



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

**Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on Monday 4th April 2022
at 7.30pm in the Committee Room at Speldhurst Village Hall**

MEMBERS PRESENT

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

OFFICERS PRESENT

Mrs K Neve – Clerk and Mrs C Barrett – Assistant Clerk

IN ATTENDANCE

There were no Borough or County Councillors in attendance.

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no members of the public present.

22/69 Covid Compliance

Cllr Mrs Lyle advised that Covid compliance at council meetings would be reviewed at Full Council in May. She asked councillors to consider any measures they would like to remain in place before attending.

22/70 To enquire if anyone intends to film, photograph and/or record the meeting

No-one present intended to film, photograph or record the meeting.

22/71 To accept and approve apologies and reasons for absence

Apologies had been received from Cllrs Pate, Scarbrough and Turner, and County Cllr McInroy for covid-related reasons. Apologies had also been received from Borough Cllrs Allen and Ms Willis due to work commitments.

22/72 Disclosure of Interests

The Clerk and the Assistant Clerk declared an interest in the discussion of salary and pension contribution reviews under item 17a.

22/73 Declarations of Lobbying

There were none.

22/74 Minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 7th March 2022

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

22/75 Public Open Session

There were no members of the public present.

22/76 Borough and County Councillors' Reports

County Cllr McInroy had sent apologies and had reported the following:

- Kent County Council (KCC) had confirmed that a further pothole blitz would be undertaken in 2022/23.
- Following a request from residents, approximately 20 metres of road in Roopers, Speldhurst would be resurfaced mid-way along the road where the worst of the defects were.
- KCC would also repair other defects to improve the road quality of Roopers, including at the nursing home end. This work was scheduled to be completed by June.

Borough Cllr Allen had sent apologies and had reported the following:

- The 285 bus route would continue following negotiations helped by Greg Clark MP.
- The Amelia Scott building would have a grand opening on 28th April for members of the public to attend.
- With garden waste collections resuming on 21st March, Urbaser had advised that there would be adequate crew numbers to carry out collections, and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC) had confirmed there had been no further disruption in resuming the service.

22/77 Review of Action Points

The updated Action Points Table had been shared with councillors and these were reviewed. The newly updated list of action points, incorporating additional actions from this meeting, are shown at the end of these minutes.

22/78 Finance Committee – Report by Cllr Ellery

- a) Cllr Ellery reported that a meeting of the Finance Committee had been held on 21st March.
- b) **Budget virements:** there were none.
- c) **Interim payments:** there were none.
- d) **To consider transferring to the Rialtas Cloud System:** The Clerk reported that the RFO had investigated Rialtas Cloud for the accounts system and the cost of using the system was £19 per month per user. For two fixed users and one 'floating' user this would amount to £700 per annum. Cllr Ellery said the Finance Committee had agreed that this transfer was desirable, as it would enable spot checks, and facilitate a smooth handover of financial administration from the RFO to the Clerk. It was **RESOLVED** to approve the transferral to Rialtas Cloud.
- e) **To consider the repair of the fence by the store:** A quote for £628.81 had been obtained from Tate Fencing to repair the fence which had been damaged by the recent storm. Tate Fencing had previously completed work to a high standard for the council and it was **RESOLVED** to approve this amount so that the fence could be repaired as soon as possible.
- f) **To consider opening a new Building Society Account:** Having previously resolved to close the account with HSBC due to increased charges, the Finance Committee had agreed that it would only invest in a Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS) protected savings account. The RFO had investigated and recommended opening a 35 day easy access Nationwide Account. It was **RESOLVED** to approve this decision.
- g) **To confirm the Grant Awarding Guidelines, the Investment Policy and Financial Risk Assessment:** The Finance Committee had amended the wording in the Grant Awarding Guidelines and the accompanying Application Form for a Grant. They had made minimal amendments to the wording in the Financial Risk Assessment. There had been no change to the Investment Policy. It was **RESOLVED** to approve all the amendments.

22/79 Accounts for Payment

RESOLVED that the invoices as listed, be paid.

Payee Name	Reference	Amount	Detail
ACRK	SO	90.00	Annual Membership
Cloudy IT	MT2204	263.70	Monthly IT
Speldhurst Rainbows	MT2205	200.00	Grant
Martyn Lawrence	MT2206	190.00	Mowing & Strimming
The Living Forest Ltd	MT2207	114.00	Tree maintenance
K Harman	MT2208	40.00	Office clean/expenses
K Neve	MT2209	22.95	Expenses
C Barrett	MT2210	50.25	APM expenses
BJ Signs & Decals Ltd	MT2218	124.80	Van Chevrons
HMRC	MT2211	2,596.51	Tax & NI Quarter
Employees	MT2213-17	4,224.87	Salaries
NEST	MT2212	394.04	Pensions
EDF	DD	362.00	Pavilion electricity
Castle Water	DD	81.25	Pavilion water

Total: **£8,754.37**

22/80 Planning Committee

Cllr Rajah, Chairman of the Planning Committee, reported the following:

- Members had considered 11 applications at the meeting on 14th March.
- There had been positive input during the Public Open Session from the Developer of Manor Court Farm, Ashurst.
- Planning consultation 22/00436/FULL 21 Holmewood Ridge, Langton Green, Tunbridge Wells TN3 0ED – Single storey rear extension and replacement of flat roof dormers with pitched roof dormers: The deadline for responding to this application fell before the next Planning Committee meeting. Cllr Rajah had visited the site and recommended remaining neutral and leave decision to Planning Officer. It was **RESOLVED** to approve his recommendation.
- It had been necessary for Cllr Turner to temporarily step down from the Planning Committee and Cllr Rajah appealed for someone to step in while he was unavailable. Cllr Mrs Soyke agreed to join the committee and attend meetings on a temporary basis until Cllr Turner could return.

22/81 Langton Green Recreation Ground (LGRG)

- a) **Report from the Pavilion Management Working Group:** Cllr Mrs Lyle reported that her attempts to arrange a meeting of the Working Group had been unsuccessful.
- b) **Traffic management and installation of grid matting to alleviate parking**
- c) **Improvements to the pathway from Lampington Row to the LGRG**
- d) **Update on the drainage project:** Cllr Mrs Lyle explained that items b, c and d were ongoing and asked the Clerk to incorporate them into a single point on the next meeting agenda.
- e) **SPC Pavilion Ltd Secretary:** Cllr Mrs Lyle reported that an Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) of Speldhurst Parish Council Pavilion Ltd would be held at the May Full Council. The purpose of this meeting would be to amend the wording of articles relating to the management of the Pavilion, which stated that the Parish Clerk would be Company Secretary. It was no longer appropriate for the Parish Clerk to hold this role and the wording would be changed accordingly.

22/82 Support for Ukrainian Refugees

The Clerk explained that Charles Mackonochie of Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC) was the liaison between TWBC and the Parish/Town Councils regarding support for Ukrainian Refugees and had provided information to be forwarded to residents. TWBC had also set up a page on their website providing support and advice on how residents could help. The Assistant Clerk (CB) would make the web link available via the parish council website and social media pages.

22/83 To consider a response to the SE Water Draft 25 Year Environment Plan

It was **RESOLVED** to delegate the plan to the Environment Working Group to consider whether a response was appropriate. The working group would submit a response on behalf of the council if appropriate.

22/84 Chairman's Report

- Review of Annual Parish Meeting: Cllr Mrs Lyle reported that a debrief meeting had been organised for 19th April and notes would be written to inform the way future meetings were organised.

22/85 Working Group and other Reports: to include any meetings held since the last Full Council meeting, the draft minutes having been previously forwarded to all Members

- a) **Governance WG** – Cllr Mrs Lyle reported that a meeting had been held on 30th March and the draft minutes had been circulated.

To consider the approval of the following, as recommended by the Governance Working Group:

- **Staff salary review** – The working group had recommended a pay award of 4% from 1st April 2022 for all staff with the exception of the Assistant Clerk (Mrs Barrett) whose hourly rate would be increased to £13 per hour to bring her salary more in line with the other Assistant Clerk (Mrs Harman), whilst acknowledging Mrs Harman's greater experience and CiLCA qualification. Councillors **RESOLVED** to approve this pay award. Cllr Mrs Lyle said the Working Group reserved the right to review the overall pay award upwards if it becomes apparent that the pay award is not comparable with equivalent industry sector pay awards, and any changes would be backdated to 1st April 2022
- **Pension contribution review** – Councillors **RESOLVED** to approve the working group's recommendation that an increase from 5% to 7% employer contribution be included in the budget for the financial year 2023/24.
- **Purchase of new laptop** for the Assistant Clerk (CB) and office furniture – Councillors **RESOLVED** to approve the working group's recommendation that a new laptop be purchased at a cost of £634, together with 3 new desks at a cost of £215 each. A further amount of £600 was approved to purchase a monitor, keyboard and docking station. It was also agreed that staff would investigate purchasing ergonomic office chairs, payment for which would be authorised under delegated authority.
- **Change in office opening hours** – Councillors **RESOLVED** to approve the working group's recommendation that there should be no change to the office opening hours.
- **CCTV upgrade** – After some discussion about the annual increase in maintenance cost, councillors **RESOLVED** to approve the working group's recommendation that Sunstone Systems' quotation for a system upgrade at a cost of £3,751.30 should be accepted. However, it was agreed that this decision would be reviewed if the new annual maintenance costs proved significantly more than at present.
- **Approval of policies** – Several policies had been considered and it was **RESOLVED** that the following policies be adopted on the recommendation of the working group: CCTV; Freedom of Information; Complaints; Virement; Lone Worker; Documents, Records and Correspondence, and Recording of Meetings.
- To request volunteers to review the fixed asset register for valuation purposes – The Clerk had circulated the fixed asset register, detailing a recommended split of assets between committees and working groups. It was agreed that committee/working group chairs would allocate assets to committee members who would calculate their value, including installation costs. The Clerk would assist with lists of assets.

- b) **Highways WG** – There had been no meeting since the last Full Council Meeting. A meeting was scheduled for 12th April.
- c) **Amenities WG** – Cllr Rowe reported that a meeting had been held on 1st March and the draft minutes had been circulated.

To consider the approval of the following course of action, as recommended by the Amenities Working Group:

- **Footpath around Recreation Ground** – Cllr Rowe recapped the feasibility study that had been carried out by the working group following a resident request for an all-weather path around the recreation ground. Several quotes for different options had been obtained and considered at the Amenities Working Group meeting on 1st March. The working group had agreed that such a project was unfeasible at the current time because 1. It would be unwise to undertake additional groundworks until the issues with the swales were resolved; 2. The costs involved, particularly at the present time, were too high; and 3. Adequate accessible areas were already provided in the large carpark area and paved footpath behind the Pavilion joining the carpark to Lampington Row. Furthermore, when the ground was dry and firm the recreation ground itself was easily accessible.
Cllr Rowe then summarised the advice sought from KALC regarding the council's legal responsibilities, and it would appear that their obligations had been met. Councillors **RESOLVED** to approve no further action at this time and the Clerk would inform the resident of their decision.
- d) **Air Traffic WG** – There had been no meeting since the last Full Council meeting.
- e) **Footpaths/Fire Hydrants** – Cllr Langridge reported that Kent Fire and Rescue had recently carried out checks on all the fire hydrants in the parish and had produced a map of their locations. The Clerk would seek further clarification from Kent Fire and Rescue on the requirements for SPC.
Cllr Langridge had met with the new owners of Shadwell and Sproud's Woods. It had been a positive meeting and the owners had agreed to repair any broken stiles. Cllr Langridge said that he and the Assistant Clerk (CB) would attempt to work with more parish landowners going forward. It was agreed that they should investigate the cost of land registry searches to assist with contact details.
- f) **Environment WG** – There had been no meeting since the last Full Council Meeting. A meeting was scheduled for 25th April.
- g) **Defibrillator WG** – Cllr Curry reported that two defibrillators had been installed, one at The Crown Inn in Old Groombridge and one at Langton Green Pavilion. Councillors Barrington-Johnson and Langridge were now considering a new location for the defibrillator currently installed at Langton Green Village Hall.
- h) **KALC** – There was nothing to report.

22/86 Diary Dates

- 11th-18th – KH and CB annual leave
- Tuesday 12th April – Highways WG – 7.30pm
- Tuesday 19th April – Planning Committee – 7.30pm
- Wednesday 20th April – Internal Audit
- Monday 25th April – Defibrillator WG – 6pm
- Monday 25th April – Environment WG – 7pm
- Wednesday 27th April – Governance WG – 7.30pm
- Thursday 5th May – Borough Council Elections
- Monday 9th May – Full Council (annual statutory meeting) – 7.30pm

22/87 Items for Information

- Cllr Mrs Lyle advised that Cllr Pate would step down as Chairman at the Annual Statutory Full Council meeting in May. He would remain as a parish councillor. Cllr Mrs Lyle asked any councillors interested in taking on the role of Chairman to express their interest in the Chair’s role to Cllr Pate and the Clerk. Cllr Barrington-Johnson confirmed that if no one came forward, a chairman would be appointed for each Full Council meeting, but this would not be ideal. Cllr Mrs Lyle said that she was happy to remain as Vice-Chair unless anyone else was willing to take on the role.
- **Notice of Election of Borough Councillor** – nomination deadline 5th April – one vacancy for Speldhurst and Bidborough Ward.
- **Speldhurst Chapel** – Unless a rescue plan could be produced, the owners of Speldhurst Chapel intended to sell. The chapel had been valued at £275,000. There was a public meeting scheduled for 20th April to discuss this. The Assistant Clerk (KH) would attend and take notes. Cllrs Ellery and Rowe planned to attend.
- **National Association of Local Council (NALC) Smaller Councils Committee Letter** – NALC had asked councils which issues they would like addressing and what services could be offered to meet their needs. The Clerk asked councillors to send her their feedback.
- **Traveller Season** – Tunbridge Wells Community Safety Unit (CSU) had advised parish councils to ensure land was secure as the Traveller season approached. Cllr Barrington Johnson requested that the Clerk and/or Chairman be prepared with contact details for the owners of the village green at Langton Green, as this site was vulnerable. They should be ready to make the owners aware at short notice if information came through suggesting that Travellers were scouting for land in the local area.
- **Holiday Dates** – The Clerk reminded councillors to notify the office of any holiday dates to help staff arrange meetings.

There being no further items the meeting closed at 9.02pm.

Chairman

Full Council Action Points

Action No	Action	Owner	Date created	Status
17/21	Raise awareness of LG car thefts and need for Neighbourhood Watch rep across media channels.	Cllr Langridge: Has now heard from NW Liaison Officer. Will follow up and report back.	4/10	Carry Over
22/21	Monitor water levels in swales on LGRG, particularly after heavy rainfall.	Cllr Barrington-Johnson and Cllr Mrs Lyle visited following prolonged rainfall and advised swales are holding water and not overflowing.	1/11	Ongoing
43/21	Cllrs to visit the Langton Green Village Car Park at weekends to monitor the traffic and parking.	All Cllrs	6/12	Ongoing

16/22	Inform Clerk of any jubilee celebrations planned in your village.	All Cllrs - Groombridge – street party centred around village green. Ashurst-event organised.	7/02	Carry Over
17/22	Write article for Local Magazine asking parish residents to sign up for an e-newsletter.	Assistant Clerk (CB)	7/02	Carry Over
23/22	Investigate Grid Matting for LGRG Car Park.	Cllr Mrs Lyle	7/03	Ongoing
27/22	Subbuteo World Cup event 2024.	Cllr Langridge to take the lead	7/03	Ongoing
28/22	Amend items for LGRG report on next Full Council agenda	Clerk	04/04	TBA
29/22	Include link to TWBC help for Ukraine page on website and social media	Assistant Clerk (CB)	04/04	TBA
30/22	Progress purchase of new office equipment	Clerk	04/04	TBA
31/22	Distribute fixed asset lists to committee Chairs	Clerk	04/04	TBA
32/22	Inform resident of Cllrs' decision regarding all-weather path at LGRG	Clerk	04/04	TBA
13/21	Scope out what is needed to undertake an accessibility audit.	Clerk: Relates to Pavilion and LGRG only. Advice being sought from KALC. Groundworks to be put on hold whilst issues remain with swales. Amenities WG recommended not feasible.	4/10	Complete
20/21	Review grant awarding criteria.	Finance Committee: Being reconsidered at next mtg.	1/11	Complete
31/21	Fire Hydrant Initiative – Investigate logistics of combining hydrant checks with the footpaths volunteers.	Cllr Langridge: Waiting to hear response from Kent Fire & Rescue on when the last checks had taken place All checks have been completed fairly recently.	1/11	Complete
11/22	Schedule upcoming working group meetings on Teams.	Clerks' office. Several Teams meetings already taken place reasonably successfully.	7/02	Complete
22/22	Investigate purchase of new oven for Pavilion which will then go on the Finance Committee Agenda.	Cllr Mrs Lyle/Clerk Finance Committee	7/03	Complete
24/22	Clarification of the Articles of Association regarding who can be company secretary.	Cllr Mrs Lyle On agenda	7/03	Complete
25/22	TW Electoral Review – warding arrangements. Respond to consultation by 21 st March.	Cllrs Barrington-Johnson, Mrs Soyke and one other TBC. Delegated authority from FC to respond.	7/03	Complete
26/22	The Great British Spring Clean. Query regarding safe disposal of rubbish collected by litterpickers.	Clerk to investigate. Response from TWBC for those wishing to undertake a litter pick forwarded to LGVS. Media Coverage		Complete

28/22	Seek delegated authority to approve an additional £280 for the maintenance of the playground.	Chairman, Vice-Chairman Clerk, Asst Clerk, RFO	7/03	Complete
-------	---	---	------	----------