigned the Amenities and Finance & Governance Committees.

27/26 PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

The Chair welcomed the members of public in attendance to the meeting.

- A member of the public expressed thanks for the furniture and equipment investment at Langton Pavilion.
- Concern was raised by the member of the public about dangerous waste at the corner of Winstone Scott Avenue; the Clerk confirmed that contact with the landowner (Town and Country Housing Association) was ongoing.

28/26 LANGTON GREEN RECREATION GROUND (LGRG)

This item was brought forward to allow Chris Allen, Langton Green Sports Association (LGCSA) to report on Pavilion progress.

- Pavilion use increasing with diverse community activities.
- Weekend sports/social club concept developing.
- Ongoing issues with winter pitch availability and lack of 3G pitch access locally. LGCSA discussions ongoing with Borough regarding potential 3G facilities. Chair thanked Mr Allen for keeping the Council updated.
- Energy efficiency funding opportunity via Football Foundation/Eon being pursued.
- Multiple grant applications had been submitted for the CIC (Community Interest Company) (Langton's Café) activities (including potential free summer lunches).
- Langton Green Football Fiesta was planned for 30th –31st May in reduced format due to parking limitations.
- Additional all-girls' football event was planned the following weekend.

Mr Allen left the meeting at 7.40pm.

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

The Chair provided an overview from the Pavilion Review Committee noting:

- Bid document update deferred to next meeting.
- Possible removal of "soft market review" stage to streamline process.
- Equipment purchases for pavilion mostly completed and under budget.
- Clarification issued regarding rental income and repayment assumptions; the Chair apologised for previous misstatement at the January Full Council meeting.

29/26 BOROUGH AND COUNTY COUNCILLORS' REPORTS

County Cllr Moreland reported:

- Proposed council tax increase of 3.99%.
- Progress on Ashurst Community Transport Scheme: Survey still open. Potential for creating a not-for-profit model.
- Kent County Council (KCC) inquiry into water outage communications.
- Potential reduction of adult education provision and discussions with Amelia Scott Centre to provide the service independently.
- Highways Improvement Plan (HIP) inaccuracies had been corrected with input from Cllrs Norton and Farley.
- Potential for a mobile speed camera: Cllr Moreland encouraged parish councils to work together towards a grass roots approach for funding. The Chair confirmed it had been raised with him by Bidborough Parish Council.

Borough Cllr Sharratt reported:

- Withdrawal of Adult Education Sessions: Cllr Sharratt would be lobbying the borough council regarding alternative use at the Amelia.
- Commons sale update and ongoing environmental matters: Public meetings were planned for 7th and 14th February.
- Taxi Licencing: Cllr Sharratt was part of a taxi working group aiming to ensure women and girls feel safer in taxis. More visible signs with taxi driver details. This was to allow users to easily comment, compliment or complain.
- Report on pollution levels at the River Grom (maintained by Southern Water): Regular testing was being carried out by a Groombridge resident who was also holding Southern Water to account.

Borough Cllr Sankey reported:

- Planning application 25/03014/Full – Mercers, Langton Green: the notification issue sent by Clerk had been raised by Cllr Sankey to be appropriate for committee consideration. Postal notifications for planning applications had been discontinued, and residents were encouraged to sign up for digital notifications via the Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC) planning portal.
- Cycle and Walking Path: The Rusthall section was to be prioritised with further investigation for the Langton Green section required.
- Local Plan: Concerns had been expressed regarding the statement issued by South East Water who had said there would be no deficit in service despite increased housing and population.
- The Portfolio Holder of Finance had been contacted to request a review regarding the Discretionary Rates Relief Policy. This was with a view to including a wider range of community venues.
- An all-borough councillors' briefing on the Crowborough Camp proposals had been requested and the concerns that had been raised previously regarding the proposed training camp in Crowborough being used for asylum seekers had been passed to the Chief Executive.

30/26 CLERK'S REPORT

- Staff appraisals were underway.
- Recruitment interviews had been completed for the Deputy Clerk role.
- Staff were undertaking CiLCA (Certificate in Local Council Administration) and ILCA (Introduction to Local Council Administration) training; potential impact on response times noted.

31/26 GENERAL MATTERS

Actionable tasks which do not fall to a committee.

	Existing	Owner	Created	Status
1/26	Confirm terms of reference for Licensing Cttee and update website and Cllrs' folder.	Deputy Clerk	05/01/26	Completed
2/26	Purchase new equipment for Pavilion.	Deputy Clerk	05/01/26	Completed
3/26	Confirm quotations under Amenities item.	Deputy Clerk	05/01/26	Completed
4/26	Include Clerk's contract and salary on Fin & Gov Agenda.	Clerk	05/01/26	Completed
5/26	Undertake virement from the Grants Budget for the purchase of the replacement oven and chairs to the Pavilion Equipment budget.	Clerk	05/01/26	Completed
6/26	Confirm precept with TWBC.	Clerk	05/01/26	Completed
7/26	Confirm nomination for KALC award.	Clerk	05/01/26	Completed
8/26	Committee Chairs to provide reports for APM to Dep Clerk.	Cttee Chrs/Dep Clerk	05/01/26	Ongoing
9/26	Submit responses for planning applications.	Cllr Curry/Dep Clerk	05/01/26	Completed
10/26	Forward grant funding email from TWBC to Cllr Moreland.	Clerk	05/01/26	Completed

	New	Owner	Created	Status
11/26	Offboard Cllr Rowe from all IT platforms.	Clerk/CloudyIT	02/02/26	
12/26	Continue communications re Winstone Scott Avenue.	Deputy Clerk	02/02/26	
13/26	Asses grass roots approach to mobile speed cameras.	Chair	02/02/26	
14/26	Encourage residents to sign up to digital planning notifications.	Admin	02/02/26	
15/26	Complete staff appraisals.	Clerk	02/02/26	
16/26	Onboard Deputy Clerk and issue contracts for Deputy and Clerk.	Clerk	02/02/26	
17/26	Email list of potential transferred discretionary services to all councillors.	Clerk/Chair	02/02/26	
18/26	Review IT and WhatsApp policies at next Fin & Gov meeting.	Fin & Gov Cttee/Clerk	02/02/26	
19/26	Change WhatsApp settings to 7 days.	Clerk	02/02/26	
20/26	Remove and add bank signatories.	Clerk	02/02/26	

32/26 COMMITTEE AND WORKING GROUPS (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) Highways Committee

Cllr Norton updated councillors on the highways parish grant submission. Design inaccuracies by KCC had been identified and corrected following site checks. Further ambitions included a pedestrian crossing and improved walking/cycling links.

It was **RESOLVED** to delegate authority to Cllr Norton and the Clerk to submit the Tunbridge Wells highways parish grant application.

b) Amenities Committee – Cllr Turner reported that there had been no meeting.

c) Environment Working Group (EWG) – Cllr Turner reported that there had been no meeting.

d) KALC

The Chair reported that an update had been received on the Local Government Reorganisation and the potential transfer of discretionary services. A list of services would be emailed to councillors for consideration. The Chair highlighted the need for a framework to work with the new Shadow Unit Authority.

e) Air Traffic issues – item deferred.

33/26 FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Report by Cllr Rowe from the meeting held on 26th January, the minutes having previously been circulated. The next meeting was scheduled for 9th March 2026.

a) Councillors noted the detailed budget reports.

b) Report on interim payments made since the last meeting.

RESOLVED to approve the interim payments made since the last meeting.

Unity Trust Current A/c

Date Paid	Payee Name	Reference	Amount paid £	Transaction Detail
31/01/26	KCC	DD	126.95	Photocopier

Unity Trust Mastercard

Date Paid	Payee Name	Reference	Amount paid £	Transaction Detail
12/01/26	Amazon	MC511	70.53	Pavilion Equip
12/01/26	Amazon	NC512	26.99	Pavilion Equip
12/01/26	Amazon	MC513	70.55	Pavilion Equip
13/01/26	Amazon	MC514	51.00	Pavilion Equip
13/01/26	Amazon	MC515	24.84	Pavilion Equip

13/01/26	Amazon	MC516	52.44	Pavilion Equip
14/01/26	Alteus Wine	MC504	-4.40	Refund
19/01/26	Amazon	MC517	37.36	Pavilion Equip
26/01/26	Amazon	MC519	*7.16	Scotch tape
26/01/26	Amazon	MC521	*21.65	Badgemaster Sheets
27/01/26	DVLA	MC518	347.50	SPC Van tax
27/01/26	Amazon	MC520	*7.79	Printer paper

- c) Councillors noted decisions made under delegated authority, starred above.
- d) To consider updating the signatories on all bank accounts
It was **RESOLVED** to add Cllr Barrington-Johnson as signatory to replace Cllr Rowe and replace outgoing signatory Mrs K Neve Clerk with new Clerk Ms H Chater.
- e) Pavilion Hire Rate: It was clarified that the Pavilion hire rate until 1st October was £10.00 per hour plus 25% of utility costs.
- f) Policies
- IT Policy – deferred for review at the next Finance & Governance Committee meeting.
 - WhatsApp Data Protection Policy – to be incorporated into the IT policy. WhatsApp usage was discussed and a seven-day message retention was proposed subject to further legal clarification.
 - Recruitment Policy adopted – It was **RESOLVED** to approve the Recruitment Policy.
- g) Staffing: (The Clerk (KN) left the meeting during, and returned after, the discussion about staffing.)
It was **RESOLVED** that Ms H Chater be appointed Clerk and RFO at £20/hour with an increase per hour subject to qualification progression and that Miss S Neve be appointed Deputy Clerk at £16.50/hour subject to satisfactory references being received.
- h) Councillors noted that responsibility for data protection compliance rests with the parish council as a whole, rather than with an individual, as parish councils are not required to appoint a Data Protection Officer. but they do remain collectively responsible for data protection compliance under UK GDPR.
- i) Grants
It was **RESOLVED** to approve the following grants:
£242.55 to Speldhurst Lunch Club towards venue hire.
£1,000 to St Mary's Church, Speldhurst for Treework (which is in addition to the annual churchyard maintenance grant already paid).

34/26 ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT

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

Date	Payee Name	Reference	Amount £	Detail
03/02/26	Capel Groundcare	MT3119	96.00	Playground repairs
03/02/26	Langton Green Charitable Trust	MT3120	182.85	SPC Electricity
03/02/26	Katie Neve	MT3121	20.70	Expenses
03/02/26	Tivoli	MT3122	162.20	Dog waste bin
03/02/26	NALC	MT3123	42.00	Event ticket
03/02/26	Langton Life	MT3126	375.00	Magazine article
03/02/26	Speldhurst News	MT3127	500.00	Magazine article
03/02/26	Shaw & Sons	MT3128	106.80	Minute Binder
03/02/26	Alison Dry	MT3129	14.22	Travel Claim
06/02/26	Octopus Energy	DD	1041.64	Pavillion Energy
10/02/26	Bt PLC	DD	28.64	Mobile Phone
11/02/26	Talk Talk Business	DD	69.16	Broadband and Office Phone
20/02/26	HMRC	MT3125	1798.23	Employers Income tax and NI

28/02/26	Hugo Fox	DD	11.99	Website
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35/26 UPDATE ON VACANCIES ON THE COUNCIL

Councillors noted the existing two vacancies noted. Potential candidates were under discussion.

36/26 ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2026

The Clerk (HC) reported that community groups had been invited to host stands; the Happy Me Dance group had confirmed they would perform and the committee Chairs who had not already done so, were requested to submit presentation slides.

37/26 PLANNING COMMITTEE

Cllr Curry confirmed that the next meeting was scheduled for 16th February.

Members noted the discontinued postal notifications and encouraged residents to sign up for digital planning alerts.

38/26 DIARY DATES

Councillors noted the following meeting dates:

- 16th February – Planning Committee
- 23rd February - Highways Committee
- 2nd March – Full Council

39/26 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

- Councillors noted the following correspondence:
 - The Pig at Groombridge Place: Cllr Norton had been in contact with the new CEO of The Pig to confirm Speldhurst Parish Council's support of the planning application and had offered assistance if required.
 - GACC Newsletters
 - KALC News January 2026
 - PCC Winter newsletter
 - RSATG Newsletter (Oct – Dec 2025)

Members recorded thanks to the outgoing Clerk, Mrs K Neve, and Cllr Rowe, for their service.

With nothing further to discuss, the meeting closed at 8.40pm

Chair