

Local Government Act 1972



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

Minutes of the Full Council Meeting

Held on Monday 7th August 2023 at 7.30pm in Langton Green Village Hall, Langton Green

Before the meeting began, Cllr Lyle made a presentation to Langton Green resident and former parish councillor Mr George Mercieca, in recognition of his assistance in implementing a more energy efficient heating and lighting system at Langton Green Pavilion. His help in gathering quotes from contractors and knowledgeable advice on the most effective ways to save money had been invaluable. Cllr Lyle said that Mr Mercieca had been a stalwart in his efforts to help the parish council. Mr Mercieca was presented with a rose plant and a bottle of wine and thanked the parish council for these gifts. He made a report on progress at the pavilion which is referred to more fully under minute item 23/181.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Councillors Curry (Chair), Lyle (Vice-Chair), Cleaver, Davies, Dooley, Ellery, Leach, Norton, Rowe, Scarbrough, Tarricone and Turner.

OFFICERS PRESENT

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

IN ATTENDANCE

County Cllr McInroy was in attendance. Apologies had been received from Borough Cllr Sankey.

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were 5 members of the public present.

23/167 To enquire if anyone intends to record the meeting

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

23/168 To accept and approve apologies and reasons for absence.

Apologies had been received from Cllr Muress (health-related).

23/169 Disclosure of Interests

Cllrs Ellery and Rowe declared an interest in agenda item 13 as shareholders in the Speldhurst Community Shop Ltd. The Clerk and Assistant Clerk (CB) declared an interest in agenda item 18a relating to staff salaries.

23/170 Declarations of Lobbying

There were none.

23/171 Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on 3rd July 2023

RESOLVED that the minutes of the 3rd July 2023 Full Council meeting, previously forwarded to members, were confirmed as correct records and signed by the Chair.

23/172 Public Open Session

Mr James Bowdidge spoke on behalf of Langton Green Village Society (LGVS) on the following matters:

- He thanked the parish council for their grant to the Langton Green Festival, which took place on 8th July as part of Tunbridge Wells Fringe Festival. Mr Bowdidge said the event had been an overall success.
- He clarified that LGVS had formally agreed to offer the parish council £5,000 towards legal fees, on condition that they unilaterally granted a license to the Langton Pavilion Café operator, Mrs Emma Howden. Mr Bowdidge explained that LGVS were open to considering financial support on different terms, but that these would need to be formally agreed by the society.
- He asked the parish council to approve an extension of Mrs Howden's license by the close of the evening's meeting. The café was currently closed for its summer break, and Mrs Howden would need sufficient notice that she would be re-opening in September so that she could re-stock and prepare.

Cllr Curry thanked Mr Bowdidge for his comments. Further discussion relating to Langton Green Pavilion Café is recorded under minute item 23/181.

23/173 Borough and County Councillors' Reports

County Cllr McInroy noted that it was some time since he had attended Full Council, and he was pleased to see both new and familiar faces at the meeting. He reported that it had been a time of financial difficulty for Kent County Council (KCC), and that work, including highways repairs, had been delayed due to lack of money. Department directors had been instructed to cut all non-statutory expenditure; however, the government had provided extra funds, which meant that the annual pothole blitz could go ahead, and had commenced on 10th July.

County Cllr McInroy had been involved in producing a Highways Information Pack to help local councils when submitting highways improvement requests. Cllr Norton said he had read this pack and confirmed that it contained useful information. County Cllr McInroy would join a meeting between members of the parish council's Highways committee and KCC's Community Engagement team on 16th August.

23/174 Chair's Report

Cllr Curry said he had been delighted to present the parish council's annual Jubilee Awards to Kitty Thorne at Speldhurst Primary School, and Dalimir Pavlov at Langton Green Primary School. Attending these ceremonies was a genuine highlight of his role and both recipients were extremely well deserving of their awards. Cllr Curry thanked both schools for hosting the presentation of this special award.

Cllr Curry recognised the significant work the office team had put into recent large-scale projects such as the Speldhurst Chapel Project parish consultation. The effort required to meet deadlines for the consultation was significant. The team oversaw the design, print and stuffing of envelopes to every door in the parish, and the setting up of the data collection form, all while answering resident questions and adding them to the site as they came in. This was truly fantastic work by all.

Cllr Curry gave an update on the energy efficiency of the Pavilion, with readings showing the following:

Jan: 3.6 Megawatt hours (MWh), Peak: 185 kilowatt hours (kWh)

Feb: 3.1 MWh, Peak: 205 kWh

Mar: 3.5 MWh, Peak: 162 kWh

Apr: 1.8 MWh, Peak: 135 kWh

25th April: Installation of new system

May: 2.4 MWh, Peak: 108 kWh

Jun: 2.1 MWh, Peak: 165 kWh

Jul (Partial): 1.4 MWh, Peak: 115 kWh

Cllr Curry noted that the 3 months following installation had seen some shut-down periods, so this should be considered when looking at the data.

23/175 Clerk's Report

The Clerk had provided a briefing note containing a summary of recent communications and events including:

- Further emails had been received from Langton Green Primary School regarding parking problems at school pick up and drop off. There had been a small number of altercations between residents and parents and the Police had been involved. The Clerk and Cllr Dooley had visited the area outside the school and discussed the issues with the Headteacher on Monday 17th July. Members of the Highways Committee had patrolled with hi-viz jackets during the last week of term and issued pavement parking flyers to some offending cars.
- The new Police Officer responsible for Speldhurst parish visited the office to explain that there had been a return to neighbourhood policing. There were 12 positions for the whole borough but currently only 5 officers in post.
- There had been a 7% hall price increase at Speldhurst Village Hall, effective from September.
- An email had been received from the Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC) regarding the D-Day anniversary on 6th June 2024. A volunteer councillor was needed if the parish council wished to be involved. Cllr Lyle advised that on previous anniversaries, beacons had been lit to mark D-Day anniversaries. Since the parish council did not own beacons, they had not participated.
- The Clerk noted the following consultations:
 - **National Highways & Transport Network - Public Satisfaction Survey** – Cllr Norton, as Highways Chair, had looked at the survey and did not feel it worth the effort of completing as it was unlikely, from experience, views would be taken into account.
 - **Kent Family Hub Services Public Consultation** – an 8-week consultation from 19th July
 - **Review of Polling Districts and Places** – a 6-week consultation ending 5pm on 1st September. This is carried out every 5 years. There was no change to the polling locations in Speldhurst parish – Langton Green and Speldhurst Village Halls.
 - **Kent & Medway Partnership Domestic Abuse Strategy 2024-2029** – now live until the 9th of October.
 - **Transport Focus and London TravelWatch** – proposals to change how tickets are sold and for improvements to customer service. Consultation extended until 1 September.
 - **KCC Household Support Fund - Summer Voucher Scheme Launch** - £100 voucher available to eligible households. Councils can put in applications.

23/176 General Matters – Actionable tasks which do not fall to a committee.

Ongoing

	Summary	Owner	Created	Status
9/23	Trial weed control April-Sept without use of glyphosate.	Env WG	09/01/23	In progress
27/23	Set up Cllr Ellery as a bank signatory.	RFO	03/04/23	Complete
32/23	Dissolve SPC Pavilion Ltd.	Cllr Lyle	03/04/23	Complete
33/23	Update and publish Spring Newsletter.	Asst Clerk (CB)	03/04/23	Complete
45/23	Commence process for PWLB in liaison with KALC.	Clerk/RFO/Chair	09/05/23	Complete
56/23	Submit annual accounts for SPC Pavilion Ltd and include item on AGM at next FC to dissolve the company.	Clerk/RFO	05/06/23	Complete

New – Items arising since last Full Council Meeting

	Summary	Owner	Created	Status
60/23	Confirm co-option of Caroline Davies and arrange signing of Declaration of Acceptance of Office.	Clerk	03/7/23	Complete
61/23	Update committee membership and circulate to Cllrs.	Clerk	03/7/23	Complete

62/23	Confirm and pay grant to Speldhurst Primary School.	Clerk/RFO	03/7/23	Complete
63/23	Update Financial Regulations and upload onto website and Cllrs' folder.	Clerk	03/7/23	Complete
64/23	Invite Cllrs Leach and Davies to next Chapel Project Mtg.	Clerk/Asst Clerk (CB)	03/7/23	Complete
65/23	Respond to Sevenoaks DC on planning application.	Asst Clerk (KH)	03/7/23	Complete
66/23	Invite Cllr Davies to join Pavilion Review Panel.	Clerk	03/7/23	Complete
67/23	Purchase Pavilion Booking System.	Asst Clerk (KH)	03/7/23	In progress
68/23	Accept quotation for electrical testing and boiler service.	Clerk	03/7/23	Complete
69/23	Provide Cllrs with update on energy usage.	Chair	03/7/23	TBA
70/23	Pass on Cllrs' appreciation to Mr Myles & request photos.	Asst Clerk (KH)	03/7/23	Complete
71/23	Purchase replacement bins for LGRG.	Asst Clerk (KH)	03/7/23	Complete
72/23	Cllr Tarricone to liaise with Neil Barrington-Johnson regarding Air Traffic Committee.	Cllr Tarricone	03/7/23	Complete
73/23	Clerk to examine the insurance renewal and report back to the next meeting.	Clerk	07/08/23	
74/23	Chair to look at CCTV connection for energy monitoring equipment.	Chair	07/08/23	
75/23	Chair to obtain a quotation from Energypal for the Pavilion Energy contract for 2024 and bring to next meeting.	Chair	07/08/23	
76/23	Notify HMRC of dissolution of SPC Pavilion Ltd, and request zero rates from the rateable authority.	RFO/Clerk/Cllr Lyle	07/08	
77/23	Accept quotation from Kestrel Mechanical Services following recent boiler service and schedule works.	Clerk	07/08/23	
78/23	Chair to look into purchase of remote access to the controls of the Pavilion boiler.	Chair	07/08/23	
79/23	Accept quotation from Ashford Security for the emergency lighting repairs and schedule works.	Clerk	07/08/23	
80/23	Accept quotation from Ashford Security for the maintenance contract for the emergency lighting, intruder alarm and fire alarm for the Pavilion.	Clerk	07/08/23	
81/23	Respond in support to TWBC for the change of name in the proposed 'Goudhurst, Lamberhurst and Horsmonden' Ward to 'Rural Tunbridge Wells' Ward.	Clerk	07/08/23	
82/23	Confirm staff salaries back dated to 1st April 2023 and notify Payroll provider.	Clerk	07/08/23	
83/23	Update Employee Code of Conduct on website.	Clerk	07/08/23	
84/23	Accept quotation by Capel Groundcare to repair the wetpour at LGRG and schedule works.	Asst Clerk (KH)	07/08/23	
85/23	Order replacement consumables for Defibrillators.	Asst Clerk (KH)	07/08/23	
86/23	Report to Finance Committee to request a future budget of a minimum of £6,000 for replacement Defibrillators.	Clerk/RFO/Asst Clerk (KH)	07/08/23	
87/23	Respond to request to use the LGRG by a Football Goalkeeping Coaching company.	Asst Clerk (KH)	07/08/23	
88/23	Update Air Committee Terms of Reference on website.	Clerk	07/08/23	

23/177 Finance Committee – Report by Cllr Ellery

- a) Report by the Chair including any Committee Meetings held since the last Full Council meeting, the minutes having previously been forwarded to all Members. There had been no meeting.

- b) Report on budget virements and request that the virements listed be approved. There were none.
- c) Report on interim payments made since the last meeting. There were a number of interim payments because the last Full Council meeting had been early in the month.

Mastercard: £12.99* Amazon for computer mouse; £9 Unity bank charges; £96.97* Amazon Natural Roundup; £6.29* Amazon Vinegar; £9.05* Amazon Sea Salt; £14.97* Amazon Washing Up Liquid; £83.57* Amazon Natural Roundup.

Unity: £10,000 Grant to Speldhurst Primary School; £1,000 Grant to St Mary's Church, Speldhurst; £497.69 Grant to Speldhurst Fete Committee; £750 Grant to Home-Start SW Kent; £270 Grant to Speldhurst Rainbows; £1,500 Grant to St Martin's Church Ashurst; £375 Langton Life Magazine Article; £54 m:power accounting for payroll; £525 M R Lawrence for Mowing and Strimming; £59.40* C Barrett for travel expenses; £360.86 Cloudy IT for IT support; £24.96 DD for BT mobile phone; £292.80 Unity Trust MC top up payment; £86.40* Engrave It All for Jubilee Awards; £703.20 NBB Recycled Furniture for Bench; £3,401.44 Zurich Insurance; £561.43 DD to NEST Pension Scheme; £63.54 DD for BT broadband; £215.59 Veolia for waste collection.

- d) To note decisions made under delegated authority. Items are starred above.

23/178 Accounts for Payment

It was **RESOLVED** that the invoices as listed below and checked by Cllr Cleaver, be paid.

Date	Payee Name	Reference	Amount £	Detail
04/08/2023	ICO	DD	35.00	ICO Renewal
08/08/2023	HMRC	MT2522	1,606.33	Income Tax and NI
08/08/2023	M R Lawrence	MT253	350.00	Mowing and Strimming
08/08/2023	Kidman's Ltd	MT254	84.04	Oil and Stihl Parts
08/08/2023	Tate & Tonbridge Fencing	MT255	13.93	Nut/Bolts/Washers for Bench
08/08/2023	Agrifactors (Southern) Ltd	MT256	420.00	Pitch Maintenance
08/08/2023	Langton Green Charitable Trust	MT257	18.50	Room Hire
08/08/2023	The Play Inspection Company	MT258	186.00	Outdoor Annual Inspection
08/08/2023	Langton Green Charitable Trust	MT259	341.56	Office Electricity
08/08/2023	Knockout Print	MT260	48.00	No Dogs Sign for Playground
08/08/2023	Katie Neve	MT261	38.60	Mileage and Expenses
08/06/2023	J S Facilities Management	MT262	116.58	Pavilion Cleaning
08/08/2023	Paul Curry	MT264	12.75	Expenses
08/08/2023	Viking Direct	MT263	335.88	Stationery and Toilet Paper
08/08/2023	M:power accounting	MT2523	54.00	Payroll for August
18/08/2023	Employees	MT265	5,078.83	Salaries
20/08/2023	Veolia	DD	209.70	Waste Collection
20/08/2023	EDF Energy	DD	1,721.00	Pavilion Energy
29/08/2023	Cloudy IT	MT2524	361.80	IT Support
	TOTAL PAYMENTS		£17,539.33	

23/179 Speldhurst Chapel Project – To receive an update on the Public Works Loan Board (PWLb).

Cllr Curry said that the consultation leaflet had now been sent out via the Post Office and residents would receive them by post in the next few days. Responses received on paper would be entered and collated onto an online Microsoft form. The mail drop had been paid for by Speldhurst Chapel Project.

Cllr Cleaver suggested holding an extra Full Council meeting to consider the responses more fully, and Cllr Curry agreed that this could be a sensible idea if necessary.

Cllr Turner asked what the deadline for the project was. Cllr Rowe explained that the chapel seller would need to know the parish council's plans by September, however this deadline would not fully commit the parish council. Speldhurst Chapel Project needed to raise sufficient funding to renovate the chapel building, so a further decision as to whether to proceed would need to be made depending on the outcome of this fundraiser.

23/180 Planning Committee

A meeting of the Planning Committee had been held on 17th July and draft minutes had been circulated. Cllr Rowe reported that 10 applications had been considered, and the committee had remained neutral on 8 with 2 objections. Cllr Curry reported that TWBC had reported an appeal had been dismissed by the Planning Inspectorate on application 21/04144 Pax Cottage, Stockland Green Road, Speldhurst.

23/181 Langton Green Recreation Ground (LGRG)

- a) **To receive an update on the Pavilion Review:** Cllr Curry said that a working group of Cllrs Lyle, Rowe and himself, supported by the Clerk, had continued to work on the detail of the review. They had identified a suitable lawyer and were ready to instruct them to act on the parish council's behalf. Cllr Lyle had written up a long-term licence which would be checked by the lawyer to ensure that there was no security of tenure issue.
Cllr Lyle hoped to have a copy of the license ready for Mrs Howden to sign by the beginning of the following week. If any issues were raised, a short-term interim licence would be granted while these were addressed.
- b) **To update on SPC Pavilion Ltd Status:** Cllr Lyle said that the dissolution of SPC Pavilion Ltd was in progress. A notice would shortly go into the Law Gazette and after two months, the company will be removed. The Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) could notify HMRC, and request zero rates from the rateable authority.
- c) **To consider the Broadband for the Pavilion:** There was currently no broadband at the pavilion now that LGCSA had cancelled their contract. It was **RESOLVED** that Cllr Curry would investigate running the parish council's SMART devices at the pavilion with a private broadband connection.
- d) **To consider fixing the Energy Contract:** The RFO had provided quotations for information. Cllr Curry noted that prices were lower than the previous year. Quotations would be discussed in more detail at the next meeting.
- e) It was noted that delegated authority had been taken to accept the quotation of £280 by Kestrel Mechanical Services Ltd to undertake the Pavilion boiler service. It was **RESOLVED** to accept the quotation from Kestrel Mechanical Services Ltd of £612.08 to undertake the remedial works recommended.
- f) It was **RESOLVED** to approve the purchase of remote access to the controls of the boiler.
- g) It was **RESOLVED** to approve the appointment of Ashford Security to undertake emergency lighting repairs on the recommendation of Mr Mercieca.
- h) It was **RESOLVED** to approve a maintenance contract with Ashford Security for the emergency lighting, intruder alarm and fire alarm at the Pavilion. Ashford Security also provided services to Langton Green Village Hall.

23/182 Assets of Community Value – The Clerk reported that Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC) has listed the Langton Green Allotments as an asset of community value. This meant that the owner had a period of time to appeal and the Langton Green Allotment Society or the parish council would have the opportunity to purchase the land should the owner wish to sell.

23/183 Local Government Boundary Commission for England – Cllr Curry reported that under a Review of Electoral Arrangements, parish councils were asked to consider supporting a change of name in the proposed ‘Goudhurst, Lamberhurst and Horsmonden’ ward to ‘Rural Tunbridge Wells’ ward. It was **RESOLVED** to support this change of name.

23/184 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 – Report by Cllr Mrs Lyle.**

A meeting had been held on 10th July.

- **Staff Salaries:** Cllr Lyle asked councillors to consider the Governance Committee’s recommendation to increase staff salaries by 7%. If agreed, this would be backdated to 1st April 2023, for all staff with an additional day’s leave (pro rata in line with their working hours). It was **RESOLVED** to approve this backdated pay increase, together with an additional day’s leave.
- **Employee Code of Conduct:** The Governance Committee had reviewed the policy and recommended approval with the inclusion of an additional paragraph regarding the Grievance procedure. It was **RESOLVED** to approve this change.
- **Insurance Renewal:** The 3-year insurance policy, taken out in 2022, was due for the annual renewal on 1st August 2023. The Clerk reported that the amount had increased, partly due to an evaluation of the office and pavilion last year. Cllr Lyle requested the Clerk to ask the insurance company to clarify the increase.

b) **Highways Committee – Report by Cllr Norton.**

A Meeting had been held on 6th July.

Cllr Turner had been elected as Vice-Chair.

The Highways Improvement Plan (HIP) had been the main focus of the meeting, and the installation of a pedestrian crossing outside Langton Green Primary School had taken top priority. LGVS had confirmed that they would provide support for a crossing if the parish council’s application was approved by KCC. KCC had said it was important for Langton Green Primary School to have a travel plan in place to support this application, and Cllr Dooley had been working with the school.

Automated Traffic Counts (ATCs) would be carried out in various parts of the parish, to assess the viability of a speed reduction in line with the HIP. Cllr Norton said that KCC had referred to Ordnance Survey data, which they also used to give an indication of the type of speeding vehicles using the road.

The Clerk had been in contact with Miller Homes, who owned the grass verge in front of properties on Farnham Lane between Dornden Drive and Great Footway. Miller Homes had indicated that they might be willing to transfer ownership of this footpath to KCC or the parish council so that a footpath could be installed. However, Cllr Norton suggested that it might be preferable if they retain ownership and allow an ‘informal’ footpath to be established on the verge. Cllr Leach noted that there might be a risk for the parish council in taking responsibility for any kind of footpath. Cllr Norton hoped to give a further update at the next meeting. Cllr Muress had taken on the role of Footpaths Co-ordinator, and footpaths would now sit under the Highways Committee. Cllr Muress had suggested allocating footpaths to each councillor to monitor for maintenance issues.

Amenities Committee – Report by Cllr Mrs Lyle. There had been no meeting.

- It was **RESOLVED** to approve a quotation from Capel Groundcare to repair the wetpour at LGRG Playground. The repair was needed to remove a trip hazard and the total expenditure would be £872.16.
- It was **RESOLVED** to approve expenditure of £447 on replacement consumables for defibrillators and a future budget for replacement Defibrillators. Cllr Curry recommended a minimum future budget of £6,000.

- After some discussion it was **RESOLVED** to refuse a request to use Langton Green Recreation Ground by a Football Goalkeeping Coaching company. Langton Green Community Sports Association (LGCSA) had been consulted and said that the request would be in direct competition with their activities, and they were concerned about the wear to the goalmouth. Cllrs Curry and Lyle shared the concerns about intensive wear and tear, and Cllr Lyle noted a potential clash of timings. However, it was agreed that the parish council should remain open to considering any similar requests in the future.
- c) **Air Traffic Committee – Report by Cllr Tarricone. A meeting had been held on 20th July.**
- To consider the recommendation of the Air Traffic Committee to approve:
 - **Reverting to Committee Status.** It was **RESOLVED** to approve.
 - **The updated Terms of Reference.** It was **RESOLVED** to remove reference to the number of members of the public on the committee.
 - It was **RESOLVED** to approve Mr Neil Barrington-Johnson joining the committee as a member of public, replacing Mr Derek Robinson who had stepped down after a decade of service.
 - It was **RESOLVED** to delegate authority to the Air Traffic Committee to respond to the latest consultations.
- d) **Environment WG – Report by Cllr Turner. The meeting had been postponed.**
- **To update on the Electric Vehicle Chargers Contract:** Cllr Turner reported that the Electric Vehicle Charger contract had been finalised and was ready to be signed. A consent form had also been signed for power supply works to be carried out. Cllr Turner hoped that installation would take place by the end of the year.
 - **The Glyphosate-Free Weed Control:** Cllr Turner reported that the trial was ongoing. June had been wet and the Groundsman had been unable to undertake very much weed control. There was now a detailed work schedule in place and Cllr Turner would report back on the results of the trial in September. He noted that alternative methods were proving more costly than Glyphosate.
- e) **KALC – Report by the Chair – there was nothing to report.**

23/185 Diary Dates – The following dates were noted:

14th August – Planning Committee

4th September – Full Council (SPVH)

11th September – Amenities Committee

18th September – Planning Committee

26th September – Highways Committee

23/186 Items for Information:

Cllr Rowe said he had attended a meeting with a local Archaeologist who had undertaken digs in Langton Green. He was now looking to carry out digs in Speldhurst and it had been agreed that he could use Pocket Park for his excavations.

There being nothing further to discuss, the meeting closed at 09.08pm.

Chair