



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

**MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 4TH MAY 2020 at 7.30pm
CONDUCTED ONLINE VIA ZOOM ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Cllrs Barrington-Johnson (Chairman), Milner, Mrs Podbury, Mrs Soyke, Mrs Lyle, Mrs Woodliffe, Ellery, Rowe, Turner, Pate, Scarbrough and Rajah

OFFICERS PRESENT: Mr C May – Clerk, Mrs K Harman – Assistant Clerk and Mrs C Barrett – Admin Assistant

IN ATTENDANCE: Borough Cllr Stanyer and Cllr Ms Willis

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC: There were no members of the public present.

20/69 WELCOME BY THE CHAIRMAN: Cllr Barrington-Johnson welcomed everyone to the first video-meeting of the Full Council. He confirmed that approval had been given for parish councils to hold meetings electronically until May 2021 and that as soon as physical meetings became possible, they would be resumed.

20/70 TO ENQUIRE IF ANYONE PRESENT INTENDS TO RECORD THE MEETING: No-one present intended to record the meeting.

20/71 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Cllr Barrington-Johnson advised councillors that he had received the resignation of Cllr Mrs Price which was with immediate effect and that the process of recruiting a replacement councillor would commence.

Apologies were also received from County Cllr McInroy

20/72 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS: There were none.

20/73 DECLARATIONS OF LOBBYING: There were none.

20/74 MINUTES: It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on **2nd March 2020** be approved as a correct record with the following amendments: Item 20/52: “which had been approved by TWBC planning officers.” being changed to “which had been approved by the FA”. It was noted that there were two items 20/52 and agreed that the second would be changed to 20/52a. Item 20/55: Cllr Mrs Lyle confirmed that the £60 cleaning fee for the pavilion was only applicable for large events, not every booking.

The minutes were then signed by the Chairman. It was also **RESOLVED** that the Confidential minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on **2nd March 2020** and the Extraordinary Meeting of **25th March 2020** be confirmed as a

correct record and signed by the Chairman.

20/75 BOROUGH AND COUNTY COUNCILLORS' REPORTS:

Borough Cllr Stanyer reported that he was receiving daily updates from TWBC. Currently there were six members at one time in the Town Hall and Skype video-conferencing was being used regularly. The major focus was to keep businesses viable and to date £30million had been given out in grants.

County Cllr Ms Willis echoed Borough Cllr Stanyer's comments adding that she had been assisting the elderly and vulnerable in the community. Cllr Pate enquired about the efforts made to identify the vulnerable in the parish. Borough Cllr Stanyer said that 1,960 in the borough had been shielded, a third of which had asked for help. Other residents had been helped in other ways. The Assembly Hall Theatre was being used as a food bank.

Cllr Mrs Soyke said that she had been communicating with the Planning Department regarding an application in Bidborough which had strong local objections as well as investigating a grant for Ashurst Village Hall. She was also impressed by the briefings from William Benson.

Cllr Mrs Podbury said that Peacock Farm were burning rubbish again and that she had reported the matter to Environmental Services. She had been in touch with the nursing homes in the area to ascertain the level of infections. A painter was taking the opportunity to decorate Langton Green VH and Speldhurst Primary School. She was in communication with the Chairman of Speldhurst VH to help obtain a grant.

20/76 PUBLIC OPEN SESSION: There were no members of the public present.

20/77 CLERK'S REPORT: The Clerk referred councillors to the details in the report he had circulated prior to the meeting.

- A discussion took place regarding which video-conferencing system to use for future council meetings and it was agreed that Microsoft Teams would be trialled as a priority because it was free under the existing package.
- The financial accounts had been extended to August 2020.
- The Speldhurst Pram Race had been cancelled.

20/78 FINANCE COMMITTEE: Cllr Mrs Lyle reported the following: -

- a) There had not been a meeting of the Finance Committee since the last Full Council meeting.
- b) **Budget virements: RESOLVED** to approve the following virements: £4,750 from the RRIM account (retrospective approval) for repairs and maintenance costs at the pavilion and reduced income in the last financial year due to works at the rec and the covid-19 related closure, as allowed under the terms of the pavilion management agreement; £2,275 from Contingency to go into a new code for computing expenses: £1,000 Microsoft 365, £150 Government hosting with remainder to computer repairs/upgrades. The Clerk confirmed that he had successfully applied for a grant for SPC Pavilion Ltd in relation to the pavilion and £10,000 had been received on 1st May.

At 8.15pm the meeting was temporarily paused due to the scheduled meeting finishing and a new meeting starting. Borough Cllr Stanyer did not re-join the meeting.

- c) **Interim payments made since the Finance Committee meeting:** there were none
- d) **Payments made under delegated authority:** there were none.
- e) **Increase in page rate for Langton Life: RESOLVED** to increase the payment for the page rate to £300.
- f) **Grant to British Red Cross:** after much discussion councillors agreed that whilst the charity was very worthy, the parish council should concentrate on supporting local charities at this time. Cllr Mrs Podbury said that there was an increased demand from Nourish. Mrs Barrett said that she had approached all the support networks within the parish offering assistance however no requests were received however it was expected more requests for assistance may emerge in the coming weeks as the lockdown extends.
- g) **Financial position of Speldhurst Village Hall:** The Clerk advised that SVH were struggling to obtain a Business Support Grant, but he was urging them to persevere. Cllr Ellery said that they had reserves and revenue was increasing since Jenny Cooper had taken on the role of administrator, but he pointed out that

they would not be receiving funds from the fete this year. He said that after depreciating assets the hall was having problems. Cllr Mrs Podbury said that there was a wider issue with the nursery school being unable to cope with any rental increases SVH Trustees were hoping to impose. Councillors were sympathetic to the situation and recognised that both the hall and the nursery school were an integral part of the village, however the parish council did not wish to subsidise a for-profit business. Cllr Ellery said the grant would be to the Village Hall. It was agreed that the situation would be reviewed in June and further consideration given to the matter once more information was known and a formal request received.

20/79 ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT:

To authorise the payment of invoices as listed

| Payee Name | Reference | Amount £ | Detail |
|--------------------------------|-----------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| BT Plc | DD | 9.60 | Mobile |
| M R Lawrence | MT1800 | 320.00 | Mowing and strimming |
| A Harrington-Vogt | MT1801 | 150.00 | Refund of booking |
| Langton Life | MT1802 | 250.00 | Media page |
| Langton Green Charitable Trust | MT1803 | 50.00 | Office rental |
| The Living Forest Ltd | MT4226 | 546.00 | Tree work |
| Streetlights | MT1805 | 26.52 | maintenance |
| Catherine Barrett | MT1806 | 679.25 | Salary |
| Mr L Cooper | MT1807 | 671.95 | Salary |
| Kate Harman | MT1808 | 783.00 | Salary |
| C May | MT1809 | 1,629.27 | Salary |
| N.E.S.T. Pension Scheme | MT1810 | 120.43 | Pension contributions |
| UK Debt Management Office | DD | <u>2,727.19</u> | Repayment PWLB loan |
| | | <u>£7,953.61</u> | |

Payments for March and April attached as appendices 1 and 2.

It was **RESOLVED** to pay the invoices for March, April and May and authorise the electronic payments and sign the cheques drawn on Unity Trust Bank.

20/80 LANGTON GREEN RECREATION GROUND (LGRG):

- Cllr Mrs Lyle reported the following:
- Report from the Management Committee of the pavilion – the café proprietor was hoping to reopen as soon as possible however it was recognised this would be in a different format, possibly making use of the outside grounds. It was suggested that some of the grant money received could be spent on equipment such as outside tables and seating.
 - Update on the progress of traffic management and parking: The traffic management plan had been agreed and signed by LGCSA. Cllr Rowe queried SPC's liability regarding maintenance costs and Cllr Mrs Lyle confirmed SPC's liability was up to the stated amount per annum (subject to the traffic management plan being adhered to by LGCSA) which would be agreed with the contractors, with LGCSA having to appoint the contractors separately and directly, with no recourse to SPC, for any work which exceeded that amount. It was agreed parking management must be monitored. The Clerk would pay the £12,500 grant to LGCSA. It was also noted that planning permission had been granted for the grid matting to be installed for additional parking. The product and installation would be investigated.
 - Drainage project: Cllr Barrington-Johnson had circulated a report to councillors detailing the current situation. It was agreed that SPC would wait to see what effect the most recent changes to the swales had on the standing water and floods before a decision was made about further works. Cllrs agreed that standing water was not desirable and Cllr Pate will investigate the site visit by an independent expert. The Clerk was to report back to Mrs Ruth Ritson (local resident) and update her.
 - Recycling: The Clerk confirmed that collections had been suspended and were to be reviewed on the 17th May.

20/81 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:

- The Chairman said that he was taking part in weekly parish conference calls including William Benson which shared advice and showed the very different approach parish councils were taking in response to Covid-19 – mainly depending on their size. He confirmed that SPC's approach was to assist the support groups which were in place within the villages in the parish very quickly once lockdown began. He said that Goudhurst had seen volunteers drop out when the parish council had tried to take over and structure assistance and he was convinced that local residents wanted to help informally and on their own terms. He therefore felt that SPC's stance was the most effective. Additionally, a comprehensive guide for advice and contacts had been put on the website and circulated within the parish and both the Chairman and Clerk were acting as intermediaries between TWBC and the parish support workers.
- SPC had received £3,200 from TWBC as its share of the £35,000 contingency fund. Councillors were asked to consider how this could be used most effectively within the parish.
- Langton Green VH had been approached to become a Covid-19 testing site for three days – more information to follow.

20/82 COMMITTEE REPORTS:

- a) **Governance** – there was nothing to report.
- b) **Planning** – Cllr Ellery said that eight applications had been discussed at the planning committee meeting on the 7th April 2020 and councillors remained neutral on all of them.
- c) **Highways** – Cllr Pate reported:
 - Costs had been received for traffic calming measures on Groombridge Hill of approximately £50,000.
 - The recording of motorists' speeds on the A264 Ashurst had revealed that 90% were not exceeding the speed limit. It was anticipated it would cost less than £10,000 to implement traffic calming measures on the road.
 - It was hoped KCC would work in partnership with SPC.
 - Lockdown was considered an ideal time to carry out maintenance and repairs within the parish because of the reduced traffic on the roads. Councillors were to consider any work necessary and a list would be compiled – Cllr Pate was to liaise with the Clerk.
 - Speedwatch results had been forwarded to KCC to be included in reports. It was noted that the visibility of Speedwatch volunteers was an effective tool in speed reduction and data capture could be used as evidence.
 - Barden Road speed assessment had been carried out however the data captured had lapsed due to lockdown.
Cllr Pate confirmed that all these issues would be reconsidered when the Highways Committee held their next meeting.
- d) **Amenities** – there was nothing to report.
- e) **Air Traffic** – there was nothing to report.
- f) **Footpaths** – Cllr Milner said that the bridge in the woods near Bullingstone Lane had been repaired by KCC following a large tree falling on it during storms earlier in the year. Cllr Mrs Soyke had installed steps and a handrail on a slippery part of a footpath on her land. She was additionally clearing two twittens.
- g) **Environment Working Group** – it was agreed the EWG would be revisited once physical meetings were recommenced.
- h) **KALC** – there was nothing to report.

At 9.00pm the meeting was temporarily paused due to the scheduled meeting finishing and a new meeting starting.

20/83 OTHER MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF 2ND MARCH 2020: there were none.

20/84 DIARY DATES: Wednesday 13th May - SPC Planning Meeting 7.30pm via VC.

20/85 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION:

- The Clerk said that TWBC had established a new website www.twsocial.co.uk which was very good.
- Cllr Pate said that he was an NHS responder but despite 400 hours on call, he had yet to receive a call for assistance.
- Cllr Mrs Soyke said that the A264 in Ashurst was in need of maintenance and repair after the heavy rains. She would send photographs to the Clerk and he would forward them to Earl Bourner, a previous TW District Manager, was now in charge of drainage for KCC.
- Cllr Turner said that he was an NHS responder and, like Cllr Pate, after 350 hours on call had not received any enquiries. The Clerk said that at a recent KALC meeting it was assumed that demand may increase once members of public start returning to work.

There being no further items the meeting closed at 9.15pm

Chairman