



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

Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on Monday 7th December 2020 at 7.00pm
Conducted online via Zoom electronic communication

MEMBERS PRESENT

Cllrs Barrington-Johnson (Chairman), Mrs Soyke, Mrs Podbury, Mrs Lyle, Mrs Woodliffe, Ellery, Pate, Turner, Scarbrough, Rajah and Langridge

OFFICERS PRESENT

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

IN ATTENDANCE

County Cllr McInroy and Borough Cllrs Ms Willis sent their apologies.

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were two members of the public present.

20/222 Welcome by the Chairman

Cllr Barrington-Johnson welcomed everyone to the meeting.

20/223 To enquire if anyone intends to record the meeting

No-one present intended to record the meeting.

20/224 To accept and approve apologies and reasons for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Rowe due to a family funeral.

20/225 Disclosure of Interests

Cllr Ellery declared an interest in Speldhurst Community shop and post office. It was noted that this interest was likely to extend to other councillors who had a financial interest in the Community Benefit Shop and the Clerk would investigate how to manage the matter.

20/226 Declarations of Lobbying

There were none.

20/227 Minutes of the Full Council meeting and confidential meeting held on 2nd November 2020

RESOLVED that the minutes, previously forwarded to Members were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

20/228 Co-option of new Councillor

Mr Trevor Myles was co-opted onto the Council. Cllr Myles then took his place in the meeting and it was noted that he would sign the declaration of acceptance of office as soon as it was practicable. The Chairman welcomed him to the council and said he looked forward to working together. It was agreed that Cllr Myles would join the Planning, Amenities and Highways committees.

20/228 Borough and County Councillors' Reports

Cllr Podbury advised that Rusthall were likely to have a 20mph zone installed which could have implications for Speldhurst parish.

20/229 Public Open Session

Mrs Ruth Ritson was attending to hear the update regarding the drainage project and Mr Garry Saunders was attending to receive a general parish update.

20/230 Clerk's Report

The Clerk reported the following:

- He had submitted the Community Right to Buy application for the Speldhurst Community Shop and Post Office and had received a response from TWBC requesting further information. It was agreed that he would ask the Community Shop Management Group if they could help with completion of the questions.
- A large infestation of rats had been discovered around the recycling area in the Langton Green Recreation Ground (LGRG) carpark. Two quotes had been obtained and the cheapest contractor had been employed under delegated authority to carry out eradication with a follow up visit to clear the remaining detritus with the assistance of the Groundsman. An annual pest control contract had been recommended by the contractor which would be considered by the Amenities Committee.
- TWBC were carrying out a census in 2021.

20/231 Finance Committee – Report by Cllr Mrs Lyle

- a) A meeting of the Finance Committee had been held on Monday 30th November; the minutes having been circulated. Grants had been awarded to Porchlight, West Kent Mediation and Citizens Advice Bureau Tunbridge Wells. The committee had declined to make a grant to the National Search and Rescue Dog Association because it was felt the email was impersonal, it would not be of great benefit to parishioners and their offer of free advertising for the parish council was not appropriate.
- b) Report on budget virements
There were none.
- c) Report on interim payments made since the last meeting
Interim payments since the Finance Committee meeting are as follows:
Unity Bank current account: £187.60 to Veolia for waste disposal; £30.00 to Castle Water pavilion
The following payments were made by Mastercard: £270.72 Microsoft 365 business for clerks; £39.99* computer equipment; £11.52* petrol for blower etc and £240.00* skip hire.
- d) Payments made under delegated authority are starred* above.

20/232 Accounts for Payment

The Clerk advised that the accounts for payment would be forwarded to two signatories for authorisation the following day and that he had omitted the three grant payments referred to in 20/231a) which would also be submitted to signatories for authorisation.

Payee Name	Ref.	Amount £	Detail
BT PLC	DD	24.00	Mobile
Kidman's Ltd	MT1914	12.19	Maintenance parts
Paul Cheater	MT1915	252.00	Pavilion cleaning October
Herrington Consulting Ltd	MT1916	480.00	Site visit
M R Lawrence	MT1917	715.00	Mowing & Strimming
Commercial Services Kent Ltd	MT1918	795.64	Vehicle Hire Oct/Nov
Viking Direct	MT1919	64.03	Stationery
Tunbridge Wells Borough Council	MT1920	200.00	Mayoral Charity
Catherine Barrett	MT1921	43.20	Expenses
Paul Cheater	MT1925	56.00	Pavilion cleaning
Commercial Services Trading Lt	MT1926	4,134.43	Maintenance to paths pavilion
Initial	MT1927	128.70	Maintenance supplies
Tate Fencing Ltd	MT1928	42.76	Tate & Tonbridge Fencing
JLM Pest Control	MT1929	620.00	Pest Control
BT PLC	DD	206.96	Broadband and Telephone
N.E.S.T. Pension Scheme	MT1923	167.98	Pension contributions
Employees' Salaries	MT1924	3,736.30	Salaries
KCS Professional Services	DD	109.50	Photocopier
Castle Water	DD	30.00	Pavilion water
Veolia	DD	159.70	Waste Disposal
HMRC	MT1922	2,487.91	Tax & NI (3 months)

£14,466.30

20/233 Langton Green Recreation Ground (LGRG)

- a) Cllr Mrs Lyle reported on behalf of the Pavilion Management Committee. The pavilion café had remained open serving takeaway refreshments only and was additionally opening on Saturday mornings. A conservative approach to income had been taken towards the budget for 2021-22 and it was considered likely that the pavilion may run at a loss that year, however it was hoped that the pavilion would break even in 2020-21 with the help of the Business Rate Support Grant.
- b) Traffic management and parking
The Clerk had obtained three quotations for the installation of rubber grid matting to increase the parking capacity at the LGRG and the lowest quote was £14,850 which was considerably more than anticipated when the offer to extend the parking was made. It was agreed to ask LGCSA for a contribution towards the costs.
- c) Improvements to pathway from Lampington Row to the LGRG
The Clerk explained that he had received emails from concerned parents whose children attend Langton Green Primary School. A footpath which had previously only had light use due to the entrance for all children (since the school expansion) in years 1 to 6 being near the basketball court, was experiencing much heavier use during the pandemic with the school using 3 different entrances to implement social distancing. The footpath is too narrow to allow social distancing without stepping off onto the grass, and the grass area had become muddy underfoot. The Clerk was asked to investigate various options including laying woodchip, gravel or planings on the muddy area and report back before a decision could be made.
- d) Drainage project update
See e) below.
- e) Update on the Herrington report
A productive meeting had been held with a representative from the company and the outcome was that further investigations were recommended by the company that the working group estimated would cost approximately £12,000, without guaranteeing certainty or implementing any actual improvements. The working group considered it more appropriate to use the money to increase the capacity of the existing soakaways, which should both alleviate the council's concerns over standing water in the swales, and reduce

further any risk of water leaving the rec. The Assistant Clerk was asked to obtain advice from TWBC Planning Department regarding whether planning permission was required for such an additional soakaway and once this had been ascertained, the matter would be discussed further.

20/234 Parish Council Vehicle

Cllr Barrington-Johnson had prepared a spreadsheet ranking the various vehicles and options which were under consideration according to their suitability and overall cost. Cllr Langridge said that having researched the matter in detail, his recommendation would be to purchase a 2017 petrol Peugeot Partner or the Renault Kango electric vehicle. The Clerk advised that he was investigating SPC participating in a KCC trial scheme which may give the opportunity to try out an electric vehicle on a short term basis and he would know further information following a meeting on the 16th December. After much discussion it was **RESOLVED** that if SPC's application was successful and participation in the trial cost £300pcm or less (i.e. the cost of the existing monthly van lease), the trial should be taken and a decision subsequently made. If it would cost more than £300pcm to participate in the trial, Cllr Langridge, Pate and Barrington-Johnson would proceed with purchasing a suitable petrol van.

20/235 Precept 2021-22

The 2021-2022 budget and precept had been discussed in some detail at the Finance Committee meeting on the 30th November and a recommendation was made of a zero percent increase. Cllr Lyle explained that it was originally hoped to increase the precept by £5K however bearing in mind the hardship being felt by many parishioners, an increase was not considered appropriate in the current circumstances. She went on to explain that because the tax base in the borough had decreased mainly due to Covid-19, a zero percent increase would be reflected as a 2.3% increase for residents because fewer households are eligible to pay for it, and so the rest would be making up for the shortfall of those residents no longer paying the tax. It is understood that nearly every parish in the Borough has been similarly affected. The shortfall of £5K from the projected budget would be taken from the contingency budget. It was **RESOLVED** that the precept request would remain at £155,250 which was a zero percent increase on 2020-21.

20/236 Christmas Closure

It was **RESOLVED** that the parish council office would officially close during the Christmas period as usual and reopen on Monday 4th January 2021.

20/237 Vandalism within the Parish

Cllr Langridge reported various incidents within Langton Green over the previous weeks such as smashed car windows and vandalism, mainly at night-time. Councillors were asked to be vigilant and report any incidents. The Admin Assistant was asked to write an article for the village magazines giving residents information on how to report vandalism. The Clerk said that the SPC website contained useful links and information on the Tunbridge Wells' Safety Community Unit (CSU). He went on to say that councillors should be checking the website regularly, receiving updates and feeding back to the office.

20/238 Footpaths

The Clerk advised that Cllr Langridge had volunteered to head up the Footpaths Working Group and would coordinate the volunteers. A meeting had been held by the Clerk, Admin Assistant and Cllr Langridge to discuss taking the working group forward and the Admin Assistant had telephoned the footpath adopters which had resulted in a further potential volunteers. Cllr Myles would also join the working group.

20/239 Draft Tunbridge Wells Agreement

Cllr Barrington-Johnson was attending a meeting of the Parish Chairmen the following day. He hoped to learn how other parish councils intended to respond to the three working days' notice to be given by TWBC should a planning decision be contrary to the decision made by the parish. This information would be used to decide SPC's response to the agreement which would be discussed further at the Full Council meeting in January.

20/240 Kent Association of Local Council (KALC)'s 2021 Community Award Scheme

It was **RESOLVED** to participate in the KALC 2021 Community Award Scheme and councillors were asked to consider a nomination to be agreed at the January meeting.

20/241 Chairman's Report

There was nothing further to report.

20/242 Committee Reports to include any Committee Meetings held since the last Full Council Meeting, the Draft Minutes having been previously forwarded to all Members

- a) **Governance** Cllr Mrs Lyle said that there had been a meeting of the Governance Committee on the 9th November when the following matters were discussed
How to carry out remote financial checks; a new item had been added to the agenda - 'Quality Assurance' - with the aim of investigating whether all procedures were being carried out in a proper manner; the internal audit was to be carried out that week, most likely remotely; the Clerk had advised that he would be stepping down by November 2021 and the recruitment process would commence in early 2021 and it was noted that the Documents, Media and CCTV Policies would need to go on the next Full Council agenda.
- b) **Planning** Cllr Ellery advised that a meeting had been held on 24th November when 13 applications were considered with SPC objecting to 5 including unjustified tree felling and a hotel at High Rocks.
- c) **Highways** The Clerk advised that he and Cllr Pate had attended a remote Highways seminar; the committee had agreed to renew some of the signage in the parish, particularly near schools and the purchase of another Speed Indicator Device (SID) was being considered.
- d) **Amenities** There was nothing to report.
- e) **Air Traffic** There was nothing to report.
- f) **Footpaths** See item 20/238.
- g) **Environment Working Group** see 20/244
- h) **KALC** There was nothing to report.

20/243 Diary Dates

Internal Audit – Thursday 10th December (deferred from November)

Planning Committee – Tuesday 15th December

20/244 Items for Information

- Cllr Langridge asked if SPC could offer its assistance to the Speldhurst Medical Centre in any way to help with the roll out of the Covid-19 vaccination programme.
- Cllr Myles advised that he knew of 2 more Groombridge volunteers to help with Speedwatch.
- Cllr Podbury said she felt it was important to reinstate the Environment Committee and it was agreed the matter would be discussed at the January meeting of Full Council.

There being no further items the meeting closed at 9.03pm.

Chairman