



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

**Minutes of the Amenities Working Group Meeting
held on Monday 20th February 2023 at 7.30pm
In the Parish Council Office, Langton Green, with an option to attend via Team Electronic
Communication for the purpose of transacting the following business:**

MEMBERS PRESENT

Cllrs Lyle (Chair), Dooley, Norton, Soyke, Tarricone in person and Turner (via Teams).

OFFICERS PRESENT

Mrs K Harman – Assistant Clerk (AC).

1. **To enquire if anyone present intends to film, photograph and/or record the meeting**
The AC would be recording the meeting for the purpose of accuracy of the minutes. The recording would be deleted once the minutes had been signed off at the next meeting.
2. **To accept and approve apologies and reasons for absence**
Apologies had been received from Cllr Rowe who was on holiday.
3. **Disclosures of Interest**
There were none.
4. **Declarations of Lobbying**
There were none.
5. **Minutes of the Amenities Committee meeting held on 7th October 2022**
RESOLVED that the minutes, previously forwarded to Members were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.
6. **Public Open Session**
Mr Brian Tasker was attending to discuss litter bins in Speldhurst. He requested a new litter bin located adjacent to the village shop. The shop had reported that members of the public were depositing dog bags into their bin which was unpleasant for other residents. Mr Tasker asked the parish council to consider replacing all the dog bins in the village with general waste bins.

The Chair suggested that item 9 - **Bins in Speldhurst** be discussed at this point in the meeting. The AC reported that she had been in contact with a representative from Speldhurst village shop and had produced signs which they could use to put on their litter bins asking residents not to deposit dog waste or nappies. She would check in with the village shop in the near future to see if this had helped.

The AC had previously explained to Mr Tasker that Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC) empty the general waste bins in Speldhurst and that the parish council pay for the dog bins to be serviced. She had been in contact with TWBC to enquire if they would be prepared to service an additional bin, adjacent to the village shop. TWBC had advised that they were unable to install a bin near to the shop due to various highways and safety issues and were also not prepared to finance a further bin in the parish.

The AC had been unable to find a contractor prepared to service general waste bins in Speldhurst. The Chair summarised that whilst the parish council was unable to do anything further at the present time to obtain another general waste bin in Speldhurst, the matter would be monitored. She thanked Mr Tasker for attending the meeting to share his concerns and he left the meeting.

7. **Review of Action Points**

The AC ran through the action points grid providing updates – see grid on last page.

Members were frustrated with the bureaucracy involved in obtaining the S106 funds from TWBC. It was agreed that the AC should contact TWBC asking them to share their critical path or timeline involved in the release of funds. Additionally, the borough councillors would be asked to help expediate the process on Speldhurst Parish Council's (SPC) behalf.

8. **Financial Review**

The finance sheets were noted.

9. **Bins in Speldhurst**

Discussed under item 6 – Public Open Session.

10. **To consider the format of future meetings**

The decision to remain as a working group (WG) for a further six months, made at the June 2022 Amenities WG meeting had now expired. It was **RESOLVED** that the Amenities WG convert back to committee status with effect from the May 2023 Full Council meeting. A recommendation would be made to Full Council accordingly.

11. **Review of SPC Policies:**

- **Policy on Donations of or Bequests for Park Benches: RESOLVED** to make a recommendation to Full Council for readoption.
- **Guidance for Requesting Permission to Erect Temporary Signs on Council Land: RESOLVED** to make a recommendation to Full Council for readoption.
- **Policy on Use of Council Land: RESOLVED** to make a recommendation to Full Council for readoption.
- **Winter Weather Policy** – Members agreed that the existing policy, last reviewed in 2018, was out of date and should be removed from the website immediately. Advice had been received from SPC's insurers regarding the council's liability should it attempt to clear snow or ice in any

way from SPC's carpark or provide salt bins for members of the public to use themselves; however, members found the advice ambiguous, and the AC was asked to clarify with Zurich. The draft Winter Weather Policy would be recommended for adoption by Full Council with the words "where possible" inserted at the start of the first paragraph, whilst confirmation regarding SPC's duty of care was investigated further. The AC was asked to refer to TWBC's and other parish council's winter weather policies for information and comparison.

12. Parish Council Land:

a) Trees on Parish Council Land

An action-only survey had been carried out by Quaife Woodlands which recommended works to two trees in the parish: Dead Ash on Langton Road to be felled and an Ivy-covered Oak on the Langton Green Recreation Ground (LGRG) to have ivy severed and a hanging branch removed from above the zip-wire. It was **RESOLVED** to ask Living Forest to carry out the works as detailed as a matter of urgency at a maximum cost of £305 under delegated authority due to the possible safety risk to members of the public and possible harm to nesting birds should the works be delayed until the spring.

b) Langton Green Recreation Ground (LGRG)

Consideration was given to the current and possible future provision of litter and dog bins on the LGRG. The AC advised that SPC is one of only a few councils that provide dedicated dog waste bins. Most parish and town councils no longer have separate facilities but instead use only general waste bins and consideration could therefore be given for SPC to do the same. The AC had approached the current dog bin service company regarding the cost implication of converting dog bins to general waste and despite chasing several times, had not received an answer. Once a quotation had been received, a decision on future provision by SPC could be made.

c) The Green at Langton Green

- It was **RESOLVED** to recommend to Full Council that the maintenance works to trees on The Green, Langton Green be carried out by Living Forest at a total cost of £300.50 which included an additional £25 if required for permissions from TWBC.
- Cllr Mrs Lyle and the AC had been researching the deeds and relating documents of The Green in an attempt to establish liability for maintenance of the accessways. A clearer understanding of the responsibilities had been obtained and it was agreed they would attend site to further establish the situation and take photographs for the benefit of other councillors and the files. A letter would then be prepared for residents and the AC would obtain quotations for resurfacing the accessways in poor condition.

d) The Boundary, Langton Green

- It was noted that it was resolved at the February Full Council meeting for maintenance works to an oak tree adjacent to the pond be carried out at a cost of £169.50.
- The AC had obtained a quotation for maintenance works to be carried out to the pond which had traditionally been maintained by residents who were now no longer able to do so.

Members considered the quotation high and asked the AC to approach the Langton Green Village Society to see if a team of volunteers could be organised to carry out the works, failing which to seek a further quote.

e) **The Green at Groombridge**

- Members considered reducing the mowing schedule from 21 to 15 mows during the growing season (April to September) on the request of residents which could result in an approximate saving of £700. It was **RESOLVED** in principle to reduce the mowing schedule from 21 to 15 mows of the top section of The Green, during the growing season, to be monitored, reviewed and altered as required. It was hoped to let parts of the lower section of The Green grow in an effort to increase biodiversity. Mowing and growing specifics were being discussed and agreed by members of the Environment Working Group (EWG). The AC would liaise with the EWG clerk and contractor to agree a schedule of works.
- Cllr Norton advised that there was some damage to the lower end of The Green caused during the severe weather before Christmas. The AC suggested the Groundsman meet him on site to establish if he would be able to carry out the repair work.

f) **Pocket Parks at Speldhurst**

- It was **RESOLVED** that a noticeboard could be installed in Pocket Park for the purpose of educating residents about what the parish council is doing to develop biodiversity, on the recommendation of the EWG.
- Members discussed and agreed the EWG's request to remove the laurels in Pocket Park in an effort to improve plant health and biodiversity. A quote had been received from SPC's maintenance contractor and a further quote would be obtained. It was agreed the eradication should be carried out over two years to reduce the visual impact and to ensure the laurels do not grow back. It was hoped that grant(s) could be obtained to fund this project and **RESOLVED** that any remaining balance could be taken from the Amenities WG's Trees budget.

13. **Items for Information**

- Cllr Turner reported that he hoped to be receiving a contract from KCC for the EV Charger application for Langton Green Village Hall Car Park in the next week which was good news. However, he is also following up on the details of the latest survey, which was carried out in December 2022, to understand the proposal for the EV Charger installation. He hopes to update progress at the next Amenities meeting.

There being nothing further to discuss, the meeting finished at 9.03pm.

Chairman