



Langton Green Pavilion (Post Full Council Statement - Final Version)

We know there are strong and differing opinions in Langton Green about its Pavilion. These need to be heard and taken into account. We would urge everyone concerned to express their views, but to do so in constructive and neighbourly ways, no matter how strongly they feel about the issues. We believe all parties can agree there must be no place for personal abuse or intimidation.

The Pavilion at Langton Green is a valuable asset for our community. Its construction ten years ago was a major achievement by the Langton Green Community Sports Association (LGCSA) which secured a grant of some £384,000 from the Football Foundation and contributed a further £120,000 or so. Speldhurst Parish Council (SPC) contributed £25,000, provided the land and, most significantly, undertook to meet the Pavilion's running costs.

Since then, LGCSA has had free use of the Pavilion, with SPC meeting all running and maintenance costs, including energy bills. To help cover these costs, SPC has sought to hire out the Pavilion when not in use by the LGCSA.

Managing the competing needs of users has not been easy. And in recent years, SPC has been unable to cover all the Pavilion running and maintenance costs from hiring fees. The surge in electricity prices after the invasion of Ukraine and increasing maintenance costs as the building ages have made that a much more difficult challenge, despite SPC's work to improve the Pavilion's energy efficiency.

The bulk of hiring fees come from the Langton Green Community Hub, a Community Interest Company which oversees the operation of the Café and a number of community events. We know this provision is valued by many in the local community, as it has been by the Council. Discussions between the Council and the Community Hub to extend for a further 12 months are ongoing.

Regardless of the outcome of these discussions, the Parish Council must satisfy itself that current arrangements offer best value for our Council Taxpayers. So we want to use the coming months to commission an independent and transparent review to see if there are any options that might produce more income to cover the Pavilion's costs and/or enhance services for local residents. These options must continue to be community-focused to comply with the original grant conditions. The LGCSA and Community Hub will be invited to participate in the review process as key stakeholders, along with other interested parties. The timescale for the review will need to be agreed with the independent third party.

The Parish Council is discussing with the LGCSA opportunities to change existing restrictions and obligations to make hiring the Pavilion more attractive. Current arrangements could inhibit the hiring potential.

We recognise all this has been difficult for the LGCSA, Community Hub and local people.

It has also been difficult for the Parish Council. Our Councillors give their time without payment to serve their local community and our external auditors have commended the Governance standards they achieve.

We have very limited resources. Our 4 staff are part-time and account for just over 2 Full Time Equivalents. Their commitment and professionalism is of a very high order.

Several Councillors have left recently and 2 of our 3 office staff have now resigned. People leave roles for a variety of reasons, but it is fair to say that Langton Green's continuing conflict over the Pavilion has been a factor in those decisions.

We are working to fill these vacancies but until we do, the capacity of the Parish Council to undertake anything other than essential work will be considerably restricted.

This is unfortunate because SPC does valuable work across all four villages, including the Speldhurst Chapel Project, environmental initiatives, representations on planning cases and road safety improvements (where we have invested significant effort and are seeing some progress, including around Langton Green Primary School). It would be a pity if this activity were to be crowded out by arguments about the Pavilion.

We are encouraged by recent discussions with the Sports Association, Community Hub and others that an agreed way forward is possible. It is in everyone's interest that this succeeds.

Speldhurst Parish Council – 12th August 2025

If, after reading this statement, you would like to speak to the parish council, please contact our Clerk, Katie Neve by email: clerk@speldhurstparishcouncil.gov.uk, or by phone: 01892 862927 / 07760 769513.