

## NOTES ON A MEETING OF THE ENVIRONMENT WORKING GROUP (EWG)

23<sup>rd</sup> July 2025 via Teams

**Attendees:** Cllrs John Turner (JT) (Chair), Paul Curry (PC) and Rebecca Leach (RL), with Ken Howes and Lizzie Pannell (LP).

**In Attendance:** Catherine Barrett (CB), Assistant Clerk.

**Apologies:** Kay Dooley (KD) & Ed Langridge (EL).

**1. To ask members for their consent to record the meeting to aid the production of meeting notes**

Members consented to the meeting being recorded by CB using the Teams recording function for the accuracy of the minutes. She would delete the recording after the next EWG meeting.

**2. Election of Chair**

JT was elected as Chair.

Before moving on to the next agenda item, JT gave the following update for the Members of the Public. He explained that the parish council was currently running with 9 councillors instead of the full 13 it was supposed to have. With forthcoming staff changes, the council office would also run at less than full capacity during the recruitment process. Given this context, the remaining councillors were looking to see how to streamline activities for the time being, and while the evening's meeting would review the work completed in the previous six months, there was limited capacity to take on new projects.

**3. An overview of action points and updates from the previous meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2025**

The action points would be included for discussion as part of the relevant agenda items.

**4. Financial Review**

- Allocated budget and outgoings for the financial year to date – The EWG budget had been set at £650.00 for the 2025-26 financial year.  
Evidence had been sent to Sussex Lund of the Pocket Park project completion. £1300.000 was expected to cover the cost of what had been paid for Laurel Removal.
- Future Outgoings – An appropriate memorial to Alan Ford would be discussed as part of the Pocket Park agenda item.
- Cllr Turner said that Pocket Park was an example of what could be achieved with careful planning and a commitment to obtaining funding. John noted the many contributions that Alan Ford had made to the project.

**5. Langton Green Recreation Ground (LGRG)**

- An update on weed control at Langton Green Recreation Ground – Cllr Turner reported that councillors had approved the continued use of non-glyphosate weed control methods – Natural Round Up, strimming – at April Full Council. The 2024 weed control trial had been successful, and the Groundsman had reported that it continued to work well.

**6. An update on EV Charger Usage – usage data had been sent by KCC, as per the table below:**

Date	Sessions	Average Session Length (Min)	Total Energy (kWh)
Dec-24	9	72	383
Jan-25	14	344	518
Feb-25	22	348	760

Mar-25	30	397	853
Apr-25	25	372	674
May-25	25	292	523

**6. An update on research into the funding available to help reduce energy loss at Langton Green Pavilion**

Jade Dickens had provided some links to energy efficiency funding organisations before stepping down from the council. JT said that there was currently much discussion about managing the pavilion, and although it would be important to address energy efficiency further at some point, it was not a priority at the moment. It was agreed that no further research would be done for the time being.

**7. An update on re-wilding activities at Pocket Park, Speldhurst, including:**

- **Looking after the newly planted trees & hedges** – JT said that CB had been watering the recently-planted trees during dry spells to help them establish. This raised a point about the necessity of continuing to monitor the park regularly. An action point was set for JT, PC and LP to meet at the park with CB and look at what was needed, for example, bramble clearance and other tidying up during Autumn, inspecting the newly planted trees, looking out for any visiting wildlife in the park and identifying the plants that were growing. KH added that it was important to find volunteers who would be willing to take over from AF. An action point was set for CB to appeal for local conservation enthusiasts on social media and in the parish magazines.
- **Lectern Noticeboard** – CB had updated the lectern noticeboard and the ‘Lectern Display’ document had been shared. CB had written and formatted the updates, but these would need to be simplified going forward.
- **Forest School sessions** – CB reported that Speldhurst Primary School had now used the park for a Forest School session. They planned to continue to use it once every half term. This had come about after a chance conversation with a local parent, and was a welcome development after previous attempts by LP to involve the school.
- **Memorial to Alan Ford** – It was agreed that JT would propose the idea of a memorial to Alan Ford at the next Full Council meeting, and Members would think about an appropriate memorial in the meantime.

**8. An update on The Green at Old Groombridge, including:**

- **Consider reduced mowing of The Green** – JT reported that at June Full Council, Cllrs agreed to continue a ‘no mow’ approach to an area of The Green at Old Groombridge for the rest of the 2025 growing season. This decision followed a request from some Old Groombridge residents that the parish council consider mowing more regularly. Cllrs agreed to write to all residents living near the Green in August with information about what we found growing in 2025, and how this benefits biodiversity. They would ask residents for their feedback on whether to continue the no-mow approach in 2026 and decide what to do based on feedback. A document giving more context had been circulated.
- **Consider an update from a local volunteer who is making site inspections** - A conservation volunteer from Southborough inspected the Green in June to see what was growing. He hadn’t had time to make a full report yet but hoped to make another inspection before the end of August.

**9. The format of future EWG Meetings** – JT explained that as the council would be streamlining its activities, he would like to propose that the EWG be combined with the Amenities Committee, of which he was also the proposed Chair. Members agreed that this was a sensible way forward. An action point was set for JT to propose the combining of the EWG and Amenities Committee at the next Full Council Meeting. KH noted that it seemed increasingly difficult to get people to volunteer to help with parish council activities.

**10. To consider an offer from the Woodland Trust for Free Tree Packs** – It was agreed not to follow up on this offer, as again, this would require manpower to identify suitable areas for tree planting, planting the trees and then maintaining them. LP said that when she had run the local nursery school, it had been challenging to give away the saplings she was given. KH agreed but expressed disappointment at the general approach to tree care, particularly the maintenance and management of the existing tree population. He felt there was little encouragement from the borough council to apply for tree preservation orders (TPOs), and when applications to fell trees with TPOs were passed, there was insufficient follow-up to ensure that replacement trees were planted. KH said that if the parish council did anything, it should be to provide literature about tree management. PC said he hoped KH would be encouraged to hear that in a recent planning application where a TPO tree was to be felled, a resident had been in touch with assurance that they would plant a replacement tree.

#### **11. Items for Full Council**

- Proposal to merge the EWG with the Amenities Committee.
- There would be no follow-up on free tree packs.
- A memorial for Alan Ford.

#### **12. Items for Information**

- KH said the time had come for him to step down from the EWG; he would do so either at the end of the year or sooner if the plan to merge with the Amenities committee went ahead. JT thanked KH for volunteering with the parish council over several years, and it was agreed by all that his attention to detail, considered and intelligent inputs, and dedication to calling for a more robust application of environmental factors when considering planning applications had been inspirational.
- CB would be leaving her role at the parish council at the beginning of September, and JT thanked her for all her hard work and achievements with the EWG. CB said she had thoroughly enjoyed her work with the group and thanked all involved for making it such a pleasurable task.
- LP added thanks to CB for making progress with engaging the primary school in activities at Pocket Park after earlier unsuccessful attempts from her.
- LP confirmed that she would be willing to join a combined EWG/Amenities Committee, subject to approval by Full Council.

With nothing further to discuss, the meeting ended at 8.54 pm.

#### **Summary of Action Points**

No.	Summary	Owner	Created	Status
12/23	Approach primary schools to get them involved with Pocket Park, Speldhurst	LP/CB	25/02/25	Complete
01/25	Research some options for reducing energy loss in LG Pavilion to share at the next meeting.	JD	25/02/25	Closed
02/25	Recommend changes to Tor and Environment Policy at next Full Council Meeting	JT	25/02/25	Complete
03/25	Recommend the continued use of non-glyphosate-based weed control at Langton Green Recreation Ground at the next Full Council meeting.	JT	25/02/25	Complete
04/25	Speak to Thrive Langton about helping with work at Pocket Park	RL	25/02/25	Closed
06/25	Prepare Pocket Park photo display for APM on 19 <sup>th</sup> May	JT/CB/LP	25/02/25	Complete
08/25	Investigate process for monitoring TPO tree-felling applications	CB/PC	25/02/25	Complete

<b>10/25</b>	Share Recycling Tips again	CB	25/02/25	Complete
<b>11/25</b>	Circulate the next meeting date	CB	25/02/25	Complete
<b>05/25</b>	Action ongoing work at Pocket Park eg, instruct mowing contractor, update noticeboard, site inspection, check new hedging and trees.	JT/AF/CB	25/02/25	Complete
<b>07/25</b>	Work on wildflower planting initiative, encouraging residents to have a rewilded area.	EL/RL	25/02/25	TBA
<b>09/25</b>	Talk to neighbouring p-c's about partnering on environmental projects and sharing info.	JT	25/02/25	In progress
<b>12/25</b>	Meet at Pocket Park and look at what was needed, eg, bramble clearance, other tidying up for Autumn, inspecting the newly planted trees, looking out for any visiting wildlife in the park, and identifying the plants growing.	JT, PC, LP	230725	TBA
<b>13/25</b>	appeal for local conservation enthusiasts on social media and in the parish magazines.	CB	230725	TBA
<b>14/25</b>	Propose merging of EWG/Amenities Committee, and a memorial for Alan Ford at Full Council	JT	230725	TBA