



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

**Minutes of the Highways Committee Meeting held on Monday 24th February 2025
in the Parish Council Office, Langton Green Recreation Ground, Langton Green**

MEMBERS PRESENT Cllrs Norton (Chair), Cleaver, Littlefield, and Turner (Vice-Chair), with Mr Langridge.

BOROUGH COUNCILLORS PRESENT: There were none.

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC: There were no members of the public present.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Mrs K Neve, Clerk, and Mrs C Barrett, Assistant Clerk.

1. To enquire if anyone present intends to film, photograph and/or record the meeting

The Clerk recorded the meeting for administrative purposes.

2. To receive and approve apologies and reason for absence

Apologies were received from Mrs Dooley and Mr Myles, both due to prior commitments.

3. Disclosure of Interests

There were none.

4. Declarations of Lobbying

In relation to agenda item 10b, Cllr Turner noted he had been asked about deer management by a resident.

5. Minutes of the meeting held on 16th December 2024 – It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes, previously distributed to all Members, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

6. Public Open Session

There were no members of the public present.

7. How can we have a Bigger Impact?

Cllr Norton updated members on this work. A productive meeting had been held in January between Cllr Norton, Cllr Turner, the Clerk and Assistant Clerk, and Mike Martin MP, to consider ways of increasing the impact of work to improve road safety. The idea of a speed camera for each of the Parish's villages was discussed. Mike Martin suggested Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC) as a potential funding source for traffic-calming measures. He was aware that many parishes in the Borough had similar concerns about

speeding traffic and liked the idea of a campaign uniting them in a common cause like a speed camera for every village. He resolved to investigate this further.

Cllr Norton's follow up email to Mike Martin suggested a mobile Speed Enforcement Vehicle rotating between villages across the Borough as a way of delivering the objective more cost effectively. Mike Martin liked this idea and discussed it with Neil Baker, Kent County Council's (KCC) Cabinet Member for Highways. Mr Baker had responded that speed cameras were a last resort. More encouragingly Borough Councillor Astra Birch had confirmed the availability of a new TWBC budget for road safety improvements and invited parish councils to bid for it. Speldhurst Parish Council (SPC) had submitted the Speed Enforcement Vehicle proposal along with its Highways Improvement Plan.

News reports of the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner increasing the number of speed enforcement vehicles and their use in East Sussex were noted as evidence in support of the idea.

An action point was set for Cllr Norton to draft a letter to Mike Martin MP, Kent Police and Crime Commissioner Matthew Scott, and Cllr Astra Birch about next steps for securing a Speed Enforcement Vehicle to benefit the parishes of Borough.

8. Review of Action Points

It was agreed that the Action Points would be discussed alongside agenda item 10, relating to the Highways Improvements Plan (HIP).

9. Review of Highways Committee's Budget

The Clerk said that there had been no recent expenditure. She anticipated purchasing two large SID (Speed Indicator Device) batteries to replace the current ones, which no longer worked properly.

Payment had finally been made by the insurance company for the replacement of the SID post in Old Groombridge. Cllr Norton thanked the Clerk for all her efforts to secure this payment.

10. Highways Improvement Plan (HIP) (including consideration of any new issues by village taking into account correspondence, recent accidents, Speedwatch, and media)

a) Ashurst

HIP Item A3: Establish Speedwatch in Ashurst – The Assistant Clerk had contacted all the Ashurst residents who had previously expressed interest in volunteering to ask if they were still interested. Several were no longer able to commit, leaving 3 potentially available. She would follow up with them to see if they had completed their online training. It was agreed that much work had been done on this and the committee would not make further attempts to establish Speedwatch if she had no success.

Non-HIP Issues – It was noted that the change of use application at Ashurst and Blackham Sports Ground for educational provision had now been granted.

b) Groombridge

HIP Item OG1: Improve safety in the centre of Old Groombridge – Mr Myles had been re-activated as a Speedwatch Co-ordinator, and an update was awaited on his progress in organising a session. An action point was set for the Clerk to ask KCC for further details regarding the re-siting of the redundant SID post further up Groombridge Hill. This had been discussed at KCC's site visit with Cllr Norton, but KCC had subsequently emailed implying SPC had reached its maximum number of permitted SID locations. It was agreed that clarification was needed on this point.

Improvements to 30mph signage were complete. In doing this work KCC had discovered that the pavement on Groombridge Hill was in poor condition and had repaired it. Mr Langridge felt that repairing the pavement so far up the hill was a waste of money at a time when KCC was in debt. He said it led nowhere and was not used and asked for this to be minuted. Cllr Norton replied that more families now lived on the hill and used this pavement to reach the school bus stop. Walkers on the Tunbridge Wells Circular Walk had also complained about its condition. The Clerk added that it was likely KCC had been obliged to repair the whole of the pavement rather than stopping before the end. It was noted that the Clerk continued to press for updates from the KCC about further technical measures for traffic-calming, such as red/textured road bandings, virtual road calming or a 20mph

zone in the village centre. She was also seeking an update on the promised HGV warning signs at the top and bottom of Bird in Hand Street.

Non-HIP Issues – The Clerk had asked KCC about a resident's request for Deer warning signs on Groombridge Hill. KCC's response asked for deer numbers and the frequency of sightings and suggested it would need to be added to SPC's HIP if we wanted it taken forward. The High Weald Organisation had recently emailed about a National Deer Conference they attended, and an action point was set for the Clerk to ask if they held any data that could be used.

Blocked drains on Bird in Hand Street had been cleared by KCC after a prolonged push from residents. When blocked, the drains overflowed, and the water froze on the road causing icy conditions. Some houses were only a foot away from the carriageway and there was a real risk of cars skidding into them. Cllr Norton cited this as a good example of residents working together to achieve positive outcomes, although action would be needed to prevent mud blocking the drains again. Members noted it was important there was clarity between proposals put forward by residents and those from SPC. Cllr Norton would discuss this with Mr Myles along with ways to prevent the drains becoming blocked with mud again.

c) Langton Green

HIP Item LG7/9: Improve road safety around Langton Green Primary School (LGPS) – The Clerk had drafted a letter to Courtenwell residents about the proposal that land outside Courtenwell be used as a "landing zone" for a pedestrian crossing. She would circulate this letter after the meeting and asked that members give feedback by 1st March. It was agreed that residents would be given 4 weeks to respond to the letter.

The Clerk continued to wait for an email from the Planning Advice team about the technical requirements necessary for a pedestrian crossing, such as lighting. It was noted that she would now deal with a new point of contact at KCC, who had replaced the previous Community Engagement Officer.

There was discussion about what more could be done to reduce average speeds. These needed to be reduced before a pedestrian crossing could be progressed. The Clerk would ask Langton Green Speedwatch to carry out further sessions. A further action point was set for her to ask KCC what else could be done.

The Clerk had drafted an informal consultation relating to double yellow lines outside the entrance to Langton Green Recreation Ground and "School Keep Clear" markings at Lampington Row. This had been circulated for feedback.

An action point was set for the Assistant Clerk to take the LGPS Travel Plan off the HIP Action Plan as this was now complete.

Cllr Norton and the Clerk had met with the Assistant Headteacher at LGPS to discuss any road-safety 'quick wins' they could press for at the entrance to the school such as zigzag lines and barriers. The Assistant Headteacher had subsequently written to KCC to try and expedite these measures. An action point was set for the Clerk to confirm with KCC that they were working on a design plan for two sets of barriers and not one as referenced in a recent email.

Non-HIP Issues – A resident had contacted the Clerk about a dangerously parked trailer on Langholm Road. This belonged to the residents of Cyclist's Rest who the parish council had previously contacted about other vehicles they had parked dangerously/inconsiderately in the layby on the A264 Langton Road and Stonewall Park Road. Various attempts, including contacting Tunbridge Wells Police, TWBC parking enforcement, and TWBC Environmental Health about perishable goods kept in the vehicles, had been made to tackle the issue over 3 years, with no success other than installing planters on the pavement in the layby. After some discussion, an action point was set for the Clerk to contact the Community Police Officer to ask if she would speak to the Cyclist's Rest residents. The Clerk would also pass her details on to the resident who had asked the parish council to help.

A resident of Farnham Close had contacted the Clerk about road-safety concerns relating to speeding vehicles on Farnham Lane. The Clerk had written to the Hatton Trust who owned Farnham Close asking them to consider installing "Slow Down" signs on their land bordering the road. The Hatton Trust said they would not do this but would consider allowing the parish or KCC to put up their own

signs. The Clerk had updated the Farnham Close resident but had not heard back. Mr Langridge said he would put up some of the parish council's smaller signs along the road around Farnham Close.

d) Speldhurst

HIP Item SP13: Improve road safety around Etherington Hill – An action point was set for the Assistant Clerk to remove the road surfacing action from the HIP Action Plan as this was now complete.

An action point was set for the Clerk to chase KCC up on the Automated Traffic Counts (ATC's) at the top and bottom of Etherington Hill. Depending on the results of the ATCs, the next steps would be to chase for technical measures that could be taken to address speeding on the hill, such as 'ribs' on the carriageway.

Non-HIP Issues – The Assistant Clerk said she would address the action point that had been set for her at the last meeting, to contact everyone who had previously volunteered with Speldhurst Speedwatch to ask if they were still willing to take part and appeal for someone to take on the role of coordinator. A resident had responded to Cllr Norton's email of March 2023 regarding speeding on Langton Road. Cllr Curry had sent a further response explaining the current situation; this had been circulated. A Road Traffic Accident at the junction of Etherington Hill and Stockland Green Road which had been reported by Borough Councillor Sankey was noted. It was agreed that this was part of the wider problem; there was poor visibility on the junction, and with speeding cars approaching from both the top and bottom of the hill there was a risk of cars pulling out into oncoming traffic.

11. Footpaths/Public Rights of Way (PROW)

The Assistant Clerk said she had been liaising with KCC about the damaged boardwalk in Shadwell Wood. She had put a farmer in touch with the KCC Public Rights of Way Officer about replacing damaged stiles on his land with self-closing gates.

A replacement gate had now been installed on one of the Ashurst footpaths.

The Assistant Clerk and the Groundsman had walked the Langton Green footpaths connecting Speldhurst Road with Farnham Lane, and Farnham Lane with Dornden Drive. They had noted some fences bordering the footpaths which were unstable and at risk of falling into the pathway. An appeal to residents had been made on social media and the website asking them to strengthen their fences.

12. Items requiring Full Council approval

- To consider the purchase of two new Speed Indicator Device (SID) batteries – It was **RESOLVED** to recommend the purchase of 2 new large SID batteries costing £84.00 + VAT each plus £7.50 for delivery.

13. Issues for Communication to the Public

- Cllr Norton would give an update on Highways at the Annual Parish Meeting on 19th May.
- An action point was set for the Assistant Clerk to post an update on social media and parish magazines about the requested Deer warning sign.

14. Items for information

- www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/report-a-problem - Reminder
- Road Safety and Active Travel Newsletter
- Highways and Transportation Parish Seminars
- SpeedWatch Update
- Footpath on Groombridge Hill
- **Date of Next Meetings:**
 - Monday 23rd June 2025
 - Monday 22nd September 2025
 - Monday 8th December 2025

With nothing further to discuss the meeting ended at 9.12 pm.

Chair

HIP ITEMS BY VILLAGE – LANGTON GREEN				
Improve safety around LGPS (LG7/9)				
Date	Action	Owned By	Outcome	Comments
011024	Establish formal 'landing zones' for crossing users - SPC to approach Courtenwell developers, who own the land.	Clerk/ Members		240225: - Clerk to circulate letter to residents about proposal to use land asking for their feedback. Members to give feedback by 010325.
011024	Specify, clarify & resolve other technical requirements for pedestrian crossing (eg lighting).	Clerk/Cllr Norton		240225: - Clerk awaiting update from Emma Richmond following Planning Advice team meeting.
011024	Reduce average speeds sufficiently to meet crossing criteria. - KCC agreed action to strengthen signage & pay for this. - Local SpeedWatch to focus on this vicinity.	Clerk/Cllr Norton		240225: - Clerk awaiting KCC's update on progress with signage following their internal meeting. - Clerk had drafted double yellow lines consultation and circulated for feedback. - Clerk to ask LG Speedwatch to complete further focus sessions. - Clerk to ask KCC if anything further can be done to reduce average speeds.
011024	Barriers & Zig Zag Lines. Should be 'quick wins. Agreed specifications by stakeholders? If so, what's preventing implementation?	Clerk /Cllr Norton		240225: - Cllr Norton and the Clerk met with the assistant headteacher at LGPS who subsequently wrote to KCC to try and expedite zigzag lines and barriers. - Clerk to confirm that KCC was working on 2 sets of barriers, not one, as referenced in a previous email.
NON-HIP ITEMS BY VILLAGE – LANGTON GREEN				
161224	Follow up on resident letter about road safety on Farnham Lane.	Clerk /Assistant Clerk		240225: - Clerk wrote to Hatton Trust asking them to consider installing Slow Down for Pedestrians signs and lights on their land bordering the road. - Response from Hatton Trust: no plans to add lighting or signs but would let KCC/SPC erect signs on their land they own. Resident updated by Clerk but no response yet. - Mr Langridge to put up SPC's smaller signs in the area. - Noted that Clerk had costed a batch of 5 Hi-Viz tabards at £11.99 to potentially offer residents reporting road safety concerns.

HIP ITEMS BY VILLAGE – OLD GROOMBRIDGE				
Improve Safety in Centre of Old Groombridge (OG 1)				
Date	Action	Owned by	Outcome	Comments
011024	Reduce average speeds in village centre (Groombridge Hill & Bird in Hand Street)	Cllr Norton/ Cllr Turner/ Clerk		240225: - Mr Myles had reactivated Speedwatch. Awaiting progress in carrying out a session. - KCC confirmed no additional SID permitted in village centre; Clerk to query this and ask if redundant post could be re-sited further up the hill (see letter in folder).
011024	Complete improvements to 30 mph signage agreed with & to be paid for by KCC (eg taller 30 mph repeater signs on Hill & by entrance to Groombridge Place), any further cutting back vegetation	Clerk	Complete	240225: - Improvements complete.
011024	Agree what further technical measures can be introduced to reduce speeds (eg red/textured road bandings or other virtual/real traffic calming, 20 mph zone etc)	Cllr Norton/Cllr Turner		240225: - Clerk still waiting for update following Planning Advice team meeting. Noted that traffic calming in place just down the road on East Sussex side of Groombridge.
011024	Restrict HGV traffic on Bird in Hand (BIH) Street. 'Not suitable for HGVs' sign out of date & only at one end. Weight restriction needed too? Resolve differences of opinion with KCC on feasibility of latter.	Clerk/Cllr Norton		240225: - Clerk was chasing for an update from KCC on the updated HGC signs. - HGV traffic continued to be better since Mike Martin's letter to the HGV company responsible for most of the traffic. - Blocked gullies causing dangerous surface water /ice finally cleared by KCC after pressure from residents supported by SPC. Cllr Norton to look into ways of preventing a reoccurrence.
240225	Deer Warning Signs on Groombridge Hill	Clerk		240225 - Clerk had asked KCC if they would install signs. KCC said they needed to know numbers of deer and frequency of sightings and ask for this to be submitted as part of SPC's formal HIP application. - Clerk to contact High Weald Org to ask if they have data that could be used.
211024	Approach Withyham PC about an alternative bridge over River Grom	Cllr Norton		161224: - Cllr Norton and Mr Myles had a positive meeting with WPC on 171224. - Assistant Clerk had added bridge to HIP.

				- Clerk said a positive response was received from KCC's PROW Officer and further discussions to continue with The Pig and Withyham PC.
HIP ITEMS BY VILLAGE – SPELDHURST				
Improve Safety Around Etherington Hill, Speldhurst (SP13)				
Date	Action	Owned by	Outcome	Comments
011024	Arrange for 2 ATCs to survey traffic speeds & volumes.	Clerk		240225: - Clerk to follow up to see if the ATCs had happened yet. - Assistant Clerk to follow up with previous Speedwatch volunteers in Speldhurst to try and get Speedwatch going again.
011024	Ask KCC engineers for other technical solutions.	Clerk/Cllr Norton		240225: - Clerk still awaiting update.
HIP ITEMS BY VILLAGE - ASHURST				
Improve safety on A264 from the junction with Langton Road into Ashurst (A3)				
161224	Establish Speedwatch in Ashurst.	Assistant Clerk		240225: - Assistant Clerk said 3 out of original 9 interested residents had indicated they would volunteer. Assistant Clerk to chase them about online training. Agreed to take off HIP if this attempt failed.
NON-HIP ITEMS BY VILLAGE – ASHURST				
161224	Follow up on increase in lorries using Broad Lane, off the A264 Ashurst Road.	Cllr Littlefield		240225: - The environmental issue on tipper truck activity and burning of toxic smelling waste was passed to Sevenoaks District Council as it is their jurisdiction. - Clerk to share an update when available.
GENERAL NON-HIP ITEMS				
Date	Action	Owned By	Outcome	Comments
161224	Continue to coordinate parish PROWS.	Assistant Clerk		240225: - Assistant Clerk to email councillors reminding them of their allocated footpaths and asking them to keep walking them. - Assistant Clerk had allocated Mrs Dooley a footpath.