



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

**Minutes of the Highways Committee Meeting held on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> December 2024  
in the Palmer Room at Langton Green Village Hall, Langton Green**

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**MEMBERS PRESENT** Cllrs Norton (Chair), Cleaver and Littlefield with Mrs Dooley and Mr Myles.

**BOROUGH COUNCILLORS PRESENT:** There were none.

**MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC:** No members of the public were 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 Cllr Turner (holiday) and Mr Langridge (health reasons).

Cllr Norton said that Cllr Muress and Cllr Ellery had stepped down from the Committee since the last meeting. Cllr Muress had resigned from the parish council and Cllr Ellery had moved to join the Amenities Committee.

Cllr Norton welcomed Cllr Littlefield and Mr Myles to the Committee.

3. **Disclosure of Interests** – There were none.
4. **Declarations of Lobbying** – There were none.
5. **Minutes of the meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> October 2024 – RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Highways Committee meeting dated 21<sup>st</sup> October 2024 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.
6. **Public Open Session**  
No members of the public were in attendance to speak.
7. **How can we have a Bigger Impact?**  
Cllr Norton gave a recap of the actions taken to inform Cllr Neil Baker, Kent County Council (KCC) Cabinet Member for Highways, and Mike Martin MP of road safety issues in Speldhurst parish.

Cllr Norton and Cllr Curry, the parish council Chair, had written to Cllr Baker in September, with Mike Martin copied in. Although Cllr Baker did not offer any solutions in his reply, this did coincide with a site visit from a KCC Highways Design Engineer and Cllr Norton felt it had been a positive move to raise awareness of the issues.

Meanwhile, at a meeting with Mr Myles to discuss road safety in Old Groombridge, Mike Martin said he had not received a copy of the letter. The Clerk re-sent this and updated him more fully on parish traffic issues. A meeting was now scheduled with Mike Martin for early January. This would be discussed further during the Highways Improvement Plan (HIP) agenda item.

#### **8. Review of Action Points**

Cllr Norton noted the new-look actions grid which was divided into HIP and non-HIP-related actions and had been shared with Members. This would be discussed fully as part of the HIP agenda item. The newly updated list of action points, incorporating the additional actions from this meeting, is shown at the end of these minutes.

#### **9. Review of Highways Committee's Budget – to review the expenditure to-date.**

The Clerk said there had not been any budget allocated for the 2025/26 financial year, as there was an existing earmarked reserve of £30,000. It was likely that one or both Speed Indicator Device (SID) batteries would need replacing as they did not appear to be charging properly. Payment would also likely be made to replace the damaged SID post in Old Groombridge; this amount would be claimed back through insurance. Cllr Norton said additional expenditure items might come up if any of the projects the Committee was pressing for came to fruition.

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

As agreed at the last meeting, a new Highways Action Plan would now be used to review progress on the HIP.

##### **a) Ashurst**

- **HIP item A3 A264 from the junction with Langton Road into Ashurst** – An action was set for the Assistant Clerk to contact those who had expressed interest in volunteering for Ashurst Speedwatch early in the New Year to set up an in-person training session at the Speedwatch site.

##### **b) Groombridge**

- **HIP item OG5 B2110 Groombridge village entrance to River Grom Bridge / East Sussex border plus Bird in Hand Street to end of existing 30mph zone** – the following updates were given:
  - Cllr Norton said the aim was still to reduce speed on Groombridge Hill and reduce speed and tackle HGV traffic on Bird in Hand Street. On Groombridge Hill, the speeds were higher, but even a lower speed on Bird in Hand Street felt too fast due to the narrow road with houses built close to the carriageway. KCC Highways had offered to pay for and install better signage on Groombridge Hill. They also advised that an additional SID location would help reduce average speeds, which were currently an obstacle to implementing further measures such as road banding and virtual traffic calming.
  - It was noted that the East Sussex side of Groombridge did have traffic-calming in place, and Cllr Norton said that a speed reduction in the centre of Old Groombridge would benefit the whole area, which attracted walkers and tourists.
  - Mr Myles said that after Mike Martin's letter to the company whose HGVs continually used Bird in Hand Street, the issue of HGV traffic had improved. It was agreed that KCC Highways' reasons for not considering a weight/width restriction did not stand up and the Committee should continue to press for this. However, they had offered to replace the sign at the bottom of Bird in Hand Street with an up-to-date graphic stating no HGV traffic. It was noted that this would also be needed at the top of the road. As this was felt to be an easily achievable measure, an action point was set for the Clerk to chase KCC Highways further.

- **Non-HIP Items for Information** – Cllr Norton and Mr Myles were due to meet with Withyham Parish Council to discuss the idea of an alternative bridge over the River Grom, which would make it safer for pedestrians walking down Groombridge Hill. Cllr Norton's contact at The Pig Hotel group had been open to this idea. There was the question of maintenance and insurance to consider but Cllr Norton hoped the two parish councils could unite behind the proposal. An action point was set for the Assistant Clerk to add this item to the HIP.
- An action point was set for the Clerk to carry out the necessary paperwork to add Mr Myles back onto the Old Groombridge Speedwatch group.

c) **Langton Green**

- **HIP Item LG9 & LG9a Speldhurst Road and Lampington Row** – the following updates were given:
  - The Clerk continued to communicate with a resident of Courtenwell about the grass verge outside the cul-de-sac. It was hoped that part of this land would be used as a landing zone for the proposed pedestrian crossing. KCC Highways had confirmed that the land was owned by the developer of Courtenwell, however, it was maintained by residents. The Clerk had asked the resident she was in contact with if he and others would like to attend the evening's meeting to hear more, but he was unavailable, and she had not heard from anyone else. It was agreed it would be prudent to explain the parish council's aims clearly to the Courtenwell residents before contacting the developer. An action point was set for the Clerk to continue communicating with her contact.

Cllr Norton re-capped the reasons to keep pressing for the crossing; it was hoped that it would encourage more families coming from the east of the village to walk to Langton Green (LG) Primary School instead of driving. This would then alleviate congestion and dangerous driving/parking in Langton Green Village Hall carpark and Lampington Row at school drop off/pick up times. This had been a critical issue for some time and had been witnessed by councillors on several occasions.
  - Following an Automated Traffic Count (ATC) earlier in the year KCC Highways had advised the average speed on Speldhurst Road was currently too high to implement a formal pedestrian crossing as a traffic calming measure because it would be too dangerous. Mrs Dooley asked if KCC Highways had advised what times of the day their ATC applied to; the Clerk confirmed that it had to measure speeds throughout the day and not only at school drop-off/pick-up times. To tackle speeding, KCC Highways had suggested double yellow lines on either side of the entrance to Langton Green Village Hall carpark and it was felt that there would be pros and cons to this. Parked cars tended to slow traffic down but made it difficult for drivers to see oncoming traffic and safely exit Langton Green Village Hall carpark. They had also suggested installing improved signage and the Clerk was awaiting an update on progress. Langton Green Speedwatch had now completed a series of Speedwatch sessions focussing on this location.
  - A new KCC Highways Community Engagement officer would work with the parish council from the start of the New Year.
  - LG Primary School had now completed its Travel Plan which contained useful information about where families travelled to school from. The lack of a Travel Plan had previously been an obstacle to progress as KCC Highways had said they were unable to do anything without it, and Members agreed it was positive that the plan was now in place. It was disappointing that KCC Highways had said LG Primary School did not qualify for a road safety assembly from them, and Kent Police did not have the resources to provide this either.
  - After a recent meeting with the Deputy Headteacher and the Office Manager from LG Primary School, the Clerk and Cllr Norton had felt they were making headway in getting barriers and guardrails installed outside the entrance on Lampington Row. However, there had been no further movement, and as it was agreed that these were straightforward measures that could be achieved relatively easily, an action point was set for the Clerk to arrange a meeting between Cllr Norton and the Headteacher to drive this forward.
- **Non-HIP items for Information** – A Farnham Close resident had written to the Clerk about road safety on Farnham Lane. Because of a lack of pavement on the road, they found themselves at risk from speeding vehicles when out walking. Cllr Norton recapped the work the committee had done

previously to try and find a solution to road safety on this stretch of road. A speed reduction further along Farnham Lane, and the establishment of an informal footpath on the grass verge between Dornden Drive and The Great Footway had both been investigated, but it had not been possible to progress these measures. It was noted that Farnham Close was a development of retirement flats owned by the Hatton Trust, and an action point was set for the Clerk to write asking them to consider installing Slow Down for Pedestrians signage and lights on their land, bordering the road. The Clerk and Assistant Clerk would also investigate the cost of a batch of Hi-Viz tabards which could be given to the resident concerned and any other residents who contacted the council with road safety concerns. The Clerk would update the resident accordingly.

**d) Speldhurst**

- **HIP item SP7 Barden Road between The Old Post Office and the junction with Furze field Avenue**  
**HIP item SP12 Penshurst Road, stretch of road between Langton Road and Northfields** – It was agreed that while both these locations presented speeding, congestion, and parking issues, they had been on the HIP for several years and despite various attempts to lobby KCC Highways and implement its own measures, it had proved impossible so far for the parish council to find a viable solution. For example, double yellow lines on Barden Road would only push vehicles onto other roads. Cllr Littlefield said he had also been asked to raise the issue of parking on the bend along Penshurst Road but having looked at the meeting documentation he could see that this had been under consideration for some time. An action point was set for the Clerk to follow up with Cllrs Curry and Ellery about volunteers to take over Speedwatch in Speldhurst, as there had been evidence of a decrease in speeding along Barden Road when this was carried out regularly.
- **HIP item SP13 Etherington Hill leading to Speldhurst Hill approaching Speldhurst Village** – KCC Highways would undertake ATCs at the top and bottom of Etherington Hill in early 2025. The issue with the road surfacing which had been raised by Borough Councillor Sankey was now resolved.
- **Non-HIP Items for Information** – Double parking continued to be an issue on Northfields, where patients from the doctor's surgery and some residents either parked on the pavement, stopping pedestrians with pushchairs and walking aids from using the pavement, or on the road, preventing larger vehicles such as the refuse lorry from passing. Borough Councillor Sankey had informally canvassed residents of Northfields for their thoughts on what could be done, but no concrete suggestion had been made. As with Barden and Penshurst Road, it was agreed that parking enforcement would only push the problem onto other roads.  
An action point was set for the Clerk and Assistant Clerk to liaise with the Speldhurst Village Hall Bookings Administrator, who had asked on social media for recommendations for a white lines company. It would be helpful if Speldhurst Village Hall would add a SLOW sign as traffic left the village hall car park.

**11. Footpaths/Public Rights of Way (PROW)** – The Assistant Clerk gave an update on the footpath issues she had been working on, which included liaising with KCC's Public Rights of Way Officer over repairs to eroded footpaths and communicating with landowners about fallen trees and damaged stiles. KCC was currently supplying self-closing metal gates free of charge to landowners living in the High Weald AONB area, and most footpaths within the parish fell within this area. It was agreed that every effort should be made to ensure local landowners knew about this offer.

Cllr Norton noted that the work the Assistant Clerk had been doing looked as if it could be labour-intensive, and it was agreed she would continue working on footpaths only when her workload allowed. Once a new councillor had been co-opted there would likely be capacity for someone to help with co-ordinating footpath matters.

An action point was set for the Assistant Clerk to email councillors reminding them of their allocated footpaths and asking them to keep walking them, and Mrs Dooley also requested to have a footpath allocated to her.

At this point, the Clerk noted that compiling reports using the data taken from the SIDs could also be time-consuming. It was agreed that unless data was needed for a certain location to support the aims of a specific project, the Clerks should aim to compile one report for each SID location per year.

**12. Items requiring Full Council approval** – There were none.

**13. Issues for Communication to the Public** – There were none. There would be more to communicate following the meeting with Mike Martin, and once KCC Highways had responded to the Clerk's recent email pressing for progress to be made.

**14. Items for information**

- [www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/report-a-problem](http://www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/report-a-problem) - Reminder
- Community Protection Warning – TWBC could be approached to issue a warning regarding poor parking as they have in other parishes. It was agreed this was worth noting for future reference.
- Letter to SpeedWatch volunteers from Chief Constable Jo Shiner.
- Better Streets Consultation – effect on roads in the parish. This proposal had now been abandoned.
- Highways Risk Assessment – feedback from Governance Committee. Cllr Lyle had requested to include ice as a risk, and to include the parish council's winter weather policy.

**Date of Next Meetings:**

- Monday 24<sup>th</sup> February 2025
- Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2025
- Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2025
- Monday 8<sup>th</sup> December 2025
- Cllr Littlefield said he had heard about a number of lorries using Broad Lane, off the A264 Ashurst Road. They might have been accessing a new development that had not been given planning permission. The Clerk asked Cllr Littlefield to email her with more details.

With nothing further to discuss the meeting ended at 9.05 pm.

**Chair**

HIP ITEMS				
1. 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		161224: - Clerk to contact Mr Mallett again with a view to speaking to other Courtenwell residents so they are clear about what is proposed before approaching the developer.
011024	Specify, clarify & resolve other technical requirements for pedestrian crossing (eg lighting).	Clerk/Cllr Norton		161224: - Clerk to contact Emma Richmond - Nigel Rowe's replacement -about technical requirements following a scheduled KCC internal meeting when these were to be discussed. - Meeting scheduled with Mike Martin MP to inform about Highways issues in early January.
011024	Get average speeds down sufficiently to meet crossing criteria. - KCC agreed action to strengthen signage & pay for this - when will they deliver? - Clarify whether speed criterion should be measured at school crossing times. - Local SpeedWatch to focus on this vicinity.	Clerk/Cllr Norton		161224: Clerk awaiting KCC's update on progress with signage following their internal meeting. KCC had provided a consultation template for double yellow lines at junction of Speldhurst Road and entrance to LGVH. Clerk asked KCC to provide drawings. KCC clarified that speed criterion could not be varied by time of day at 2/10/24 site meeting. LG Speedwatch had completed focus sessions.
011024	LGPS Travel Plan. Required for other action to take place. Been in preparation for a very long time. Now signed off? If not, when? Specific measures in TP?	Clerk	Travel Plan <b>complete</b>	161224: - Cllr Norton to propose meeting with LGPS Headteacher to offer help in achieving Travel Plan objectives, including re-establishing walking bus, raising awareness of road safety, improving parking facilities etc - KCC had confirmed that LGPS did not qualify for their full Road Safety Club Programme delivering road safety assemblies.
011024	Barriers & Zig Zag Lines. Should be 'quick wins'. Agreed specifications by stakeholders? If so, what's preventing implementation?	Clerk /Cllr Norton		161224: - Clerk awaiting update from KCC about barriers/guard rails and other measures. - At proposed meeting with LGPS Headteacher Cllr Norton to address 1-2 road safety quick wins around school entrance to try and expedite progress.

				- Zigzag lines at staff & pupil entrances consultation template now provided by KCC. Clerk had requested drawings.
<b>2. Improve Safety in Centre of Old Groombridge (OG 1)</b>				
Date	Action	Owned by	Outcome	Comments
011024	Reduce average speeds in village centre (Groombridge Hill & Bird in Hand Street)	Cllr Norton/Cllr Turner/Clerk		161224: - Mr Myles to reactivate Speedwatch. - Clerk awaiting update from KCC about additional SID location.
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		161224: - Clerk had chased KCC about installing repeater signs and clearing pathway on Groombridge Hill & installing repeater signs on BIH Street. Awaiting update.
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		161224: - Depending on outcome of KCC's upcoming internal meeting, continue to press for technical measures. 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		161224: - KCC had offered to replace the sign at the bottom of Bird in Hand Street with an up-to-date graphic stating no HGV traffic. this would also be needed at the top of the road. Clerk to chase. - Mr Myles noted that Mike Martin's letter to the HGV company who continually used BIH Street had led to reduced traffic. Agreed that KCC's reasons for not considering a weight restriction did not stand up (they advised these were only considered on routes where there were weak structures e.g. bridges, and A TRO to change weight restriction would cost in the region of £3k) and the Committee should continue to press for this. - Cllr Norton to raise at Mike Martin meeting.
<b>3. Improve Safety Around Etherington Hill, Speldhurst (SP13)</b>				
Date	Action	Owned by	Outcome	Comments

011024	Improve safety/quality of road surface after inappropriate resurfacing - pursue recent exchanges with KCC & contractors.	Clerk	Action <b>complete</b>	161224: - KCC confirmed surfacing now satisfactory. Cllr Sankey confirmed loose gravel had abated.
011024	Arrange for 2 ATCs to survey traffic speeds & volumes.	Clerk		161224: - KCC confirmed this would take place in early 2025. - Clerk to follow up with Cllrs Curry and Ellery about volunteers to take over Speedwatch in Speldhurst, as there had been evidence of a decrease in speeding when this was carried out regularly.
011024	Ask KCC engineers for other technical solutions.	Clerk/Cllr Norton		061224: - HIP passed on to KCC Planning Team. Clerk awaiting update.
<b>4. Improve safety on A264 from the junction with Langton Road into Ashurst (A3)</b>				
161224	Establish Speedwatch in Ashurst.	Assistant Clerk		161224: - Assistant Clerk to contact those who previously expressed interest in volunteering to set up an in-person training session at the Speedwatch site.
<b>NON-HIP ITEMS</b>				
Date	Action	Owned By	Outcome	Comments
190824	Discuss warning sign request at junction of Penshurst Road and Southfields/Northfields with resident who put in request.	Cllr Sankey	Action <b>Complete.</b>	
270224	Write to St Mary's Lane residents asking their thoughts about signage at junction with Northfields	Asst Clerk	Agreed not to write. Action <b>closed.</b>	161224: - White lines at junction refreshed some time ago. Clerk and Assistant Clerk to liaise with Speldhurst Village Hall Bookings Administrator. It would help if SPVH would add a SLOW sign as traffic left the village hall car park.
211024	Re-send copy of the letter regarding highways issues to Mike Martin MP as an email attachment (originally cc'd in letter to KCC Cabinet Member)	Clerk/Cllr Norton	Letter sent and meeting arranged. Action <b>complete.</b>	
211024	Add item to FC agenda re. Trevor Myles joining committee as MoP	Assistant Clerk	Membership approved.	



			Action <b>Complete.</b>	
211024	Incorporate all action points relating to the HIP priorities and KCC into an action plan.	Cllr Norton & Cllr Turner	Action <b>Complete.</b>	
211024	Approach Withyham PC about alternative bridge over River Grom	Cllr Norton		161224: - Cllr Norton and Mr Myles to meet with WPC on 171224 involving Mr Myles. - Assistant Clerk to add bridge to HIP.
211024	Ensure KCC Schools Travel Planner knows the PC supports Speldhurst School Travel Plan.	Clerk	Action <b>Complete.</b>	
161224	Follow up on resident letter about road safety on Farnham Lane.	Clerk /Assistant Clerk		161224: - Clerk to write to Hatton Trust asking them to consider installing Slow Down for Pedestrians signs and lights on their land bordering the road. - Clerk and Assistant Clerk to investigate cost of a batch of Hi-Viz tabards to give to resident concerned and other residents contacting council with concerns. - Clerk to update resident.
161224	Continue to coordinate parish PROWS	Assistant Clerk		161224: - Assistant Clerk to email councillors reminding them of their allocated footpaths and asking them to keep walking them - Assistant Clerk to allocate Mrs Dooley a footpath.
161224	Follow up on increase in lorries using Broad Lane, off the A264 Ashurst Road.	Cllr Littlefield		161224: - Cllr Littlefield to email the Clerk with more details.