

# Council Tax Benefit and the Precept

The Government is changing the Council Tax benefit system and replacing it with a Local Council Tax Support Scheme. This is to be administered by the local authority (TWBC) but with a 10% reduction in the grant from Central Government. Pensioners are protected against reduction in support.

This new scheme has meant that the tax base on which the band D rate was calculated has changed. Speldhurst Parish Council decided to increase the precept in the coming financial year by 2.5% from £122,000 to £125,000, but the change in the tax base means that the precept will show an increase of 5.5% in total. The change in the tax base will affect all Parish Councils, some of whom have adjustments in double figures before any change to their precept is factored in.

## Langton Green School Expansion

There are plans in place to increase the size of Langton Green Primary School from 210 pupils to 420 over a seven year period – starting in September 2013. Information regarding the proposal has not been widely distributed and serious concerns have been raised over whether local children will be guaranteed a place if this proposal goes ahead and the impact this proposal will have on traffic and parking, which is already a major issue in the immediate area. Plans for the extended



building have not yet been submitted for comment, so it is difficult to have a view on the proposals, but the current school is in Green Belt and any expansion will need to be given very serious consideration.

## Awards for the young

The Parish Council has introduced an annual award, called the Jubilee Award for Olympic Spirit, for children in the parish who make a significant voluntary contribution.



Presentations were made in July last year by the Deputy Lieutenant of Kent, Peter Blackwell to children from both Langton Green and Speldhurst Primary schools, all of whom had undertaken voluntary work for the benefit of others.

## Proposed new Sports pavilion

For those who have ever ventured into the sports pavilion at the Langton Green recreation ground, you will understand why the Sports Club felt that the time has arrived to consider doing something about it! Plans for a proposed



new pavilion with improved facilities have been drawn up and will be available for public comment in the very near future. Many clubs use the sports ground and pavilion and it is a very valuable community asset.

## Faster broadband - update

Our final application for funding was issued by KCC to DEFRA before Christmas – we expect to hear whether it was successful in March. (This is intended to deliver BT-Infinity type services to most Speldhurst Parish residents). Further down the line is the joint KCC/BDUK initiative (which should deliver BT-Infinity type services to most Langton Green residents); suppliers' responses to KCC are due mid-month with a decision expected next month. We hope to experience the first results of this initiative towards the end of 2013.

## Neighbourhood planning

Councillors have attended various meetings during the past year in order to obtain information about whether it could be a benefit to the Parish to produce a Neighbourhood Plan. They will be meeting members of the public who have volunteered to drive this initiative forward in January, in order to discuss the available options.



Speldhurst Parish Council

*Working for the whole community*

NEWSLETTER

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# Annual Parish Assembly

Last year's Annual Assembly held in Speldhurst was a first, in that it involved many local clubs and associations and gave them the opportunity to explain their aims and ambitions and a way of encouraging new members to join. This year's Assembly will be held in Langton Green Village Hall on Monday, April 8th and we hope those clubs and others will be represented again. Our guest speaker this year will be Chief Inspector Nicola Faulconbridge from Tunbridge Wells Police, so we are guaranteed an interesting evening!



## Airport noise

There is growing concern in the Tunbridge Wells area, and elsewhere, over the disturbance caused by the increase in flight traffic to Gatwick Airport. Over 70% of flights now approach the runway from the east (over our Parish) and night-time approaches seem to be on the increase. It is interesting to note that at Heathrow, the operator and the airlines have a voluntary agreement not to land between midnight and 4.30am. No such agreement exists at Gatwick. And Gatwick is expected to grow significantly over the next 5-7 years, possibly with a second runway.

If you have been disturbed by aircraft noise, raise your complaint now by emailing [noise@gatwickairport.com](mailto:noise@gatwickairport.com) providing the time, date and nature of the disturbance. If you don't, the airport will assume there is not a problem!

## A greener parish



Residents of Southfields and Furzefield Avenue in Speldhurst can now look at their roads with a certain amount of

renewed pride. A community-led project with funding by Speldhurst Parish Council and donations from the community, saw the planting of ten new trees. The project has taken a long time to get off the ground but with the help of Kent County Council, Cleartrack (who scan the ground to ensure no vital services are affected) and the local community, the work was completed after two long days planting in very wet and muddy conditions in December. Hopefully, the true benefit of the planting will be seen next spring when the buds appear!

YOU ARE MOST WELCOME to attend our monthly meetings. Details are published on our web site [www.speldhurstparishcouncil.gov.uk](http://www.speldhurstparishcouncil.gov.uk) in local magazines and on our Parish Notice Boards.

## Safety on school buses

Questions have been raised about the safety of children who have to travel standing up on overcrowded school buses, both up and downstairs. If any parent or child has an observation on the matter, please get in touch with the Parish Clerk.

## Speedwatch in action

Regular Speedwatch patrols, working with Tunbridge Wells Police and our PCSO have been in action in the Parish. Speeding tickets



have been given out and many verbal and written notices have been issued. The Speedwatch team are determined to remind local people and visitors that speeding on our roads is dangerous and will continue to help enforce speed limits where possible.

## Where's the Xmas tree gone?

One morning in the middle of December last year, a Christmas Tree appeared in the middle of The Green outside The George Public House in Old Groombridge, with a deep trench being dug right across The Green, in an attempt to wire the lights to a lamp-post! Whilst this was not only highly dangerous, it was also a surprise to the Parish Council, as they own the land (and the lamp-post!) and no-one had asked for permission to erect it. On asking around as to who might have been responsible, no-one came forward. A week or so later, someone owned up and was advised that permission must be sought in future for such a venture.



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### Speldhurst Parish Council

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This newsletter will be available, as will all future issues, on the Parish Council web site.

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