

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 6th October 2025 at Ashurst Village Hall

MEMBERS PRESENT

Cllrs Rowe (Vice-Chair), Cleaver, Curry, Ellery, Leach, Littlefield, Norton, Tarricone and Turner.

OFFICERS PRESENT

C Barrett (CB) Assistant Clerk.

IN ATTENDANCE

County Cllr Moreland was in attendance. Cllr Sharratt had sent apologies.

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were at least 8 members of the public present.

25/190 Election of Chair

The Assistant Clerk said Cllr Curry had indicated he was willing to resume the role of Chair of the parish council and asked for a formal proposer and seconder. Cllr Turner proposed, Cllr Rowe acted as seconder, and it was **RESOLVED** to elect Cllr Curry as Chair of the Parish Council. Cllr Curry signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office book and assumed chair-ship of the meeting. He said he was happy to return to the role after a break and thanked Cllr Rowe for assuming extra responsibility as Vice-Chair in the interim.

25/191 To enquire if anyone intends to record the meeting

The Chair informed members of the meeting that, as the Wi-Fi connection was not working, it would not be possible to record the meeting to help ensure accuracy of the minutes on this occasion.

25/192 To accept and approve apologies and reasons for absence.

Apologies were received from Borough Cllr Sharratt due to transport issues.
The Clerk was on annual leave.

25/193 Disclosure of Interests

Councillors' ongoing disclosures were noted:
Cllrs Curry, Ellery, and Rowe had shares in the Speldhurst shop and post office.

25/194 Declarations of Lobbying

Cllrs Curry, Leach, and Rowe had been lobbied regarding Langton Green Pavilion.

25/195 Minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 1st September 2025 – RESOLVED to approve that the minutes, previously forwarded to Members, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

25/196 Co-option of New Councillors

The two candidates, Jade Dickens and James Farley, left the room, and the Co-option Working Group recommended that they be co-opted to the Parish Council. It was **RESOLVED** to co-opt both candidates, and they then returned to the room, signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office book, and took their seats with their fellow councillors. Cllr Dickens was assigned the Planning and Amenities & Environment Committees, and Cllr Farley Planning and Highways.

25/197 Public Open Session

The Meeting was adjourned to allow members of the public to raise with the Council any items of concern or interest.

A Langton Green resident spoke of their concerns about traffic and excessive speeding on the Langton Road, together with concerns about air traffic, and the news that a second full runway had been approved at Gatwick Airport. They asked if the parish council was currently addressing these issues.

Cllr Curry replied that Langton Green had an active, effective Community Speedwatch group, which welcomed new volunteers. Cllr Norton, Chair of the Highways Committee, added that this committee had been active in highlighting concerns and pressing Kent County Council (KCC) for traffic calming measures across the parish. The Speldhurst/Langton Road was a priority, and the committee was working to get a pedestrian crossing and improved signage on the stretch of road passing Langton Green Recreation Ground and Langton Green Primary School. Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC) had made a grant available to parish councils for road safety purposes, and the committee was pursuing this opportunity to ensure Speldhurst parish was allocated a share.

Cllr Norton said he would also like to see a mobile speed enforcement team shared across the villages of the Tunbridge Wells District, including Speldhurst Parish. He understood this was successful in other parts of the country and had raised the idea in a meeting with Mike Martin, MP, who had in turn pitched it to KCC; however, there had been no further progress.

Cllr Cleaver said the other Langton Road – the A264 between Tunbridge Wells and Langton Green – was also a speeding hotspot. Rusthall Parish Council and residents were trying to obtain a speed reduction, so far without success.

Regarding Air Traffic, Cllr Curry agreed that the approval of a second runway was disappointing. He added that although the parish council was not aligned with specific action groups, they had submitted comments and attended public hearings throughout the second runway application process. The parish council's focus was now on the forthcoming airspace review; it was important to be aware of proposed flightpaths and ensure they had their say on these at the public consultation stages.

It was agreed the Langton Green resident would provide an email address to the Assistant Clerk to receive updates.

Natalina Kiely of Langton's Sports, Community Hub & Café (LSCC), said she and Ryan Cousins would run a short-term community hub at Langton Green Pavilion, and hoped to move to a long-term arrangement. With the parish council and Langton Green Community Sports Association's (LGCSA) help, they were working hard to get the hub open. If anyone had suggestions for what they would like at the hub, these were welcome, with a suggestions box available.

Chris Allen of LGCSA said the last four weeks had seen more positive change than in decades. He added that people had put aside individual differences, and councillors had made time to visit with LGCSA, sit down, and talk. It appeared that the new pavilion hire agreement would deliver an improved level of financial stability for the parish council, while retaining a café for local people, and extending a social club aspect to LGCSA. It would have been unimaginable a few weeks ago that all these boxes could be ticked, and it was notable how much had changed.

Cllr Curry thanked the speakers for their contributions.

25/198 County and Borough Councillor Reports

County Councillor Moreland spoke on the following:

- He reiterated that Highways were the responsibility of KCC and invited any resident with concerns to contact him. He added that Rusthall residents and parish councillors had been pressing for traffic calming on the A264 Langton Road for many years.
- KCC had said no to instating a bus service for Ashurst. He was now trying to set up a community transport scheme, which might get a one-off contribution from KCC. Leaflets, funded by the Liberal Democrat party, would be distributed to residents. These would provide a link to a questionnaire which he hoped many people would complete. The idea was to set up a minibus with a driver initially, and if there was high demand this might persuade KCC to contribute.
- KCC had forwarded a motion to rescind its declaration of an environmental crisis.
- Several local councils had put forward proposals for future local government reform models, but the response from KCC had felt chaotic so far.
- Council Tax could increase by up to 5%.

Borough Cllr Sharratt had sent the following for highlighting:

- The consultation on the safer walking, wheeling, and cycling route.
- Southern Water had substantial works planned on Eridge Road; once complete these should improve the state of the River Grom.

25/199 Langton Green Recreation Ground (LGRG) – To receive an update on the Pavilion.

- **To receive an update on the progress of the Independent Review for the Pavilion** – Cllr Curry said the Corporate Property Manager at TWBC had provided helpful advice about an independent review. Cllr Curry planned to propose to the members of the Pavilion Working Group, once confirmed, that they meet with LGCSA representatives and ask them what they would like to come out of a review. The Working Group would then prepare a statement for approval at the next Full Council, before sharing publicly.
- **To consider proposals from prospective candidates for the running of a Community Hub on a short-term hire agreement whilst the review is finalised** – Cllr Rowe said that since the Langton Pavilion Community Hub's decision not to continue, several parties had expressed interest in running a short-term hub while a review was undertaken. Two parties had come forward with full proposals, which had been reviewed, and a decision was subsequently made to recommend that Natalina Kiely and Ryan Cousins be offered a short-term hire agreement. The details of this agreement were in the councillors' folder. It was **RESOLVED** to approve this recommendation. Cllr Rowe gave thanks to Chris Allen, who coordinated an impressive effort by LGCSA volunteers to re-paint the inside of the pavilion's main space. Councillors expressed their appreciation for the efforts of all those involved, and to Natalina and Ryan, for their hard work. The hire agreement would be signed the next day, and a joint statement from the parish council and LGCSA announcing the re-opening of a pavilion hub and café would go out via media channels.

Cllr Rowe said a review for the pavilion would take place over the next six months, at the end of which he hoped the parish council would be in a better position to decide on a longer-term hire agreement with a hub operator. Cllr Rowe wished Ryan and Natalina luck in their undertaking.

- **To consider the SPC appointed Trustee on LGCSA** – It was **RESOLVED** to approve Cllr Norton as the appointed Trustee. Having spoken to Chris Allen and others at LGCSA and viewed the impressive weekend football activities taking place at LGRG, Cllr Norton confirmed he was happy to take on the role of Trustee for a trial period of six months. He looked forward to working with LGCSA on the great asset it provided the local community.
- **To confirm the members of the Pavilion Working Group and their remit** – It was **RESOLVED** to approve that Cllr Rowe step down from the Working Group, Cllrs Leach and Turner remain in the Working Group, Cllr Curry facilitate the Working Group's meetings and activities, and provide context, and Cllr Dickens join the Working Group, having been a member in her previous tenure as parish councillor.

Several Members of the Public left the meeting at 8.15pm.

25/200 Clerk's Report

The Clerk's report was available to view in the councillors' folder.

25/201 General Matters – Actionable tasks which do not fall to a committee. All items were either in progress or complete.

	Existing	Owner	Created	Status
31/25	Update Premises Licence to be held by Pavilion Working Group and confirm terms of reference.	Clerk	07/04/25	In progress
41/25	Establish review process for Community Hub.	Pav WG	06/05/25	In progress
42/25	Confirm increased charges for Pavilion and update website.	Asst Clerk (CB)	06/05/25	Closed
43/25	Establish Pavilion Licence Committee and confirm ToFR.	Clerk	06/05/25	In progress
52/25	Set up working group of councillors to look at next year's APM and potential change of focus. Contact other PCs on theirs.	Clerk	02/06/25	In progress
56/25	Write to solicitors regarding Pavilion.	Clerk/Cllr Rowe	07/07/25	TBA
63/25	Undertake insurance restatement valuation on Speldhurst Chapel.	Cllr Rowe/Clerk	04/08/25	Complete
67/25	Confirm approval of £587 (excl. VAT) to Capel Groundcare to replace the chains on the swings in the junior playground.	Clerk	01/09/25	Complete
68/25	Confirm appointments of Deputy Clerk and Parish Council Administrator.	Clerk	01/09/25	Complete
69/25	Order Wreaths for Remembrance Sunday.	Clerk	01/09/25	Complete
70/25	Compile a list of potential dates for the Annual Parish Meeting.	Clerk	01/09/25	In progress
	New	Owner	Created	Status
71/25	Confirm renewal of grounds maintenance contract.	Clerk	06/10/25	
72/25	Pay donation of £100 to Mayor's Toy Appeal.	Clerk	06/10/25	
73/25	Confirm new electricity contract and given notice to current contract in time for end of term.	Clerk/Curry Curry	06/10/25	
74/25	Transfer funds from Unity to savings accounts.	Clerk	06/10/25	
75/25	Email the Clerk before 15 th November with anticipated items of expenditure in 2026, to be factored into Finance & Governance budget-setting meeting.	Committee Chairs	06/10/25	
76/25	Email nominations for 2026 KALC award.	All Councillors	06/10/25	
77/25	Meet to discuss 2026 APM.	Chair and Clerks	06/10/25	
78/25	Arrange a date to meet with LGCSA representatives re. pavilion review.	Chair & Clerk	06/10/25	
79/25	Post/email letter relating to The Pig planning application to the relevant borough councillor, with CC's, as per Cllr Norton's request.	Clerk	06/10/25	

25/202 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) **Highways Committee** – Cllr Norton said that a notably positive meeting had been held on 22nd September. A bid for funding from TWBC was in preparation, awaiting reports and costings from KCC, applying for money to fund

various items for Langton Green, Old Groombridge, and Speldhurst. Cllr Norton noted that the Highways Committee had an additional £30,000 in Ear Marked Reserves (EMR) to help cover the cost of these and felt the priority now was to get the work costed.

Another positive was that Ashurst Speedwatch looked to be on the verge of starting up, with Langton Green volunteers kindly agreeing to hold a training session with the Ashurst Volunteers.

Cllrs Norton and Turner had fed back to the Committee about a presentation they had attended on TWBC's proposed Active Travel Plan, incorporating a route for cyclists, walkers, wheelchairs, prams, and mobility scooters. Residents were encouraged to participate in a consultation on this proposal, and links to further information could be found on the parish council website: [Safer Walking, Wheeling and Cycling Links - Speldhurst Parish Council, Speldhurst, Tunbridge Wells](#)

Cllr Turner noted that the prospective path included a proposal for Farnham Lane, where the Highways Committee had tried to find road-safety solutions for pedestrians for some time. The Active Travel Plan also linked well with the pedestrian crossing that the committee had been pressing for near Langton Green Primary School. There would be a public consultation drop-in at Langton Green Pavilion on 22nd October between 3pm and 7pm. The link to the consultation could be found on the parish council website.

Cllr Norton said that pedestrian barriers near Langton Green Primary School had now been installed, together with updated Heavy Goods Vehicle signage in Old Groombridge, and it was encouraging that KCC were now starting to implement small measures which had been requested for a long time.

b) **Amenities Committee** – Report by Cllr Turner. A meeting was planned for 23rd October.

- **To consider developing a flower meadow in Pocket Park** – After some discussion, it was **RESOLVED** to approve a proposal from Nature Plus, a local company carrying out projects with a biodiversity net gain focus, to carry out preparatory groundwork, sow a mix of wildflower seeds, and manage future maintenance at the cost of £450. Cllr Turner had met with the Nature Plus business owners at Pocket Park and spent some time discussing their proposal. A project of this size, usually costing £3,000, had been offered at a discount if the parish council mentioned Nature Plus's work, as they were keen to build their business and work with other local councils. It was noted that Nature Plus would use a minimal amount of glyphosate-based product to spot-treat persistent roots, which would need to be removed before the wildflower seeds could be sown. This did not contravene the council's weed control policy, which reserved the right to use a limited and controlled amount of glyphosate product when there was no alternative.
- **To consider the renewal of the annual grounds' maintenance contract** – Three Counties Grounds Maintenance had confirmed their price would remain the same in 2026. They had provided a highly satisfactory service, and it was **RESOLVED** to approve a renewal of their contract.
- **To consider the continuation of the "no-mow" at Groombridge Green** – Cllr Turner said discussion of this item would be deferred until the Amenities & Environment Committee meeting on 23rd October.
- **To consider the quotations for replacement bollards in the Langton Green Recreation Ground Car Park** – This item had now been considered and approved at the previous week's Finance and Governance Committee meeting.

c) **KALC** – Cllr Curry would attend a Parish Chairs meeting the following evening. He had recommended condensing the agreement on how Parish Council Chairs interact with TWBC in preparation for future local government reform. There would be a discussion about this with suggestions for how neighbouring parish councils could form a voting block to have shared input on common matters. He would report back on this.

25/203 Finance and Governance Committee

Cllr Rowe said there had been a meeting on 1st October; the minutes had not yet been prepared.

The latest accounts had been circulated, and any questions should be directed to the Clerk. The next meeting in November would focus on budget setting for the 2026/27 financial year. If any Committee Chairs anticipated specific items of expenditure, they should inform the Clerk beforehand.

- a) **To note the detailed budget reports** – These had been circulated.
- b) **Report on interim payments made since the last meeting** – There were none.
- c) **To note decisions made under delegated authority. Items are starred** – There were none.
- d) **Mayor's Toy Appeal** – It was **RESOLVED** to approve a donation of £100.
- e) **To consider the renewal of the electricity contract** - This had been addressed at the Finance and Governance Committee meeting. Cllr Curry said a quote from the current provider, EDF, to supply electricity for two years from January 2026 was less than the current contract; however, a quote from Octopus was even more competitive. He noted that the advantage of using EDF was that the arrangement was brokered on the parish council's behalf, while appointing Octopus would mean self-managing the contract. Cllr Curry would attempt to progress with Octopus; however, if there was an issue in securing the contract, he would need to revert to EDF before its quote expired.
- f) **To consider the transfer of funds from the Unity Trust Bank Account into the Savings Accounts following receipt of the half-year Precept** – it was **RESOLVED** that the Clerk should move funds accordingly.

25/204 Accounts for Payment

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

Date Paid	Payee Name	Reference	Amount Paid	Transaction Detail
08/10/2025	Langton Life	MT3026	375.00	Magazine Article
08/10/2025	KALC	MT3027	60.00	Training - Dep Clerk
08/10/2025	KALC	MT3028	60.00	Training - Plng - Dep Clerk
08/10/2025	JLM Pest Control	MT3029	150.00	Pest Control
08/10/2025	Glasdon UK Ltd	MT3030	305.40	Canine Waste Bin Ashurst
08/10/2025	Seal Calibration Ltd	MT3031	166.80	AED Health Check Groombridge
08/10/2025	Seal Calibration Ltd	MT3032	166.80	AED Health Check Pavilion
08/10/2025	Katie Neve	MT3033	81.09	Travel and Office Expenses
08/10/2025	Tivoli	MT3036	162.20	Canine Waste Removal
08/10/2025	Ashford Security	MT3037	81.00	Emergency Visit - Fire Shutter
10/10/2025	Talk Talk Business	DD	69.17	Office Phone Off/Pav Broadband
10/10/2025	BT PLC	DD	28.64	Office Mobile
20/10/2025	Employees	MT3034	6,314.42	Salaries
20/10/2025	HMRC	MT3035	1,607.22	NI and Income Tax
20/10/2025	EDF Energy	DD	909.16	Pavilion Electricity
28/10/2025	Hugo Fox	DD	11.99	Monthly Website
30/10/2025	Unity Trust Bank	DD	10.20	Bank Charges

25/205 Audited AGAR 2024-25 – To note the completion letter and notice for the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR). The notice of conclusion had been posted on the website and noticeboard as required by the audit process. Thanks were recorded to the Clerk and team for their work in ensuring the statutory requirements relating to the AGAR were met.

25/206 KALC Community Awards Scheme 2026 – The deadline for nominations was 30th January 2026. The Assistant Clerk asked councillors to nominate anyone who had made a significant contribution to the parish by email to the Clerk, and to include a supporting paragraph outlining what they had done to make them a worthwhile recipient of the award.

25/207 Annual Parish Meeting (APM) 2026 – To consider an appropriate date, location and speaker/subject. The Deputy Clerk had submitted a proposal for a community fair-type event to be held at Langton Green Pavilion on Saturday, 23rd May. After some discussion, it was agreed that Cllr Curry would meet with the clerking team to discuss the possibility of a scaled-down version of this proposal and consider alternative dates that did not fall on a Bank Holiday weekend or school holiday. LGCSA's dates for their annual football fiesta should also be taken into account.

25/208 Appointed Trustee to Langton Green Village Hall – To consider the Speldhurst Parish Council appointed Trustee for next year. It was **RESOLVED** to approve Kay Dooley, a former councillor, as appointed trustee. Councillors expressed gratitude to Kay Dooley for her kind offer to take on this role.

25/209 Update on Vacancies on the Council – The Assistant Clerk said at least two interested individuals were in contact with the Clerk.

25/210 Speldhurst Chapel – Cllr Rowe said he was awaiting an insurance re-evaluation report. The Mayor of Tunbridge Wells would officiate at the grand opening of the new Community Shop & Post Office on 8th November, to be opened by the Mayor. The current shop would close a week before so the move could take place.

25/211 Planning Committee – Cllr Curry said a meeting had been held on 15th September and Members had remained neutral on every application. He had signed a letter, drafted jointly with Withyham Parish Council, reiterating to TWBC Planning Department that there was a real risk of losing The Pig development at Groombridge Place if they did not progress on the application. Cllr Norton added that residents strongly supported the application, as its development into a hotel by The Pig would regenerate the building and grounds, and provide employment opportunities. Cllr Dickens asked why there was a delay, and Cllr Norton said he understood one of the issues was the proposed lodges on historic parkland. Cllr Leach asked County Cllr Moreland if he could help progress. He said that he would try to talk to TWBC planning.

25/212 Diary Dates

- 13th October – Planning Committee
- 3rd November – Full Council

25/213 Items for Information

- The Clerk had circulated the following:
 - 24 Construction Enquirer Article about approval of 2nd Runway at Gatwick
 - Gatwick in Touch
 - GACC Newsletter (Sept 25) and Press Release
 - CAGNE Update
 - IAG Minutes (March 25) and Agenda (Sept 25)
 - KALC News (September)
 - Parish Chairs Agenda (September)
 - PCC Summer Newsletter

- Cllr Tarricone asked if Air Traffic could be reinstated. Cllr Curry answered that Air Traffic items could be included on the Full Council agenda at any time. Cllr Tarricone should email any item for consideration to the Clerk.
- Cllr Rowe had attended the September Parish Chairs' meeting. This included a presentation on S106 Developer Contributions, which advised that parish councils should formulate comprehensive proposals on how contributions could be spent, to be ready to take advantage of S106 opportunities.
TWBC Planning department had a backlog of emails from parish councils requesting extensions. They advised that councils do not need to request an extension to the 21 day deadline as long as they submit their submission within 35 days. This is because planning take a minimum of 35 days to make a decision on a planning application and all submissions received up to this point are considered.
- The Assistant Clerk welcomed Cllrs Dickens and Farley to the council and thanked them for stepping into their roles; everyone looked forward to working with them, and it was great to see councillor numbers increase again.
- Cllr Farley said he looked forward to working with his fellow councillors.
- Cllr Turner said there was an opportunity to apply for a bus stop shelter grant from TWBC. The deadline was 31st October, and the requirements were that the bus shelter should already be prioritized in the council's Highways Improvement Plan (HIP) and should have wheelchair access. As the bus stop did not meet these requirements, Cllr Turner would not progress the application.
He would discuss whether to keep the Amenities & Environment Committee together or separate them again at the next meeting. He hoped separate committees might now be possible with more staff and councillors.
He thanked the Assistant Clerk for coming back to cover the Full Council meeting.
- Cllr Ellery would attend the Speldhurst Village Hall Trustees' meeting that week and would report back.

With nothing further to discuss, the meeting closed at 8.57 pm.

Chair