



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

**MINUTES OF AN EXTRAORDINARY FULL COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON MONDAY, 29th NOVEMBER 2010 at 7.30pm
IN THE COMMITTEE ROOM, LANGTON GREEN VILLAGE HALL**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Cllrs. Mrs Jeffreys (Chairman), Mrs Paulson-Ellis, Mrs Podbury, Mrs Hull, Mrs Soyke, Mrs Waters, Brown, Ellis, Langridge, Milner, Parker, and Wheeler

OFFICERS PRESENT: Chris May, Clerk; Mrs M Flemington, Assistant Clerk

There were approximately 20 members of the public

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Cllr Pendleton (family commitment)

10/166 DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL AND PREJUDICIAL INTEREST: There were none.

10/167 DECLARATIONS OF LOBBYING: Cllr Mrs Paulson-Ellis had been contacted by Mrs Ponsford but had expressed no opinion – Cllr Mrs Hull had also been contacted. Cllr Mrs Podbury had also been contacted by members of the public but had not expressed an opinion.

The Chairman explained that the decision on the precept would be taken on December 6th, as stated in the Minutes of the Finance Meeting of 8th November, and the reason the Extraordinary Meeting had been called was so that all Councillors could have further discussions on the precept ahead of that meeting. The Chairman explained that the Public Open Session would be confined to twenty minutes to enable Councillors to discuss the issues.

10/168 PUBLIC OPEN SESSION: Mr Ponsford thanked the Chairman for the explanation of why the meeting had been called. He showed Councillors pages of flip charts indicating increases v Government recommendations; increases v pension income and proposed a precept of £55,000. Mr Jeffrey asked questions about the under spend of £82,000; Mr Baker suggested that the Council had gone about the budget process the wrong way and asked for more details regarding the reserves; Mrs Danks did not have confidence in the figures; Mr Danks asked for more details of the PWLB; Mr Sterling believed that the Council had not acted responsibly; Mr Lee asked what the legal notice period was for calling meetings and Mrs Ponsford asked Councillors to be less extravagant and suggested a precept of around £115,000

10/169 THE PRECEPT 2011-12: Cllr Mrs Soyke made a general comment regarding the pitfalls of percentages – despite the large % increase in our precept last year, a band D property still paid less than a similar property in a neighbouring parish which had a very small % increase. Cllr Langridge believed there were savings to be made and that a more appropriate precept would be in the region of £110,000 - £115,000. Cllr Brown agreed. Cllr Mrs Podbury stated that a precept of £125,000 was a prudent figure based on past precepts. Cllr Milner spoke of the need for dialogue and of the need to be constructive. Cllr Mrs Hull said that the Council needed to take on board that many people locally are struggling financially. Cllr Mrs Jeffreys asked Councillors to consider whether they thought a precept of £115,000 would be sustainable over the next five years as it was possible that precept increases would not be allowed.

Cllr Parker asked Councillors if they had considered where the cuts should be made. Councillors then gave their views on where some cuts could be made.

Cllr Jeffreys cautioned against cuts to highways which had proven to be the biggest concern to all villagers in the Parish. Cllr Wheeler gave a brief overview of potential traffic calming problems in Speldhurst concerning the Local Needs Housing project and the possibility of the Parish Council contributing. Cllr Mrs Soyke said she thought that funding by the Parish Council should only be as a last resort.

Cllr Parker said that in his opinion the play area in the Speldhurst Recreation Ground should be condemned. After much discussion and varying views on where cuts could be made it was **AGREED** that the clerk would review the figures and present Councillors with three different proposals for a precept of £123,900 and £113,900 as well as the Finance Committee proposal for £133,900. The precept would then be voted on at the Full Council meeting on December 6th.

10/170 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION: There were none.

There being nothing further to discuss the meeting closed at 8.48pm

CHAIRMAN