

Local Government Act 1972



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

Minutes of the Full Council Meeting

Held at 7.30 pm on Monday 4th August 2025 at Speldhurst Village Hall

MEMBERS PRESENT

Cllrs Rowe (Vice-Chair), Cleaver, Curry, Ellery, Leach, Norton, Tarricone and Turner.

OFFICERS PRESENT

K Neve, Clerk and K Harman (KH) Assistant Clerk (minutes).

IN ATTENDANCE

Borough Cllr Sankey was in attendance. Cllrs Sharratt and County Cllr Moreland had sent apologies.

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were 7 members of the public present.

25/150 Election of Chair

In the absence of a permanent Chair, Cllr Norton was elected to chair the meeting.

25/151 To enquire if anyone intends to record the meeting

The Chair advised that the Clerk had started an audio recording, which would be used to ensure the accuracy of minutes. Anyone who wished to speak should consider that their voice may be recorded, and the recording could be requested via Freedom of Information.

25/152 To accept and approve apologies and reasons for absence.

Apologies were received from Cllr Littlefield (work-related).

25/153 Disclosure of Interests

Councillors' ongoing disclosures were noted:

Cllrs Curry, Ellery, and Rowe had shares in the Speldhurst shop and post office.

25/154 Declarations of Lobbying

Cllrs Curry and Rowe had been lobbied regarding the Langton Green Community Hub (LGCH).

25/155 Minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 7th July 2025 – RESOLVED to approve that the minutes, previously forwarded to Members, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

25/156 Public Open Session

All members of public attending were to hear an update on the Langton Green Pavilion. Cllr Norton opened the Public Open Session with a summary of the current situation. He said that there were strong and differing views in

the community regarding the pavilion which should all be heard in a calm, constructive and neighbourly way. Langton Green Community Sports Association (LGCSA) had contributed considerable funds, Speldhurst Parish Council (SPC) had contributed the land, a grant and the running costs of the pavilion. In the early stages, the hiring income had virtually covered the overheads; however, in recent years there had been a struggle with the building ageing and requiring increased maintenance as well as considerable increases in energy prices. The bulk of hiring income came from the Community Hub, a Community Interest Company that oversees the cafe and community events. This provision was valued by many in the community, as it was by the Council, and discussions to extend it for 12 months were in hand. Given these cost pressures the Council wanted to use the coming months to review how the Pavilions' income and services could be maximised to ensure best value for taxpayers and users. LGCSA's usage stipulations made developing other uses and income difficult, so SPC would want the Sports Association to look at how these might be amended. Conflict over the Pavilion had caused problems for the Parish Council as well as for the other parties and had been a factor in recent resignations. Councillors give their time without payment to help the local community and there were very limited resources. Currently, SPC's capacity to be proactive was much reduced being 4 councillors short, with no Chair and 2 out of the 3 office staff having resigned. This was regrettable because it meant that the good work of the parish council in other areas such as road safety enhancements was being crowded out.

Cllr Sankey enquired about the £25,000 Public Realm money (PR2) from Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC) which was the result of motoring fines collected in Tunbridge Wells. Cllr Norton explained that unfortunately due to the amount of time spent by clerks and councillors on pavilion matters in the past week, the PR2 had not yet been followed up although he hoped they would be able to take forward actions from a very useful meeting with Kent County Council (KCC) Highways if Pavilion related concerns allowed it.

James Bowdidge spoke in support of the Hub and reiterated the good it provided the community.

Jeremy Stirling commended SPC on its hard work and said it faced a challenge ahead trying to increase income from the Pavilion. Cllr Ellery said it was important to remember value wasn't just measured in pounds and pence but value to the community.

Cllr Curry said that the pavilion was currently a large drain on resources, becoming all-encompassing and causing stress to those working towards a resolution. However, it was hoped that with the recent change in leadership of LGCSA, steps were being taken to move forward.

Andrew Thompson spoke of his concerns regarding transparency and urged councillors to commit to an open transparent tender for the facility.

Cllr Sankey raised the question of the necessity for a formal tender process.

25/157 Borough and County Councillors' Reports

Borough Cllr Sankey said that he had nothing new to report - the Borough Council was quiet as it was holiday season. Devolution was moving slowly forward and he would provide an update when further information was known.

Cllr Norton brought forward the agenda item relating to the Pavilion for discussion.

25/158 Langton Green Recreation Ground

- An update on the Community Hub's activities had been circulated.
- After careful consideration, it was agreed that an independent review of the income capabilities of the pavilion would be carried out during the coming year. TWBC's Corporate Property Manager would be asked for guidance in the process.

It was then **RESOLVED** unanimously to allow an extension for two weeks for the Community Hub to sign the new 12 month hire agreement for the pavilion. Certainty of income was key.

Cllrs Leach, Curry, Turner and Rowe agreed to form a working group to agree the format of the pavilion review.

- Update on discussions with LGCSA regarding revised terms:

- Cllr Rowe reported that a meeting had been held recently between LGCSA and SPC where both parties outlined their positions. The focus was on common ground and what could be agreed and achieved going forward with a commitment from both sides to consult regularly and work together proactively.
- A reduction in LGCSA weekend bookings to enable increased opportunities for income generation was agreed.
- It was confirmed that the Langton Green Matters Facebook page did not represent LGCSA.
- There was no decision yet on whether LGCSA would proceed with an application for a 3G pitch.
- It was **RESOLVED** to publish an official SPC statement concerning the Pavilion with wording to be finalised outside the meeting. Cllr Ellery, Curry and Norton agreed to finalise the statements via email.
- Request for Parish Poll: Andrew Thompson agreed that if a transparent, independent review on the income capabilities of the pavilion was carried out, he would withdraw his request for a parish poll. He would also revisit the information he was seeking from SPC under his Freedom of Information requests.

25/159 Clerk's Report

The following were circulated by the Clerk:

- An updated list of current bank signatories as requested by the Finance and Governance Committee.
- Information on SPC's defibrillators as requested by the Finance and Governance Committee.
- Local Government Review Survey Response.
- Ashurst McDermott Hall Trust Meeting Minutes from 09/07/25.
- Highways speed bin stickers for distribution.

25/160 General Matters – Actionable tasks that do not fall to a committee.

All items were either in progress or complete.

	Existing	Owner	Created	Status
31/25	Update Premises Licence to be held by Pavilion Working Group and confirm terms of reference.	Clerk	07/04/25	In progress
41/25	Establish review process for Community Hub.	Pav WG	06/05/25	In progress
42/25	Confirm increased charges for Pavilion and update website.	Asst Clerk (CB)	06/05/25	In progress
43/25	Establish Pavilion Licence Committee and confirm ToFR.	Clerk	06/05/25	In progress
52/25	Set up working group of councillors to look at next year's APM and potential change of focus. Contact other PCs on theirs.	Clerk	02/06/25	In progress
54/25	Write to Chair of LGCSA regarding revised set of terms.	Clerk/Cllr Rowe	07/07/25	Complete
55/25	Advertise job vacancy.	Clerk	07/07/25	Complete
56/25	Write to solicitors regarding Pavilion.	Clerk/Cllr Rowe	07/07/25	TBA
57/25	Include insurance renewal on Fin & Governance Cttee agenda.	Clerk	07/07/25	Complete
58/25	Update Terms of Reference on website and Cllrs' folder.	Clerk	07/07/25	In progress
59/25	Complete Local Government Reorganisation Survey.	Clerk/Cllr Curry/Cllrs	07/07/25	Complete
60/25	Accept quotation from Ashford Security for remedial works at Pavilion.	Clerk	07/07/25	Complete
	New	Owner	Created	Status
61/25	Advertise vacancy for Deputy Clerk role.	Clerk	04/08/25	
62/25	Update Financial Regulations and Standing Orders on website and in councillors' folder.	Clerk	04/08/25	
63/25	Undertake insurance restatement valuation on Speldhurst Chapel.	Cllr Rowe/Clerk	04/08/25	
64/25	Respond to planning consultations 25/01741 and 25/01484.	Asst Clerk (KH)	04/08/25	

65/25	Finalise Statement concerning Pavilion and publish.	Clrs Curry, Ellery, Norton, Rowe and Clerk	04/08/25	
66/25	Progress with review process for the Pavilion and consult with TWBC Corporate Property Manager and include on next Full Council agenda.	Clrs Curry, Ellery, Norton, Rowe and Clerk	04/08/25	

25/161 Committees and Working Groups (WG) and other Reports: to include any meetings held since the last Full Council meeting, the draft minutes having previously been forwarded to all Members

- a) **Highways Committee** – Cllr Norton and Cllr Turner had met with the Clerk and Assistant Clerk (CB) to discuss Highway Improvement Plan (HIP) items for grant funding. He said that recent meetings with both Kent County Council (KCC) and County Cllr John Moreland were proactive and encouraging and it was hoped projects would now move forward. He commended the hard work of the Clerk and Assistant Clerk (CB) on these matters.
- b) **Amenities Committee** – Cllr Turner advised there had been no meeting and there was nothing to report.
- c) **Environment WG (EWG)** – Cllr Turner, Chair reported that a meeting had been held on 23rd July and raised the following:
 - On recommendation of the EWG it was **RESOLVED** to combine the EWG and Amenities Committee.
 - A memorial to Alan Ford in Pocket Park was considered appropriate. Cllr Turner would look at options and report back.
 - A request from Woodland Trust for free trees was regretfully declined due to lack of volunteers to pursue the project.
 - The Clerk's recent bid for a grant from TWBC towards maintenance of the Boundary Pond had been unsuccessful.
 - Cllr Turner asked for it to be recorded that Catherine Barrett's contribution towards the EWG had been fantastic and that she would be greatly missed.
- d) **KALC (Kent Association of Local Councils)** – there was nothing to report.

25/162 Finance and Governance Committee – Report by Cllr Rowe. A meeting had been held on 21st July, the minutes had been circulated.

- a) The detailed budget reports were noted.
- b) Report on interim payments made since the last meeting:

Unity Trust Bank: £67.34 Talk Talk DD for Pavilion Broadband and office phone and broadband; £105.04 DD Unity Trust Credit Card Payment; £4162.30 Zurich for insurance renewal; £84.67 BT final broadband and office phone.

Mastercard: £9 DD card charge; £6.40* Wickes for Fly and Wasp Spray; £7* Quick Fix for petrol for key cutting; £16.99* Amazon for USB sticks; £49.61 LG Service Station for fuel for van.
- c) The decisions made under delegated authority, starred above, were noted.
- d) A decision on a grant towards Speldhurst News was deferred until further information was received.
- e) **Staff Vacancy** – The Clerk said that on reflection, for resilience, it would be better to retain 3 part-time members of the team. She would write to each applicant explaining the situation and advising them that the roles available are Deputy Clerk and a Parish Administrator. It was agreed that the Clerk would advertise for a Deputy Clerk's role.
- f) It was **RESOLVED** that a temporary reduction in non-essential activities should be implemented and priority given to statutory functions during the current period of councillor and staff shortages, until full capacity is restored.
- g) It was **RESOLVED** to approve the updated Financial Regulations and Standing Orders as recommended by the Finance and Governance Committee.

25/163 Accounts for Payment

It was **RESOLVED** that the invoices as listed below and checked by Cllr Turner be paid.

Date	Payee	Reference	Amount £	Transaction
04/08/2025	ICO	DD	47.00	Data Protection Fee
05/08/2025	Katie Neve	MT2986	29.70	Mileage Claim
05/08/2025	Catherine Barrett	MT2987	49.50	Mileage Claim
05/08/2025	Kate Harman	MT2988	60.10	Expenses Claim
05/08/2025	Agrifactors (Southern) Ltd	MT2989	840.00	LGRG Pitch Maintenance
05/08/2025	LGVH	MT2990	199.99	SPC Office Electricity 01-07/25
05/08/2025	LGVH	MT2991	40.38	Meeting Room Hire
05/08/2025	M R Lawrence	MT2992	350.00	Mowing and Strimming
05/08/2025	Engrave It All	MT2993	107.64	Jubilee Award Engraving
05/08/2025	Trevor Myles	MT2994	17.25	Steel Rod - Bench Groombridge
05/08/2025	Mrs M Logan	MT2995	34.50	Pavilion Cleaning
05/08/2025	St Martin's Church, Ashurst	MT2996	1,500.00	Grant - Church & Broadsheet
05/08/2025	St Mary's Church, Speldhurst	MT2997	1,000.00	Grant - Churchyard
05/08/2025	Tivoli	MT2998	162.20	Canine Waste Removal
05/08/2025	WJ-Sunstone	MT2999	1,045.25	Pavilion CCTV - 50% Deposit
05/08/2025	The Play Inspection Company Ltd	MT3001	211.20	Annual Playground Inspection
05/08/2025	HMRC	MT3002	1,920.01	Income Tax and NI
05/08/2025	Langton Life	MT3003	375.00	Magazine Article
05/08/2025	3 Counties Grounds Maintenance	MT3004	602.40	Grounds Maintenance
05/08/2025	London Hearts	MT3006	3,816.00	Defibrillators
05/08/2025	Ashurst McDermott Hall Sports	MT3007	37.50	Meeting Room
08/08/2025	BT PLC	DD	28.64	Office Mobile
11/08/2025	Talk Talk Business	DD	67.34	Talk Talk Business
20/08/2025	EDF Energy	DD	790.74	Pavilion Electricity
20/08/2025	Employees	MT3005	5,863.72	Salaries
28/08/2025	Hugo Fox	DD	11.99	Monthly Website Subscription
28/08/2025	Veolia	DD	360.91	Waste and Recycling
31/08/2025	Unity Trust Bank	DD	11.25	Bank Charges

25/164 Update on Vacancies on the Council – The Clerk was in liaison with TWBC and proceeding within the guidelines to recruit new councillors.

25/165 Speldhurst Chapel Project – A status report had been circulated and latest update provided. Cllr Rowe said the building works were progressing well and would hopefully be finished by the end of September. It was **RESOLVED** to spend up to £1,000 on obtaining an official valuation of the premises in its new form for insurance purposes.

25/166 Planning Committee – Report provided by Cllr Curry, Planning Chair. A meeting was held on 14th July, and draft minutes circulated. Cllr Curry said there was nothing of note to report. There would be no August meeting.

- **25/01741/FULL - Went Farm, Langton Road, Speldhurst**

Proposal: Demolition of existing conservatory and construction of single-storey side extension

Decision: Remain neutral, defer to Planning Officer.

- **25/01484/FULL - Myra, Furzefield Avenue, Speldhurst**

Proposal: Proposed rear and roof extension with alterations to roof.

Decision: Remain neutral, defer to Planning Officer.

25/167 Diary Dates

- 1st September – Full Council (SPVH)
- 8th September – Finance and Governance Committee
- 15th September – Planning Committee
- 22nd September – Highways Committee
- Rota for Chairing Full Council Meetings:
 - **September** – Rebecca Leach
 - **October** – Giles Littlefield
 - **November** – Paul Curry
 - **December** – Richard Ellery TBC
 - **January** – Domenico Tarricone
 - **February** – John Turner
 - **March** – Paul Curry

25/168 Items for Information

- GACC Newsletter – July
- GAGNE Gatwick Statement
- Talk Talk – Change of Company Name
- Cllr Rowe made an enquiry regarding obtaining more deer signs for the parish. The Clerk asked for all sightings and incidents to be logged with her to justify the request.

There being nothing further to discuss, the meeting closed at 9.23 pm.

Chair