

Local Government Act 1972



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

Minutes of the Full Council Meeting

Held on Monday 9th January 2023 at 7.30pm in the Palmer Room, Langton Green Village Hall

MEMBERS PRESENT

Councillors Curry (Chair), Barrington-Johnson, Mrs Dooley, Ellery, Mrs Lyle (Vice-Chair), Norton, Rajah, Rowe, Scarbrough and Mrs Soyke.

OFFICERS PRESENT

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

IN ATTENDANCE

There were no Borough or County Councillors in attendance. Apologies were received from Borough Cllr Sankey and County Cllr McInroy (attending another meeting).

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were six members of the public present. Cllr Turner attended via Team electronic communication so that he could present the report of the Environment Working Group under item 23/20e) to help councillors make an informed decision. He would not take part in discussions or voting.

23/01 Covid Compliance

Those in attendance were free to decide whether to wear a mask according to their own wishes.

23/02 To enquire if anyone intends to record the meeting

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

23/03 To accept and approve apologies and reasons for absence

Apologies had been received from Cllrs Turner (Covid-related), Tarricone (holiday) and Rajah (unwell).

23/04 Disclosure of Interests

The following declared an interest in item 19 regarding Speldhurst Chapel: Cllrs Curry and Ellery had been in liaison with Mr Pinnell and Mr Perkins regarding the project and had invited them to the meeting. Cllrs Ellery, Rowe and Mrs K Harman were shareholders in the Speldhurst Community Shop Ltd.

23/05 Declarations of Lobbying

There were none.

23/06 Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on 5th December 2022

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

23/07 Public Open Session

Mr Stuart Smith, Chair of Trustees for the Langton Green Village Hall (LGVH) was accompanied by the Treasurer and gave members advance notice that the Trustees were planning the following upgrades to the hall:

1. Refurbishment works - primarily replacement of the adult toilets incorporating some health and safety requirements, totalling approximately £50,000.
2. Solar panels for the roof of the LGVH and an accompanying Tesla battery – totalling approximately £50,000.

Mr Smith said that the Trustees would be approaching the Parish Council for a grant totalling approximately £25,000 for the projects and would supply further details in due course.

Cllr Mrs Lyle suggested the Trustees additionally investigate any grants which may be available.

Mr Edward Pinnell, Chair of the Speldhurst Community Shop and Mr John Perkins, from St Mary's Church, along with two other members of the Community Hub Project Steering Group were attending to advise councillors of the plans to purchase the Chapel opposite the present shop. The current lease for the shop expires in 2024 and although it could probably be extended, it was dependent on the owner. They were therefore looking for permanent premises, and the Chapel has the advantage of some parking.

They applied to the Community Ownership Fund (COF) for £250,000 and an additional £40,000 to cover fees and costs in December 2022 and will be approaching residents via another community share offer in late Feb/ early March to coincide with the April tax benefit for more funds. If this is successful, they calculate that they will have around £500,000 and the total project including extension, renovation and refurbishment will total £660,000. They were therefore asking the Parish Council if they could offer them a grant, which could be financed over a 50-year period, of £150,000 via a Public Works Loan. Mr Pinnell said that the purchase had to be complete by September 2023 or the property would go on the market.

The Finance Officer had advised the Clerk that any loan would have to be approved by the Kent Association for Local Councils (KALC) who would consider if adequate public consultation of the whole parish had been made before the application was submitted. It would then be submitted to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLHC) for final approval. After much discussion, the Chair said that the matter would be considered further by councillors once they had had the opportunity to thoroughly consider the proposals.

Before they left, the Chair thanked all members of the public for attending the meeting and bringing the various matters to councillors' attention. Mr Stuart Smith remained for the duration of the meeting.

23/08 Borough and County Councillors' Reports

In their absence, the Clerk was asked to email the Borough and County Councillors asking for their attendance at meetings and a briefing report.

County Cllr McInroy had provided a report advising that he was still waiting to hear from Kent County Council (KCC) regarding both the school bus withdrawal and payments to schools for the Ukrainian children. He had chased and would let the Clerk know once he has further information.

23/09 Chair's Report

- The Chair thanked Mr George Merceica for his excellent help and advice in enabling SPC to obtain a better picture of the Pavilion's energy usage and recommendations to keep future use to a minimum.
- Pressure was being put on Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC) and KCC to address the current problems with potholes and lack of road sweeping.

23/10 Clerk's Report

The Clerk advised the following:

- A thank you note had been received from HRH King Charles, thanking SPC for its letter of condolence on the death of his late mother, HRH Queen Elizabeth. The note would be scanned for the website and was available in the SPC office.
- The first visit of the new Internal Auditor would take place on Wednesday 11th January.
- The electoral process would start in May. The Clerk was attending a KALC election training session and would provide an update. She asked councillors to let her know if they were thinking of standing down.
- The contract for the new Pavilion Manager had been issued but not yet signed. It was hoped the position with the pavilion could be confirmed in the meantime.

23/11 General Matters

New - Items arising since last Full Council meeting				
	Summary	Owner	Created	Status
1/23	Write to county and borough councillors asking for their attendance at meetings and a briefing report.	Clerk	09/01/23	
2/23	Notify TWBC of SPC's precept	Clerk/RFO	09/01/23	
3/23	Replace heating system at Pavilion	Cllrs Curry/Lyle	09/01/23	
4/23	Nomination for the KALC Award to the Clerk	All Cllrs	09/01/23	
5/23	Response to Kent Fire and Rescue and ask residents to let us know if they are interested in attending fire safety talk	Asst Clerks (KH/CB)	09/01/23	
6/23	Notify LGVS of permission for Bird and Bat Boxes at LGRG	Asst Clerk (KH)	09/01/23	
7/23	Information pack on funding for Speldhurst Community Hub for circulation to councillors.	Chair	09/01/23	
8/23	Meeting to be held to discuss Speldhurst Community Hub project.	Clerk/Chair/RFO	09/01/23	
9/23	Trial weed control April-Sept without use of glyphosate and write policy on weed control.	Env WG	09/01/23	
Ongoing				
71/22	Obtain professional advice on energy efficiency at the pavilion.	Chair/Cllrs Rowe and Mrs Lyle	05/09/22	In progress
82/22	Finalise and distribute e-newsletter.	Assist Clerk CB	03/10/22	In progress
86/22	Make donation to the Mayor's Toy Appeal.	RFO	04/11/22	Complete
88/22	Extend Pavilion Café licence until 31/03/23.	Pav Man Cttee	04/11/22	Complete
89/22	Confirm appointment of Pavilion Building Manager.	Pav Man Cttee	04/11/22	In progress
90/22	Confirm SPC representatives on Pavilion Review and set up initial meeting.	Clerk	04/11/22	Complete
93/22	Set up meeting of APM WG and invite Cllr Norton to join.	Clerk/Chair	04/11/22	Complete

97/22	Purchase and installation of horse warning signs.	Highways WG	04/11/22	In progress
98/22	Adoption of Amenities ToFR and update website.	Asst Clerk (KH)	04/11/22	Complete
99/22	Update Highways ToFR to include Footpaths.	Highways WG	04/11/22	TBA
102/22	Start process of re-wilding Groombridge Green.	Env WG	04/11/22	In progress
103/22	Follow up to find out when remaining grant money for Ukrainian students would be paid by central government.	Cllr McInroy	05/12/22	In progress
104/22	Chase up on the possibility of funding for a parish-run school bus.	Cllr McInroy	05/12/22	In progress
105/22	Respond to South East Water Consultation	Cllr Turner	05/12/22	TBA

23/12 Finance Committee – Report by Cllr Ellery:

- a) Report by the Chair: There had not been a meeting of the Finance Committee since the last Full Council meeting.
- b) Report on budget virements: There were none.
- c) Interim payments made since the last meeting:
 - Unity Acct: £39.31 LGVH meeting rooms; £215.00 KN SLCC membership; £330.60 Living Forest Trees; £144.56 Stationery*; £156.00 Pavilion cleaning; £206.40 Energy monitors (pavilion)*; £658.82 Transfer to MasterCard account; £132.82 Pavilion (Initial); £238.96 Veolia; £67.66 photocopier; £33.45 bank charges; £25.92 BT mobile.
 - Mastercard: £9.00 Card fee; £319.80 Christmas Refreshments; £48.98 Petrol (van and tools); £8.00 Keys pavilion*; £50.00 KH ALCC membership; £292.50 Van DVLC tax.
- d) Decisions made under delegated authority are starred * above.

23/13 Precept 2023/24

The 2023-2024 budget and precept had been considered in detail at the Finance Committee meeting on the 22nd November 2022 and was presented to the Full Council meeting on 5th December 2022, when it was decided to defer a decision to the January meeting. After much discussion it was **RESOLVED** that the precept request would be £179,100 based on a Band D equivalent increase of 6.8% (adjusted for the tax base).

23/14 Accounts for Payment

RESOLVED that the invoices as listed and checked by Cllr Mrs Dooley, be paid.
The list of payments are attached to these minutes.

23/15 Planning Committee

The Clerk advised that the December meeting was cancelled due to the extreme weather conditions. The next meeting would be held on 16th January 2023.

23/16 Langton Green Recreation Ground (LGRG) – report by Cllr Mrs Lyle:

- a) **To receive a report from the Pavilion Management Working Group:**
 - Cllr Mrs Lyle said that a 3-month occupational licence had been signed by the café proprietor. It was agreed that she could accept bookings after this period on the basis that she could hire out the pavilion space.
 - Mr Russell had not yet signed the Pavilion Manager contract and Cllr Mrs Lyle suggested it be delayed until the outcome of the Pavilion Review.

b) **Update on the investigation into the energy efficiency of the boiler:** The most cost-effective way to use the boiler in the Pavilion was to have it switched off permanently and only switched on prior to a sporting event if necessary. A plan to remove the wash basins and kitchen sinks from the existing boiler and install an on-demand heating system for these facilities was being urgently progressed by Cllrs Curry and Mrs Lyle. The replacement heating system would cost a maximum of £8,000 and it was hoped it would save in the region of £8,000 per annum. It was **RESOLVED** to spend up to £8,000 from the RRIM account on replacement on-demand water heating systems for the kitchen sink and wash basins in the Pavilion.

c) **Update on the Pavilion Review:** The Chair said that SPC's options regarding the operation of the pavilion were being thoroughly reviewed.

23/17 Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC) Community Awards Scheme 2023

It was **RESOLVED** to opt in to the KALC Community Awards Scheme for 2023. The Chair asked members to let the Clerk have suggestions for nominations.

23/18 Kent Fire and Rescue – Free Fire Safety in the Home Talks

The Clerk was asked to contact Kent Fire and Rescue thanking them for the offer of talks however it was important to gauge the level of take-up in the community first. This would be done via social media posts.

23/19 Speldhurst Chapel

This item was discussed after the Public Open Session – refer to item 23/07. The Chair would put together an information pack for councillors so that the matter could be considered further.

23/20 Working Group (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 WG** – Report by Cllr Mrs Lyle: There had not been a meeting.
- b) **Highways WG** – Report by Cllr Norton: There had not been a meeting. There were currently too many members of the Highways WG and it was agreed that Cllr Scarbrough would stand down. Cllr Rajah would be standing down from SPC in May. The Highways Improvement Plan (HIP) used by KCC had been converted into a working document by the Assistant Clerk (CB) for referral by the Highways WG. This gives a clear list of projects to work towards and would help the meetings to run more efficiently. Cllr Norton thanked the Assistant Clerk for her hard work. The Highways WG was trying to work more closely with representatives from the villages within the parish.
- c) **Amenities WG** – Report by Cllr Mrs Lyle: There had not been a meeting
 - To consider the installation of Bird and Bat Boxes at the LGRG: It was **RESOLVED** that the Langton Green Village Society (LGVS) could install bird and bat boxes on the LGRG as discussed with SPC on the condition that they maintain them.
- d) **Air Traffic WG** – Report by Cllr Barrington-Johnson: There had not been a meeting. A request to join CAGNE had been declined. It had been agreed previously that SPC could be more effective if they were not tied to a campaign group.
- e) **Environment WG** – Report by Cllr Turner:
 - Cllr Turner provided an update on the Environment Working Group's (EWG) proposal for weed control on council owned land via Teams after investigating alternatives to Glyphosate for weed control. It was clear from the investigation that alternatives to Glyphosate would not be as cost effective and would require additional time and effort but it was agreed to use alternative weed control methods, and avoid use of Glyphosate, for a trial period over the coming April - September 2023 growing season. At the end of this season an assessment would be made on the overall success of this approach and if further changes would be needed before any new policy would be written. A suggestion to ask for volunteers to help with hand weeding where appropriate has already been made by the EWG to LGVS.

It was also agreed that no effective alternative to Glyphosate was reasonable for very large areas such as the recreation ground, so Glyphosate could continue to be used until results of the trial were known.

- f) **KALC** – Report by the Chair: The Boundary Commission consultation to change the electoral system had resulted in a vote to remain with the current system of by-thirds.

23/21 Diary Dates – The following dates were noted:

- 16th January – Planning Committee
- 24th January – Environment Working Group
- 6th February – Full Council

23/22 Items for Information:

Enquiries had been received from two residents during the recent period of extreme weather about gritting the LGRG carpark. The Assistant Clerk (KH) had replied explaining that it had been agreed by the Amenities Committee, on the advice of SPC's insurers, that no action should be taken to clear snow and ice, in an effort to avoid any liability to SPC.

There being no further items the meeting closed at 9.26pm.

Chair

Unity Trust Current A/c

List of Payments made between 01/01/2023 and 31/01/2023

<u>Date Paid</u>	<u>Payee Name</u>	<u>Reference</u>	<u>Amount Paid</u>	<u>Authorized Ref</u>	<u>Transaction Detail</u>
10/01/2023	Tate Fencing Ltd	MT2391	113.50		Boarding
10/01/2023	Cloudy IT	MT2392	272.82		Monthly Support/hosting
10/01/2023	m:power accounting	MT2393	48.00		Salary Admin
10/01/2023	KALC	MT2395	120.00		Training
10/01/2023	KALC	MT2396	60.00		Training
10/01/2023	HMRC	MT2397	1,053.60		NI & Tax
10/01/2023	Speldhurst Village Hall	MT2398	30.10		Meeting rooms
10/01/2023	JS Facilities Management	MT2399	118.50		Pavilion cleaner
10/01/2023	Langton Life	MT2400	375.00		Langton Life Magazine
17/01/2023	Unity Trust Mastercard	Credit car	728.28		Credit card
20/01/2023	EDF Energy	DD	1,721.00		Pavilion - electricity
20/01/2023	Employee	MT2394	5,993.73		Salaries
28/01/2023	Veolia	DD	243.68		Waste/Recycling
28/01/2023	Castle Water	DD	50.63		Pavilion - water
Total Payments			10,928.84		