

Local Government Act 1972



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

Minutes of the Full Council Meeting

held on Monday 3rd October 2022 at 7.30pm in the Committee Room, Speldhurst Village Hall

MEMBERS PRESENT

Cllrs Curry (Chair), Barrington-Johnson, Ellery, Mrs Lyle (Vice-Chair), Norton, Rajah, Rowe, Scarbrough and Mrs Soyke.

OFFICERS PRESENT

Mrs K Neve, Clerk and Mrs C Barrett, Assistant Clerk (minutes).

IN ATTENDANCE

Borough Cllr Sankey was in attendance.

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There was one member of the public present.

Before the meeting started, a minute's silence was held to remember the late HRH Queen Elizabeth II.

22/194 Covid Compliance

Those in attendance were free to decide whether to wear a mask according to their own wishes.

22/195 To enquire if anyone intends to record the meeting

The meeting was recorded by the Clerk for accuracy of the minutes. The recording would be deleted once the meeting minutes are signed off at the next Full Council meeting.

22/196 To accept and approve apologies and reasons for absence

Apologies had been received from Cllrs Turner (Covid-related) and Mrs Woodliffe (work commitments), together with County Cllr McInroy (work commitments), and Borough Cllrs Allen and Ms Willis (work commitments).

22/197 Disclosure of Interests

There were none.

22/198 Declarations of Lobbying

There were none.

22/199 Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on 5th September 2022

RESOLVED that the minutes, previously forwarded to Members were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

22/200 Public Open Session

No member of the public present wished to speak.

22/201 Borough and County Councillors' Reports

- Borough Cllr Matthew Sankey was in attendance and provided the following information:
 - a) **Road Parking Fines** – A review of the contract between Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC) and Kent County Council (KCC) was in progress. Under the terms of the current contract, TWBC paid for Traffic Wardens and received revenue from parking fines issued in car parks, while KCC received revenue from fines issued on roads. Cllr Sankey would provide further updates once these terms had been renegotiated.
 - b) **Local Government Boundary Commission for England - Electoral Review of the Borough and Electoral System** – Discussions relating to this matter were ongoing. The Chair said he would ask Cllr Sankey for further information under item agenda item 23.
 - c) **Cabinet Advisory Board** – The cabinet advisory board existed to advise cabinet members, and to scrutinise all policies once produced by the cabinet. A review of the advisory board was currently underway to ensure it remained politically balanced, since it had been noted that cabinet members themselves made up the majority of the board's numbers.

22/202 Chair's Report

- The Chair had spent some time looking into brokers and suppliers with the aim of achieving the best deal for the council when the pavilion energy contract came up for renewal.
- With two co-option vacancies following the resignations of Mr Pate and Mr Langridge, the Chair said that some working groups, such as Footpaths, would go into "stand-by" mode until the council was back up to full capacity. He asked councillors to speak to anyone who might be interested in becoming a parish councillor, and would be happy to talk to interested individuals about the commitment required by the role. Cllr Mrs Woodliffe would step down from the council at the end of 2022, and Cllrs Rajah and Mrs Soyke would not stand for re-election in May 2023.
- The Chair would be away until mid-November, but would be contactable for some of that time.

22/203 Clerk's Report

- The Clerk added her own request that councillors talk to their friends and neighbours in the parish about the councillor vacancies. She would circulate the vacancy notices once they were available.
- Two nominations had been submitted for the Love Where We Live awards.

22/204 General Matters

New - Items arising since last Full Council meeting				
	Summary	Owner	Created	Status
56/22	Meeting with Cllr Barrington-Johnson and Mr Cornelius regarding LG carpark issues. <i>To be organised for end Sept/October.</i>	Clerk	04/07/22	In progress
Ongoing				
39/22	Look for new Internal Auditor and write to David Buckett expressing thanks for his work. <i>Letter to David Buckett sent. Contacted neighbouring parishes.</i>	Clerk/RFO	09/05/22	In progress

65/22	Increase subscription to Langton Life magazine by 25%.	RFO	05/09/22	Complete
66/22	Respond to the consultation on LGBCE Electoral Review.	Cllr B-Johnson	05/09/22	Complete
67/22	Committee and WG expenditure proposals for 2023/24	Clerk	05/09/22	Complete
68/22	Programme of meetings for committees and WGs for '23	Clerk	05/09/22	In progress
69/22	Liaison with Mr Martin Russell regarding the new position of Pavilion Manager.	Cllr Mrs Lyle	05/09/22	In progress
70/22	Liaise with Borough Cllr Sankey regarding energy account advice.	Chair	05/09/22	Complete
71/22	Obtain professional advice on energy efficiency at the pavilion.	Chair/Cllrs Rowe and Mrs Lyle	05/09/22	In progress
72/22	Check with the Monitoring Officer if SPC can advertise and interview for Mr Pate's and Cllr Langridge's vacancies at the same time. <i>Must be advertised separately.</i>	Clerk	05/09/22	Complete
73/22	Vacancy candidate interviews	Chair/Cllrs Mrs Lyle/Rajah	05/09/22	In progress
74/22	Send ideas for inclusion in the newsletter to Asst Clerk CB	All	05/09/22	Complete
75/22	Send suggestions for Love Where we Live Awards to Clerk	All	05/09/22	Complete
76/22	Organise CAB energy talks	Assist Clerk KH	05/09/22	Complete
77/22	Instruct Treeworks to fell tree in The Boundary, LG	Assistant Clerk KH	05/09/22	Complete
78/22	Talk to friends/neighbours in parish about cllr vacancies	All councillors	03/10/22	TBA
79/22	Contact an individual with experience of IR35 to check Pavilion Manager contract	Cllr Mrs Lyle	03/10/22	TBA
80/22	Send invitation to cllrs to view the SPC shared calendar	Assist Clerk CB	03/10/22	TBA
81/22	Confirm details for attendance at Remembrance Sunday services in Ashurst, LG, Old Groombridge and Speldhurst	Cllrs Mrs Soyke, Barrington-Johnson, Norton and Curry	03/10/22	TBA
82/22	Finalise and distribute e-newsletter	Assist Clerk CB	03/10/22	TBA
83/22	Invite SPC appointed LGVH trustee to attend council mtgs	Clerk	03/10/22	TBA
84/22	Write follow up letter to County Cllr McInroy regarding funding for Ukrainian pupils at Speldhurst school	Cllr Curry/Cllr Rowe/Clerk	03/10/22	TBA
85/22	Request County Cllr McInroy attend next full council	Cllr Curry	03/10/22	TBA

22/205 Finance Committee – Report by Cllr Ellery:

- Report by the Chair including any Committee Meetings held since the last Full Council meeting. Cllr Ellery said that a meeting was scheduled for 11th October.
- Report on budget virements and request that the virements listed be approved.** There were none.
- Report on interim payments made since the last meeting.** Unity Trust Current Account: £274.83 for Unity Trust Mastercard Top Up; £819.55 EDF Energy DD for Pavilion electricity; £284.18 Veolia DD for recycling and waste disposal; £25.92 BT Plc DD for mobile phone; £33.15 Unity Trust Bank for bank charges. Mastercard: £9.00 for card charges; £14.45* Amazon for picture frames; £10* Amazon for hand sanitizer; £7.09* Amazon for reflective tape; £18.69* Amazon for antibacterial wipes and bin liners; £90.36* Amazon for first aid kit refill; £30* Land Registry for land searches and £125 RBL Poppy Appeal for wreaths. Decisions made under delegated authority are starred * above.
Cllr Ellery noted that there had been a significant increase in the direct debit payment to EDF for energy at Langton Green Pavilion. Cllr Mrs Lyle queried the increase and the Chair said it was likely to be a pre-emptive amount due to rising costs.

22/206 Accounts for Payment – RESOLVED that the invoices as listed, be paid.

Payee Name	Reference	Amount £	Detail
St Mary's Church, Speldhurst	MT2322	1,000.00	Grant: Churchyard maintenance
Speldhurst News	MT2323	12.00	Subscription
Tate Fencing Ltd	MT2324	68.42	Posts; cement etc
Viking Direct	MT2325	199.32	Stationery
LGVH	MT2326	19.13	Meeting room
Ashurst McDermott Hall Trust	MT2327	36.00	Meeting room
m:power accounting	MT2328	48.00	Salary admin
Langton Life	MT2329	375.00	Bi-monthly magazine
Streetlights	MT2330	66.00	Street light maintenance
KALC	MT2331	144.00	Training: Finance Conference
KALC	MT2332	60.00	Training: Planning Conference
Knockout Print	MT2333	42.00	LGRG signs
M R Lawrence	MT2334	320.00	Mowing: strimming
Ranger Electrical	MT2335	72.00	Pavilion: Call out
Sevenoaks District Council	MT2336	180.00	Pavilion: License
JS Facilities Management	MT2337	150.00	Pavilion: Cleaning
K Harman	MT2338	30.60	Expenses
P Curry	MT2339	23.85	Expenses
HMRC	MT2340	1,294.91	Tax & NI
Employees	MT2341	4,500.32	Salaries
EDF Energy	DD	537.00	Pavilion: Electricity
Castle Water	DD	50.63	Pavilion: Water
Total:		£9,229.18	

22/207 Planning Committee – report by Cllr Rajah:

- A meeting had been held on 26th September when a representative of Groombridge Place Estate had addressed the committee regarding an application to hold functions for local businesses and families. The intention was to hire the estate out to low impact groups only to help raise revenue for restoration works, however, councillors were concerned about the impact these events would have on local residents. It had been agreed to remain neutral on the application, but the committee recorded its full support for the TWBC Environmental Protection team's request for a Noise Management Plan as a condition of any approval.
- It seemed that plans for the development of Site 231 as part of the Tunbridge Wells local plan had been extended. The committee had emailed TWBC for clarification.
- A response had been received from the Conservation Officer at TWBC to say they were unable to help regarding the position of the trees which had been planted on the Green at Langton Green. Cllr Barrington-Johnson and Cllr Rajah would now work together to find a solution to the issue.

22/208 Langton Green Recreation Ground – report by Cllr Mrs Lyle:**a) To receive a report from the Pavilion Management Working Group**

Cllr Mrs Lyle would contact Langton Green Charitable Sports Association (LGCSA) to remind them that the renewal of the occupational license for 2023 was pending. As in previous years, they have the opportunity

to propose a different licensee or income-producing solution, subject to agreeing the scope and wording with SPC.

Cllr Mrs Lyle said that the working group would consider a number of potential measures such as closing the pavilion for the coldest months of the year and/or imposing an electricity cost surcharge on users to lower costs or contribute to the increased expense of electricity used at the Pavilion.

b) To consider paying for the services of a manager for the Pavilion

A manager had now been appointed, subject to contract. A draft contract of agreement had been circulated to councillors and it was **RESOLVED** to approve the agreement following a check by someone with experience of IR35 regulations. An action point was set for Cllr Mrs Lyle to contact an appropriate individual.

c) Consider the energy contract at the Pavilion

The energy contract was due for renewal in December, and Cllr Mrs Lyle handed over to the Chair, who reported the following:

- If the council opted to continue with the terms of its current contract, the annual cost would increase from £4166.00 to over £30,000.
- The Chair had taken advice from Utility Aid, the council's current energy broker, who had provided its best possible quote for a new one-year fixed contract with EDF.
- He had consulted a second broker, Energy Pal, who had matched Utility's EDF quote, and also provided a quote from Positive, which came out cheaper.
- Both brokers advised that a fixed one-year contract was the safest option in the face of current uncertainty about rising costs.
- The amounts quoted did not take into account any government contributions which may be forthcoming.
- The Chair had read Trust Pilot's reviews on Positive, who were not an energy provider the council were familiar with. Approximately half of these reviews were negative. Furthermore, Utility Aid had voiced doubts about Positive's ability to stay solvent, and the possibility of their raising their prices mid-term. After some discussion, it was decided that taking out a contract with Positive was too much of a risk.
- The Chair said that Energy Pal had been more helpful and proactive in their communications than Utility Aid, and it was **RESOLVED** by a majority decision to appoint Energy Pal as broker and EDF as supplier of a one-year fixed contract starting in December 2022.

d) Update on the investigation into the energy efficiency of the boiler

A working group of councillors consisting of Cllrs Mrs Lyle, Rowe, Norton and Curry were investigating the energy efficiency of the boiler and energy use at the Pavilion in general. A meeting was being organised and they would report back to Full Council.

22/209 Vacancy on the Council

- a) No requests for an election had been received following Mr Pate's resignation. A further notice had been advertised following Mr Langridge's resignation, expiring on 11th October. TWBC had confirmed that if no requests for an election were received, both positions could be advertised at the same time to be filled by co-option, expiring on the 31st October.
- b) It was **RESOLVED** that the working group delegated to co-opt a replacement for Mr Pate would also co-opt a replacement for Mr Langridge. Interview dates would be circulated to the working group in due course.

22/210 Committees and Working Groups

A list of current committee and working group memberships and vacancies had been circulated. The Chair noted that the Environment Working Group needed a minimum of two more councillors. This would be addressed with potential new councillors at co-option stage. Cllr Barrington-Johnson added that if new councillors had particular

strengths that suited specific committees, existing councillors could be moved around to ensure full capacity across all committees and working groups.

22/211 Annual Parish Meeting 2023 – to consider an appropriate date, location and speaker.

- Full Council meetings for the next year had been scheduled and a list of dates and locations had been circulated. The Clerk asked councillors to look out for an invitation from the Assistant Clerk (CB) to view the SPC shared calendar so they could view all meetings, staff holidays and other important dates.
- A date, location and speaker for the Annual Parish Meeting needed to be agreed, and the Clerk had contacted a potential speaker to ask for their availability between 1st March and 1st June. Since the 2022 meeting had been held at Langton Green, the 2023 meeting would be held at Speldhurst Village Hall. Once the date and speaker had been confirmed a working group would be delegated to organise the meeting.

22/212 Remembrance Sunday – to consider who will lay wreaths on behalf of the parish council.

The Clerk had ordered a wreath for each village, plus one for Langton Green Village Society (LGVS) who would reimburse the parish council. The following councillors would lay wreaths:

Cllr Mrs Soyke – Ashurst

Cllr Barrington-Johnson – Langton Green

Cllr Norton – Old Groombridge

Cllr Curry – Speldhurst

22/213 Newsletter – to finalise the newsletter.

The newsletter would take the form of an e-newsletter for the first time. Residents could sign up for this or view it through a link on the council's website and Facebook page. It had originally been suggested that articles be included from several councillors. However, the Chair had since written a Chair's Highlights message which included a number of the council's key achievements in the last six months. It was now proposed that a single message from the Chair was more appropriate. The first draft had been circulated and councillors were asked for feedback. It was agreed that the Chair's Highlights message was an engaging summary of all that had been achieved recently. Cllr Norton asked if it would be possible to include a highways update, as it would be helpful to remind residents about the Old Groombridge/Ashurst Speed reductions. The Assistant Clerk said if it was not possible this time, a highways themed newsletter could go out in the new year, as e-newsletters were quicker to produce, and could be distributed more regularly. It was **RESOLVED** to approve the newsletter, subject to minor amendments.

22/214 Appointed Trustee to Langton Green Village Hall – to consider the parish council appointed Trustee for next year.

The Langton Green Village Hall Trustees would hold their Annual General Meeting on 13th October, when Trustees would be confirmed for the next year. The current parish council appointed Trustee was willing to continue in the role and it was **RESOLVED** to approve his appointment for another year. Cllr Barrington-Johnson suggested inviting the Trustee to attend parish council meetings from time to time.

22/215 Civility and Respect Pledge – to consider agreeing to and signing the Pledge.

It was agreed that the council already had sufficient measures in place to ensure that councillors remain civil and respectful to each other at all times. The council's has a code of conduct for employees and councillors which was reviewed annually. It was **RESOLVED** not to sign up to the Civility and Respect Pledge.

22/216 Working Group 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) **Governance WG:** There was nothing to report.
- b) **Highways WG:** There was nothing to report.
- c) **Amenities WG:** There was nothing to report.
- d) **Air Traffic WG:** There was nothing to report.
- e) **Footpaths:** The Chair said that there was a vacancy for the role of Footpaths Co-ordinator. Only essential Footpaths administration would be carried out until it was filled.
- f) **Environment WG:** There was nothing to report.
- g) **Defibrillator WG:** The Chair said the working group had achieved its aims and would be dissolved for the foreseeable future. The working group budget would be retained for future works.
- h) **KALC:** The Chair had attended the Tunbridge Wells Chairs meeting of the Kent Association of Local Councils and the main item on the agenda has been the LGBCE Boundary Review. Some parish councils were unhappy with the proposals and wanted to halt the review but guidance from TWBC and KALC was that the Boundary Commission would not halt the proceedings. Borough Cllr Sankey asked SPC's views on the proposals and Cllr Barrington-Johnson confirmed that SPC's response to the proposal as it stands was that it was acceptable to be included in a borough ward with Rusthall Parish Council.

22/217 Diary Dates

- 7th October – Amenities Working Group
- 10th October – Environment Working Group
- 11th October – Finance Committee
- 17th October – Planning Committee
- 2nd November – Highways Working Group
- 7th November – Full Council - LGVH
- 9th November – Governance Working Group
- 14th November – Planning Committee
- 5th December – Full Council – SPVH – 7pm start
- 12th December – Planning Committee

22/218 Items for Information:

- Cllr Rowe said that he had been informed by the DfE that the 1st instalment payment had been made to local authorities during August to cover Ukrainian pupils with the remaining instalments due to be paid during October. This information had been passed on to Speldhurst Primary School and when they queried this with KCC they were very reticent other than saying they reserved the right to use the money centrally. It was agreed that this was unacceptable and that a follow up letter should be sent from the parish council to County Cllr McInroy.
- Cllr Ellery requested that County Cllr McInroy be asked specifically to attend the next council meeting, as he had not attended for some time.

There being no further items the meeting closed at 8:59pm.

Chair

