



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

**Minutes of a Highways Committee Meeting held in the Council Office, Langton Green Recreation Ground  
on Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2019 at 7.30pm**

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**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Cllrs Mrs Podbury (Chairman), Mrs Lyle, Mrs Woodliffe, Ellery, Pate, Round and Mr Norton

**OFFICERS PRESENT:** Mr C May – Clerk

1. **To enquire if anyone present intends to film, photograph and/or record the meeting:** No-one present intended to film, photograph or record the meeting.
2. **To receive and approve apologies and reasons for absence:** Richard Wheeler and Mrs Horne (previous engagement)
3. **Disclosure of Interests:** There were none
4. **Declarations of Lobbying:** There were none.
5. **Minutes: RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Highways Committee meeting dated **24<sup>th</sup> October 2018** which have previously been distributed to all members, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.
6. **Public Open Session:** There were no members of the public present
7. **Matters Arising and Correspondence:** An email from a Speldhurst resident (Mrs Roff) covered many issues including school parking and the new 20mph speed limit. The Clerk was asked to respond.
8. **Terms of Reference:** It was **RESOLVED** to recommend no change to Full Council
9. **Review of Highways Committee's Budget:** The Clerk had circulated the financial sheets. He said that after all expenditure there was a surplus of £15,300 which was to be carried forward to the next financial year. Any expenditure in excess of that amount would have to come from the contingency account.
10. **Monitoring of recent accidents in the Parish:** The Clerk had circulated a sheet of reported accidents for 2018. These included a report from PCSO up to the end of October 2018. The Clerk reported that he had requested an update but had no response. Cllr Pate asked to be copied on correspondence.

It was also agreed to encourage the reporting of accidents via the new website and Facebook.

- 11. Parish Plan:** The Clerk said that most of actions in the Parish Plan that had been completed come under Highways. Cllr Pate said that the plan was the mandate for the council to pursue traffic calming measures.
- 12. A report on the status of the 20 mph, Gateways and TRO projects:** The Clerk reported that the scheme in Speldhurst has been implemented. The speed reduction from 60 to 40 in Speldhurst Road, Langton has been installed. The Clerk said that the Highways District Manager was making changes to the Langton gateway and he would chase this action.
- 13. Report on KCC Highways seminar 5<sup>th</sup> November:** This was attended by Cllr Mrs Podbury and the Clerk. It is an annual seminar hosted by KCC for the Highways department to update Parish Councils on issues, new developments and meet the staff and usually a useful exercise. They are keen to promote the idea to Parish Councils that they can make improvements to local highways issues should they be willing to fund them. East Farleigh PC gave a presentation about substantial improvements they have made by funding them with a PWBL. The new Director, Simon Jones, considered that work on behalf of Parish Councils would improve over time. The Head of the Schemes team responsible for implementing such changes, Nikola Floodgate, was more cautious and advised of the lack of staff and the time it will take to process the improvements.
- 14. Report on KCC Highways meeting 23<sup>rd</sup> November:** This meeting was attended by Cllr Mrs Podbury, Cllr Pate and the Clerk. The meeting was attended by Emma Green and Fiona Paine who work in the Schemes Planning & Delivery team for this area (and report to Nikola Floodgate who manages all of Kent). The meeting was summarised by Fiona Paine in an email dated 29<sup>th</sup> November who, in an honest summation, said it was understood that “the meeting may have left you feeling frustrated”. She said there are a large number of parishes and they need to dedicate time equally to all which means timescales for delivering changes are far from ideal. The team does not have the resources to carry out studies of options to improve or alter traffic management issues and suggested it may be best to employ a consultant.
- 15. To consider correspondence on issues by Village**
  - a) **Groombridge**
    - **Groombridge Hill** – an ATC speed count was carried out funded by the Schemes Planning & Delivery team who summarised the findings:
      - Good compliance with the current 50mph speed limit
      - Average traffic speed below the proposed 40mph speed limit in both directions
      - 85 percentile speed is below the limit of enforcement

A number of factors were quoted when considering an appropriate speed limit and they did not consider that a reduction in the speed limit to 40mph was beneficial for the following reasons:

    - It would not reduce average speeds
    - Only 2 slight injuries in last 3 years
    - Sparse roadside development
    - Road geometry and engineering suited to 50mph
    - A reduction was unlikely to resolve the issue of speed entering the village

They do not have the resources to carry out a study of alternative options but would be happy to meet with a consultant, should we employ one.

Cllr Pate asked about data collection. The Clerk said that one of the mobile SIDs has the capacity to record data but he does not know how to download the information. He will advise Cllr Ellery of the make and also contact the department of KCC for instructions.

It was agreed that another mobile SID (with data collection) would be useful and the Clerk was asked to look into the cost.

Mr Norton pointed out that this analysis was seriously flawed. SPC's accident log evidenced 10 collisions on Groombridge Hill in 2018 alone, 4 of which involved injury. It also failed to take into account significant concerns about the road geometry (eg. a lack of a verge for escape in case of collisions) and vulnerable road users (eg. cyclists, schoolchildren and farm traffic). The Committee asked Mr Norton to draft a response to KCC Highways regarding the number of accidents quoted on the hill and other issues. The Clerk advised that Withyham PC has managed to reduce the speed limit on the A264 from the railway bridge at Ashurst for a number of miles from 60 to 40mph in East Sussex. He said WPC has a Highways advisor who is a retired person who did a lot of the work which involved public meetings. He suggested one or two members could meet with WPC to find out more information.

Mr Simon Jeffreys had submitted photos of the beginning of subsidence on Groombridge Hill and the Clerk would report it.

- **Bird in Hand Street** – Councillors noted the serious accident when a car skidded in snowy conditions and hit a house causing serious damage to a grade 2 listed home. This will be added to database and monitored.
- **The Green** – the Clerk circulated the correspondence regarding the parking request to the Committee.

b) **Ashurst**

- **A264 Ashurst Road** – the Committee agreed that the A264 from Langton to Ashurst would benefit from a speed reduction and would consider using a consultant.

c) **Speldhurst**

- **Review of the 20mph speed limit in the village** – it was agreed that overall it been perceived positively however there were reports of motorists not adhering to the limit which stressed the need for data collection. It was suggested that a mobile SID could be reinstated on the existing pole to collect the data but the Clerk advised that KCC Highways had told him that SIDs in 20mph zones was not current practise. The Clerk will investigate alternatives and ask the Police to carry out a speed check.

d) **Langton Green**

- **20mph advisory scheme** – the Clerk had circulated emails of chasing KCC Highways to get them working. Cllr Mrs Woodliffe asked about the correspondence regarding the 20mph advisory sign. The Clerk advised that he had not responded because he was waiting for the Committee to recommend an appropriate response. The resident had written to our MP and he had been contacted the previous day by one of Greg Clark's assistants on the matter. The Clerk had contacted KCC Highways asking about the siting of the equipment who had responded that they were specifically sited and the designer is happy with the locations in terms of effectiveness. The Clerk would draft a response to the resident.
- **Langton Road: traffic camera markings** – the Clerk had circulated emails chasing that the lines be reinstated following the recent resurfacing work.
- **Langton Road speed limit to Farm Shop** – The Committee agreed that a consultant will be needed to progress the reduction.
- **Langton Road east towards Tunbridge Wells** – Previous Speed Watch sessions had shown no excessive speeding. To be monitored.
- **Speldhurst Road** – the new speed limit from 60 to 40mph had come in to effect in December. It was agreed that this was a positive improvement.

16. **To consider whether to engage a consultant** – Cllr Pate would join the Clerk and sift through the recommended list sent by KCC Highways and report back.

**17. Speedwatch** – The Clerk reported that he had volunteers from Speldhurst and Groombridge. It was agreed to place an advertisement in Langton Life and other broadsheets for volunteers (similar to the one Rusthall PC had placed in their magazine). Cllr Mrs Podbury said that Mr Langridge had volunteered for Langton. The Clerk would chase and organise some training.

**18. Items for information:**

- Cllr Ellery said he will suggest another place on Barden Road for a deer sign
- Cllr Round asked if a mini roundabout had been considered at The Hare junction. He was advised that this had been discussed 20 years ago.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.17pm

Chairman