

Speldhurst Parish Council

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

**MINUTES OF A FULL COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON MONDAY, 14th DECEMBER at 7.30pm
IN THE COMMITTEE ROOM, LANGTON GREEN VILLAGE HALL**

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

OFFICER PRESENT: Chris May, Clerk

Cllr David Jukes and Mr Roger Dixon.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: None

2311 DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL AND PREJUDICIAL INTEREST:

Personal – Cllr Mrs Soyke – Ashurst Village Play Area – resident of Ashurst (1825-3).

Personal & Prejudicial – Clerk Chris May – 2315 iii) approval of overtime to Clerk. Cllr Mrs Soyke - 2317 vii) footpath near her house.

2312 DECLARATIONS OF LOBBYING: No declarations were received

2313 MINUTES: The Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on **16th November 2009**, having previously been forwarded to Members, were approved and signed.

2314 PUBLIC OPEN SESSION – Mr Dixon asked after the progress of the double yellow lines requested from KHS for Speldhurst. The update is minuted under 2317 i).

2315 FINANCE COMMITTEE – Report by Cllr Parker

- i) Cllr Parker said that Cllr Pendleton had agreed to join the Governance Committee which would meet during January.
- ii) A meeting had been held with John Roberts, the new Internal Auditor, on 26th November with Cllr Mrs Jeffreys, Parker and the Clerk. It was a “get to know you” meeting and a further meeting has been arranged for him to meet the Clerk on 7th January to review procedures and have a detailed look at the accounts.
- iii) Approval of payment of overtime to the Clerk – The Clerk had submitted his claim to all members for review. He left the room. The Council agreed his claim. The Clerk was invited back in to the room.
- iv) The Finance Committee agreed to the installation of eight bollards along the footpath on the car park at a cost of £962.00. They also agreed a one off payment of £1,900 to install the Christmas lights on the trees on the Green at Groombridge. The lights would be left up and re-connected next year. A grant from TWBC had been applied for towards the cost and it would be £500 or less. A pay rise for the Clerk in line with NALC recommendations and backdated to July was approved.
- v) Cllr Parker addressed the Council regarding the Precept for the coming financial year. All members had been emailed copies of the detailed figures and he described some of the figures that needed some clarification. The Precept would be higher this coming year because the Council had concentrated last year on keeping the figure down as much as possible and had not increased the reserves, and he explained that because of this, if all expenditure went through, the balance would be down to just over £13,000 which was unacceptable for a Parish Council. The reserves had to be rebuilt and the Finance Committee also recommended a contingency figure of £25,000 so if any unplanned expenditure did occur it would not impact the reserves. There were also a number of projects that were planned to be financed - The extension to the Langton Green Village Hall, Speldhurst Pavilion renovation project, Ashurst play area, an

ISS for Groombridge (if the Ashurst ISS is successful) and a loan for a Parish Office if the extension went ahead. The Finance Committee recognised that the total of £195,000 was considerable and might not be palatable with some of the electorate but it was thought that the need to build the reserves was necessary and the projects were all worth supporting. It recognised that the present economic climate was difficult but that the Speldhurst precept was one of the lowest in the area, based on the number residents, and it was explained that this increase would be a one-off and that the precept could be reduced the following year.

There followed a long debate over the precept. On reflection it was acknowledged that had last year's precept been increased and a contingency allocated then this year's increase would not have been so large but it was accepted by all Councillors that there had to be an increase in the precept because the reserves were too low. All the projects were then considered individually but it was recognised that if the precept was to be reduced to near the previous year's figure then all projects would have to be abandoned. Councillors considered that this was not what the Parish would want and were then asked to vote and it was resolved unanimously to pass the precept of £195,000.

2316 ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT –November 2009 – Invoices verified by Cllr Pendleton

The following payments had been made and authorisation was requested retrospectively.

BT	£	29.04	Mobile Phone	735
BT	£	34.54	Final bill 610201	736
Shaw & Sons	£	39.91	Forms LGA1	737
TOTAL	£	103.49		

ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT – November 2009 – Invoices verified by Cllr Pendleton

KCC	£	905.92	Playground Inspection Apr-Oct	738
KCC	£	808.42	Maintenance - Groombridge	739
KCC	£	835.65	Maintenance – Speldhurst	740
Speldhurst VH	£	69.00	Hire of Hall	741
Mrs J Podbury	£	44.00	Expenses	742
Rymans	£	91.94	Stationery	743
M R Lawrence	£	80.00	LGRG Litter	744
M R Lawrence	£	90.00	Roopers	745
LGCT	£	60.99	Hire of Hall	746
Mr C May	£	1,479.88	Salary	747
Mr C May	£	253.00	Expenses	748
HMRC	£	792.88	N.I./Tax	749
Treework	£	368.00	Copper Beech Tree	750
TOTAL	£	5,879.68		

2317 HIGHWAYS REPORT - The Clerk had circulated a report to all Councillors prior to the meeting which included updates on a number of Highways issues.

- i) Parking restrictions in Speldhurst – there have been resources issues with the TRO team hence the lack of progress but this has now been resolved. A timetable has been requested for action.
- ii) Langton Green crossing at the Twitten – the Clerk had been back to designer suggesting improvements in signage but they maintain that the build is within regulations but they will monitor the situation.
- iii) 2190 Langton Green – Land outside the old Watson Hall – The Clerk had contacted three contractors and only one has come back with a “ball park” figure - £6,600 to install with kerbs and £8,500 with bricks as per the design. This considerably more than the sum allocated in the budget.
- iv) 2213 Groombridge Hill – there is nothing further to report. A speed watch is planned for 15th December. A resident has emailed expressing disappointment that they are behind Ashurst in the queue for an ISS.
- v) Ashurst ISS – The Road Safety Team are expected to report in February 2010.
- vi) The Spire Hospital bus stop – Nothing further to report
- vii) Ashurst footpath – Nothing further to report.
- viii) Salt bins – The Clerk reported that the Parish was to receive two Salt bins relating to the request made in February this year but one of them was already installed (Stockland Green Road/Etherington Hill) the other one was at Bird in Hand Street, Groombridge. The Clerk was asked to pursue the reasons why Northfields and Lampington Row had not been allocated bins and to report the Council's dissatisfaction with the report.

2302 PARISH WEBSITE AND LOGO – It was decided to postpone discussion on this subject until the January meeting. The Clerk had been regularly updating the website with agendas and minutes.

1825-3 ASHURST VILLAGE PLAY AREA – Registering of Common Ground – Cllr Mrs Soyke reported that there had been a meeting of the Ashurst McDermott Hall committee and they had decided that the playground would not be positioned within the present Village Hall garden. She recommended that any further decision by the Council be deferred until the January meeting.

2137-4 LAMPINGTON ROW – The school had been advised that the Village Hall would be receptive to helping with a “walking bus” starting at the Recreation Ground car park. It is hoped that this will alleviate the parking problems, so the Council will not be considering any further action for the time being.

2249 PARISH OFFICE – There had been no further progress with obtaining an accurate cost of the Office. Donaldson West had been advised that a meeting would be required in the New Year to discuss the transfer of land to the LGCT and a meeting of the Transfer of Land committee would also take place.

2285 GROOMBRIDGE: CHRISTMAS LIGHTS – The Clerk had contacted TWBC regarding a grant and had obtained the name of a contractor to install the lights. Details of costs are under Finance. The lights went up on December 8th (delayed because of the extremely wet weather) and would stay up and be re-connected next year.

2318 CHAIRMAN’S REPORT – The Chairman had received an invitation for a Christmas drink from 3H. She had also received a copy of correspondence from Mrs Lindsey Symonds of Milestone House, Groombridge Hill who had contacted KHS regarding a number of road accidents outside her property. ***The Clerk was asked to contact KHS and be kept up to date on the issue.***

2319 COMMITTEE REPORTS

- i) Planning – Cllr Mrs Podbury gave a brief summary of the meetings which had all been minuted and circulated to members. The Clerk had contacted the Enforcement Officer regarding the Farm Shop and he said that there was a new application being submitted and until then he could take no action. The Environmental Health Department had shown little interest in the matter. ***The Clerk was asked to contact the Enforcement Officer to find when the new application was being re-submitted.***
- ii) Parish Vision – Cllr Mrs Podbury had circulated a detailed update. The committee had been extremely busy and she thanked everyone for their efforts. The committee was now concentrating on getting the questionnaire right and this would be submitted to members for approval in January.
- iii) Recreation Ground – Cllr Ellis reported that the Recreation Ground still had a rubbish problem and he was still maintaining feelers to see if anybody was interested in the job of Groundsman. The Clerk reported that he had received a cheque for £1,200 for half of the season’s fees from the Football Club.
- iv) Footpaths – Cllr Mrs Podbury had circulated an update. She had asked the Clerk to investigate whether planning permission was required for the storage container and he had confirmed that if it were positioned in the car park it would need it because it was “change of use”. The other sites are unlikely to require planning permission, however the duty Planning Officer will advise.
- v) KALC - Cllr Brown had circulated an update on the meeting of the TW Area Committee on 9th December.
- vi) Environment – Cllr Mrs Podbury had attended a Climate Change Communities “Networking” meeting on 8th December and had circulated a detailed paper. There are considerable environmental grants available.
- vii) Local Needs Housing – Cllr Wheeler gave a brief summary of the inaugural meeting of the LNH Committee held on 4th December. Although potential land in Speldhurst has been identified for LNH it did not preclude SPC identifying other land such as “brownfield sites” to TWBC and this will be discussed with Cllr Stanyer and Sarah Lewis at a proposed meeting on 15th January. It was clarified that although there were potentially 26 households in the Parish with an identified “need” it would only mean building about 9-13 dwellings and not all of these would be in Speldhurst.

2320 OTHER MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF 16th NOVEMBER 2009 – The work on the beech tree had been completed on 11th December. This item would now be removed from the Agenda.

2321 CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED

- i) Letter from KHS dated 17th November – “Introducing a Permit Scheme into Kent”. From 25th Jan 2010 all roadworks will need a permit.
- ii) Bourne Amenity Ltd – reducing labour rates by 50% for 5 months. They build play areas, drain sports fields, mend gates etc
- iii) HMRC – as we have less than 50 employees our annual return must be done online.
- iv) CAB – email – thanks for generous grant.
- v) Letter from TW Mayor – thanks for kind donation

- vi) Letter from KCC – Subsidised Local Bus Services – notes of services affected services.
- vii) Letter from CROP – Citizens Rights for Older People – requesting a donation – **Clerk to write requesting more information**
- viii) Brochure from Civic Pride – providing services to Councils

- ix) Email from resident Robert Attwood of Breakstones Lane – he requested the re-instatement of the barrier at the start of the “Twitten”/Breakstones Lane. Copy attached – **Clerk to write advising that the Council considered his request but have decided that the rights of disabled take priority.**
- x) Samaritans TW – requesting donation – **Clerk to write requesting more information**
- xi) Fieldwork CPRE monthly magazine
- xii) Protect Kent –the old CPRE Kent looking for more members
- xiii) Letter from Lord Lieutenant of Kent inviting Chairman, Vice Chairman or the Clerk to a service on April 22nd 2010 at Maidstone – **Cllr Mrs Soyke to consider attending.**
- xiv) Email from KALC re Power of Well Being Training on Monday 11th January at Swanscombe & Greenhithe Town Hall
- xv) Audit Commission is appointing a new External Auditor for our books with effect from January 2010 – his name is Wayne Rickard (CV included).
- xvi) KCC letter dated 9th Dec – Consultation Draft: Community Infrastructure Provision Service Strategies in Kent 2009 – we are being consulted from 9th Dec to 20th Jan. **Cllr Mrs Soyke to review.**
- xvii) Letter from Jacobs – KCC and KHS Road safety agents. As Parish Councils are privy to the low hourly rate that KCC charge. They will now work for us including speed limit analysis using KCC adopted criteria.
- xviii) NALC leadership course dates for next year – this is the 3 day course that Cllr Mrs Soyke attended last year – 23-26 March; 13-16 July; 16-19 Nov. **Cllr Mrs Jeffreys to attend July course.**
- xix) Calendar from Sturgeons
- xx) “Explore Kent” magazine issue 18
- xxi) Letter from a company called Kogo Ltd advertising their IT expertise and would we like a free consultation.
- xxii) Letter from Raymond Benn & Co Chartered Certified Accountants offering taxation, accounting and financial services.
- xxiii) Letter from The Royal British Legion – thank you for our contribution to the Poppy Appeal.

2322 DIARY DATES

Wednesday 16th December – Planning Meeting 10.00am LGVH

Monday 4th January – Full Council Meeting 7.30pm Committee Room SPVH

2323 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION – Cllr Mrs Waters advised the committee that there had been instances of fly tipping in Speldhurst but the matter had been dealt with. She also advised that the Headmistress was leaving Speldhurst Primary School to join St James’s.

Cllr Mrs Hull advised that the builders Elysian Homes were responsible for the damage to the verges and the mud at Furzefield Avenue.

Cllr Brown had the latest copy of “Watchout” magazine which he would forward to the Clerk for distribution.

There being nothing further to discuss the meeting closed at 9.10pm

CHAIRMAN