

Local Government Act 1972



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

Minutes of the Full Council Meeting

Held at 7.30 pm on Monday 3rd February 2025 in the Committee Room, Speldhurst Village Hall

MEMBERS PRESENT

Cllrs Curry (Chair), Lyle (Vice-Chair), Ellery, Leach, Littlefield, Norton and Turner.

OFFICERS PRESENT

K Neve, Clerk and K Harman (KH) Assistant Clerk (minutes).

IN ATTENDANCE

County Cllr McInroy and Borough Cllr Sankey were in attendance.

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were 3 members of the public present.

25/23 To enquire if anyone intends to record the meeting

The Chair read out the following statement: "An audio recording has been started. It will be used to ensure our minutes are accurate, but be aware that your voice may be recorded, and the recording could be requested from us via Freedom of Information."

25/24 To accept and approve apologies and reasons for absence.

Apologies had been received from Cllrs Dickens and Tarricone (health reasons); Cleaver and Rowe (holidays) and Davies (work commitments).

Apologies were also received from Borough Cllrs Britcher-Allan and Sharratt.

25/25 Disclosure of Interests

Councillors' ongoing disclosures were noted:

Cllrs Curry, Ellery and Rowe have shares in the Speldhurst shop and post office.

25/26 Declarations of Lobbying

There were none.

25/27 Minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 6th January 2025 – RESOLVED to approve that the minutes, previously forwarded to Members, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

25/28 Public Open Session

No one wished to speak.

25/29 Borough and County Councillors' Reports**County Cllr McInroy:**

- **Finances:** Kent County Council (KCC) will close 2024/25 with a balanced year end, although there have been reductions in non-statutory services, even with proceeds of £25m from properties which were surplus to requirements. KCC received the Settlement from Government just before Christmas, resulting in a reduction in funding. This will mean further reductions in services in 2025/26, even with a further 5% increase in Council Tax, required so as to trigger the maximum funding from Government under the new arrangements, although there will be an increased spending on Highways with KCC expected to receive an additional £11m on top of the budgeted £20m.
- **Government Devolution:** Following publication of the Government White Paper, along with 16 other counties, KCC voted in January to apply for unitary status in 2027, rather than the default position of 2028, due to promises of enhanced powers and funding by the Government. A decision regarding whether Kent was on the priority list for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) was still awaited.

Borough Cllr Sankey:

- Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC) would be holding an Extraordinary Full Council meeting on 4th February to discuss the opportunities and risks of devolution and local government reorganisation. There were likely to be council tax increases through devolution – perhaps even double.
- The Draft Strategic Plan would be tabled at Full Council.
- TWBC was focusing its efforts on the unparished areas of the borough.

Borough Cllr Sharratt (via email):

- Government Devolution (as reported by Borough Cllr Sankey)

Borough Cllr Britcher-Allan (via email):

- The Draft Strategic Plan (as above).
- Government Devolution (as above).
- Rusthall's annual bonfire and fireworks event was relocating to Southwood Road playing fields.
- Rusthall's Community Larder was open and able to refer residents in need to Nourish Food Bank.

25/30 Clerk's Report

- Councillors were asked to submit ideas for the newsletters including photographs and suggested wording to the Assistant Clerk (CB).
- Historic England had decided not to proceed with an application to add Speldhurst Chapel to the List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest.
- A plea to all councillors to make every effort to attend meetings which are diarised well in advance.
- Parish Chairs' meeting minutes were circulated.
- Devolution briefing notes were circulated.
- Councillors were asked to provide feedback on staff to the Clerk and Chair (for the Clerk) to aid appraisals.
- Talk Talk who supply the Pavilion broadband had advised of a price increase of £1.65 pcm.
- The Assistant Clerks had provided information regarding their workloads during January.

25/31 General Matters – Actionable tasks which do not fall to a committee.

Ongoing				
	Summary	Owner	Created	Status
20/24	Contact TWBC Licensing regarding alcohol licence for the Pavilion.	Clerk	06/02/24	Ongoing

80/24	Draft email regarding Emirates flight pattern.	Cllr Tarricone/Clerk	02/09/24	Complete
01/25	Notify TWBC of precept.	Clerk	06/01/25	Complete
02/25	Article on precept for Website, Newsletters and Social Media.	Cllr Rowe/Asst Clerk (CB)	06/01/25	Complete
03/25	Include item on Governance Agenda re data on SPC activities.	Clerk	06/01/25	Complete
04/25	Confirm nomination for KALC Community Award.	Clerk/Asst Clerk (CB)	06/01/25	Complete
05/25	Follow up with interested residents for councillor vacancy.	Clerk	06/01/25	Complete
06/25	Contact new Chair of LGCSA to request a meeting and follow up with Working Party. (Cllrs Curry, Davies, Dickens, Leach & Lyle)	Chair	06/01/25	Complete
	New	Owner	Created	Status
07/25	Include approved policies on website: cyber security, employee code of conduct and Kent code of conduct for members.	Clerk	03/02/25	
08/25	Confirm appointment of Mulberry and Co as the new Payroll Provider.	Clerk	03/02/25	
09/25	Instruct AJL Roadmarking to carry out repairs to and relining of LGRG car park.	Asst Clerk (KH)	03/02/25	
10/25	Instruct The Living Forest to carry out maintenance works to the Pond at The Boundary and tree works at Roopers.	Asst Clerk (KH)	03/02/25	
11/25	Set up meeting with the Community Hub and following that with LGCSA to discuss the Pavilion.	Clerk	03/02/25	

25/32 Committees and Working Groups (WG) 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 Committee** – Cllr Lyle, Governance Chair: Meeting held on 27th January.

- It was **RESOLVED** to approve the following policies: Cyber Security Policy (with amendments suggested by Cllr Curry); Employee Code of Conduct and the Kent Code of Conduct for Members.
- It was **RESOLVED** to appoint Mulberry and Co as the new payroll provider.

b) **Highways Committee** – Cllr Norton, Highways Chair: There had been no meeting, the next was scheduled for 24th February.

- The Clerk and Cllr Norton had visited Langton Green Primary School Deputy Head to try and move issues forward including the installation of railings outside the school entrance.
- He had attended a meeting with a Director of The Pig in Groombridge regarding installing a footbridge over the River Grom.
- KCC had improved signage and cut back vegetation in Groombridge and the Speed Indicator Device (SID) post had been replaced. The SID battery was not keeping its charge and would need replacing.
- A mobile speeding device could make a useful contribution to road safety. This was discussed at a meeting with Mike Martin MP and forwarded to TWBC who were looking for road safety initiatives.

c) **Amenities Committee** – Cllr Lyle, Chair, reported: Meeting held on 20th January.

- It was **RESOLVED** to instruct AJL Roadmarking to carry out repairs to the tarmac in the front carpark at the Langton Green Recreation Ground at a cost of £1,600.
- It was **RESOLVED** to instruct AJL Roadmarking to reline the front carpark at the Langton Green Recreation Ground at a cost of £1,200 on the recommendation of the Amenities Committee.
- It was **RESOLVED** to instruct The Living Forest to carry out maintenance works to the pond and surrounding vegetation at the Boundary, Langton Green at a cost of £1,798 on the recommendation of the Amenities Committee.

- It was **RESOLVED** to instruct The Living Forest to carry out maintenance works to an overgrown Oak tree adjacent to 2 Roopers, Speldhurst at a cost of £840 on the recommendation of the Amenities Committee.
- d) **Environment WG (EWG)** – Cllr Turner, Chair, reported: There had been no meeting, the next meeting was scheduled for 25th February.
- e) **KALC (Kent Association of Local Councils)** – Cllr Curry reported.
- All parish councils should be contributing to a Travellers’ Fund to pay for recovery of a site following an encampment moving on; however, it transpired no parishes had contributed since 2015.
 - According to the Tunbridge Wells Agreement, the Leader of the Council should attend KALC Parish Chair meetings in person; however, this was not currently happening which had led to the meetings being less effective. Borough Cllr Sankey asked Cllr Curry to email him with his suggestions on the matter so that they could be considered further.
- f) **Air Traffic Issues** – Cllr Curry reported that the Government was now discussing a third runway at Heathrow, in addition to the second runway at Gatwick. The parish council would need to decide which, if any, of the opposition groups it should align with.

25/33 Finance Committee – Report by the Clerk in Cllr Rowe’s absence

There had been no meeting of the Finance Committee since the last Full Council meeting.

- a) Interim payments since the last meeting:

Unity Trust Bank: £102 Ashford Security for Pavilion Alarm; £54.69 Speldhurst Village Hall for Room Hire; £375 Langton Life for Magazine Articles; £2,669.10 Commercial Services Trading Ltd for Grounds Maintenance; £34.99* P Curry for Microphone for Laptop Recordings; £594* Southpoint Electrical Ltd for Oven for Pavilion.
Mastercard: £9 DD card charge.

- b) Decisions made under delegated authority are starred above*.

25/34 Accounts for Payment

RESOLVED that the invoices as listed below and checked by Cllr Leach be paid.

Date Paid	Payee Name	Reference	Amount Paid £	Transaction Detail
04/02/2025	Groombridge Magazine	MT2884	36.00	Groombridge Magazine Subscription
04/02/2025	Southborough Town Council	MT2885	96.00	Councillor Training x 2
04/02/2025	Prontaplumb Ltd	MT2886	312.00	Pavilion Plumbing Repairs
04/02/2025	Commercial Services Trading Ltd	MT2887	947.12	Grounds Maintenance
04/02/2025	Tivoli	MT2888	140.63	Canine Waste Removal
04/02/2025	m:power accounting	MT2889	57.60	Payroll Administration
04/02/2025	Cloudy IT	MT2890	268.32	IT Support
04/02/2025	The Living Forest Ltd	MT2892	132.90	Removal of overhanging branch
04/02/2025	Brooklyn Monk	MT2893	120.00	Pavilion Cleaning
04/02/2025	T.Bonard Electrical LTD	MT2894	139.20	PAT Testing - Office
04/02/2025	T.Bonard Electrical LTD	MT2895	134.40	PAT Testing for Pavilion
04/02/2025	Knockout Print	MT2896	216.00	Recreation Ground Sign
04/02/2025	Employees	MT2897	5,586.05	Salaries
10/02/2025	BT PLC	DD	26.93	Office Mobile
10/02/2025	N.E.S.T. Pension Scheme	DD	678.79	Pension Contributions

11/02/2025	Talk Talk Business	DD	27.54	Pavilion Broadband
13/02/2025	KCC (KCS)	DD	126.95	Photocopier Quarterly Rental
20/02/2025	HMRC	MT2891	1,196.24	Tax and NI
20/02/2025	EDF Energy	DD	595.71	Pavilion Energy
28/02/2025	Hugo Fox	DD	11.99	Website Monthly Subscription
28/02/2025	BT PLC	DD	69.42	Office Broadband and Phone

25/35 Update on Vacancy on Council

There had been no further interest.

25/36 Annual Parish Meeting 2025

There was nothing to report. The working group would meet to firm up arrangements.

25/37 Speldhurst Chapel Project

An update had been received from the Chapel project manager which had been circulated.

25/38 Planning Committee – Report provided by Cllr Cleaver, Planning Chair (via email):

A meeting had been held on 15th January and the minutes circulated. A number of applications were considered with the committee objecting to two of these. Members considered their objections reflected residents' concerns.

25/39 Langton Green Recreation Ground (LGRG) and Pavilion

- An update on the Community Hub had been circulated. The programme remained essentially the same, continuing the activities, groups and events which had proved popular.
- Cllr Curry and James Ponsford, the new Chair of LGCSA, had met to discuss the way forward. The new working group had also met including a meeting with a fundraising contact to obtain advice. The next meeting would be with James Bowdidge to discuss the six-month extension of the Community Hub followed by another meeting with James Ponsford with the hope of moving forward constructively. Cllr Curry thanked Cllrs Dickens and Leach for their help in progressing matters.

25/40 Chair's Report

There was nothing further to report that had not already been discussed.

25/41 Diary Dates – The following dates were noted:

- 12th February - Planning Committee (12.30pm)
- 24th February – Highways Committee
- 25th February – Environment Working Group
- 3rd March – Full Council – LGVH

25/42 Items for Information

- Cllr Lyle reported that an application would shortly be submitted to TWBC for a new barn for agricultural use at Manor Court Farm, Ashurst, owned by her family.

There being nothing further to discuss, the meeting closed at 8.08 pm.

Chair