

Local Government Act 1972



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

## MINUTES OF THE FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE MEETING

Held on Monday 26<sup>th</sup> January 2026 at 7.30pm in the

Parish Council Office, Langton Green Recreation Ground

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### MEMBERS PRESENT

Cllrs Rowe (Chair), Cleaver (Vice-Chair), Curry, Ellery and Turner.

### MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no members of the public present.

### OFFICERS PRESENT

Mrs K Neve – Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) (Minutes) and Ms H Chater – Deputy Clerk.

#### 1. TO ENQUIRE IF ANYONE PRESENT 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 Finance and Governance Committee meeting.

#### 2. TO RECEIVE AND APPROVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr Tarricone (work commitment).

#### 3. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

The Clerk and Deputy Clerk declared an interest in item 9j) relating to staff members. The Deputy Clerk declared an interest in item 8f) relating to a grant application for Tunbridge Wells and District Samaritans as she was a volunteer.

#### 4. DECLARATIONS OF LOBBYING

There were none.

#### 5. MINUTES

**RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the Finance and Governance Committee meeting dated 24<sup>th</sup> November 2026, copies having previously been forwarded to Members, be approved and signed as a correct record.

#### 6. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

There were no members of the public present.

## 7. REVIEW OF ACTION POINTS

The Clerk reported that most action points had been completed or were in progress.

## 8. FINANCE ITEMS

### a) Interim Payments

**Unity Trust Bank:** £1,753.20 Hopkins for Bleed kits and AED service; £2,298.99 Nisbets for Pavilion furniture; £178 Oak & More for Pavilion furniture; £533 TRL Furniture for Pavilion furniture; £144 Mulberry for Payroll; £41.33 Castle Water for Pavilion water; £725.41 NEST pensions, £977.76 EDF Pavilion Energy; Nisbets £1097.77 ( to replace incorrect benches and tables) refund due; £495 SLCC CiLCA training (HC).

**Mastercard:** £9 Monthly Credit Card Charges; \*£59.32 Langton Green Service Station for fuel; £427.50 Subcold for Pavilion Equipment; £275.97 Wayfair for Pavilion Furniture. Starred items were made under delegated power.

### b) Financial position to review expenditure vs budget (including Pavilion) at 19<sup>th</sup> January 2026

Councillors noted the summary sheets and detailed reports which had been circulated prior to the meeting.

### c) Budget Virements

Councillors noted the virement of £2,000 from the Grants budget to the Pavilion Equipment budget for the purchase of a new oven and replacement chairs.

### d) Banking and reserves – to consider the present banking arrangements.

- **To note the bank reconciliations, balances and current bank interest rates** – The Clerk confirmed that all the bank reconciliations had been checked and signed by a councillor, in line with financial procedures. Councillors noted the balances and current bank interest rates.
- **To note the transfer of funds between accounts** – It was noted that £20,000 had been transferred from the Unity Trust Savings account to the Unity Trust Bank account, and £15,000 from the Cambridge Building Society account to the Unity Trust Current account. The Clerk was asked to transfer further funds from the Cambridge Building Society account, retaining the minimum balance required.
- **To consider updating the signatories on all accounts** – The Clerk requested authorisation to change the signatories on all accounts to facilitate the change of Clerk and councillors. It was **RESOLVED** to seek Full Council approval for the change of signatories at the meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2026.
- **To consider the change in fees and charges** – Councillors noted the change in fees and charges for the Unity Trust Bank account, the Veolia waste contract and the Talk Talk contract for the Pavilion Broadband. It was **RESOLVED** to approve the renewal of the Talk Talk Pavilion Broadband contract for a 24-month period at £26.95 per month, excluding VAT.

### e) Committee and Working Group expenditure

The Clerk presented a report detailing the expenditure for equipment and furniture at the Pavilion approved at the last Full Council meeting which councillors noted. The total cost of items purchased was below the approved budget.

**f) Grant requests**

- **Langton Life – RESOLVED** that an annual grant of £2,250 be awarded to Langton Life towards the production costs of the village magazine. The grant to be paid bi-monthly in six instalments of £375 and to include the provision of bi-monthly articles in the magazine. A grant request for £2,250 covering 2026/27 is required stating payments to be paid bi-monthly in £375 instalments.
- **Tunbridge Wells and District Samaritans –** To be consistent with other grant requests from similar organisations, councillors **RESOLVED** not to approve a grant to Tunbridge Wells and District Samaritans but to focus the budget on locally focused activities.
- **Speldhurst News – RESOLVED** that an annual grant of £500 be paid to Speldhurst News towards the production costs of the village magazine and inclusion of articles.

The Clerk reported that two further grant applications had been received after the publication deadline for the agenda and would be included on the February Full Council agenda for councillors' consideration.

**g) To clarify the hourly rental for the short-term hire agreement of the Pavilion**

Councillors noted that the correct hourly rental for the short-term hire agreement of the Pavilion was £10 per hour until October 2026, plus 25% utilities surcharge. Zero net terms for payment would apply from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2026. The Council is targeting an hourly hire charge of at least £12.50 as part of the pavilion review which would apply from October 2026.

**9. GOVERNANCE ITEMS**

**a) Governance Checks**

The Clerk reported that the monthly checks were up to date. Councillors Tarricone and Curry had carried out the last two checks. The Clerk would contact councillors to arrange the following months' checks.

**b) Internal Auditor (IA)**

The Clerk presented for councillors' information the Internal Auditor's report which had previously been reported to Full Council. Councillors noted the actions taken on the two recommendations – computer backup and compliance with Practitioners' Guide – Assertion 10. The Clerk was requested to contact Cloudy IT to confirm their backup and retention policy and then to update the Documents, Records and Correspondence Policy to correctly record the backup and retention arrangements for electronic records.

**c) External Audit (Forvis Mazars LLP)**

The Clerk presented a report on the new Assertion 10 for the forthcoming audit and, following the Internal Auditor's recommendation, councillors were asked to review compliance with paragraphs 1.47–1.54 of the Practitioners' Guide before the end of the financial year. The Deputy Clerk reported on completion of a three-part data protection training course and confirmed that the parish council's arrangements were compliant.

**d) Insurance Policy**

The Clerk confirmed that the insurance company had formally denied liability for the claim arising from the alleged strimming incident, as correct procedures had been followed.

- **To note the insurance Reinstatement for the Pavilion** Councillors noted the insurance Reinstatement for the Pavilion of £1,433,900.00 (excluding VAT). The Clerk was asked to contact the original builders to request a current rebuild cost and to find out from the insurance company what the premium would be for the reinstatement valuation.

**e) Review of Fixed Asset Register**

The Clerk reported that the new equipment purchased for the Pavilion (as reported under item 8e) above) had now been added to the Fixed Asset Register.

**f) Photographic record of assets**

The Clerk reported that the photographic record of the new equipment for the pavilion would be added to the photographic record of assets.

**g) Councillor Vacancies**

The Clerk reported that there were two current vacancies and that a further vacancy would arise following the departure of Cllr Rowe on 11<sup>th</sup> February. Former councillor and Chair, Mr Barrington-Johnson, had expressed an interest in returning, and his potential co-option would be considered at the February Full Council meeting.

**h) Committees**

The Clerk advised that a new Council Vice-Chair would be required following the departure of Cllr Rowe and that, if Mr Barrington-Johnson were co-opted, he would be invited to join the Finance & Governance and Amenities Committees. Cllr Cleaver, the current Vice-Chair of the Finance & Governance Committee, stated that he would be willing to assume the role of Chair, and Cllr Ellery stated that he would be willing to take on the role of Vice-Chair.

**i) Policies**

The Clerk presented three new policies for councillors' consideration: the IT Policy, WhatsApp Data Protection Policy, and Recruitment Policy. It was **RESOLVED** that the policies be recommended to Full Council for approval. The IT Policy would first be reviewed again at the next Finance & Governance Committee meeting following the amendments discussed at the meeting. The Clerk was requested to prepare a draft AI policy for review at the next meeting. Councillors also requested that all future policies follow a template for consistency.

**j) Staff Members**

• **Staff Contracts**

The Clerk presented the contracts for the new Clerk and Deputy Clerk. Councillors discussed the contracts and the proposed salaries and requested confirmation of the current rates for both posts. It was **RESOLVED** to recommend approval of the contracts to Full Council at its February meeting, with salaries set at £20 per hour for the Clerk and £16.50 per hour for the Deputy Clerk. The Clerk would be entitled to a further salary increase upon the successful completion of CILCA. Also, a notice period of 3 months for the Clerk was being recommended.

The current Clerk's official leaving date was the end of February, but it was likely she would be able to extend this by a couple of weeks to assist with handover and training, hours to be agreed by negotiation.

• **Staff Training**

The following training was noted:

- **Deputy Clerk** – Three-part Data Protection Training and the start of CILCA (Certificate in Local Council Administration)
- **Parish Council Administrator** – Digital Friends Webinar and the start of ILCA (Introduction in Local Council Administration) and would be attending the SLCC (Society of Local Council Clerks) AI Workshop and the NALC (National Association of Local Councils) Funding Solutions.

**k) To confirm the role of Data Protection Officer (DPO) as the responsibility of the Council and not the Clerk**

It was **RESOLVED** to recommend to Full Council that responsibility for the DPO role rests with the Council and not the Clerk.

**10. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

- CCLA Market Updates (December and January)
- CCLA Investment review of 2025 and outlook for 2026
- Dates of forthcoming meetings:
  - Monday 9<sup>th</sup> March
  - Monday 27<sup>th</sup> April
  - Monday 20<sup>th</sup> July
  - Monday 28<sup>th</sup> September
  - Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> November

There being nothing further to discuss, the meeting closed at 9.27pm.

**Chair**

**Finance Committee Action Points**

<b>Action Number</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Date created</b>	<b>Status</b>
18/25	Explore the following training: Conflict Resolution; Cyber Training; Data Protection; FOI/SAR.	Clerk	01/10	In progress
22/25	Contact Rialtas Accounting regarding corrections required in the accounts.	Clerk	24/11	<b>Complete</b>
23/25	Open Unity Trust Savings Account.	Clerk	24/11	<b>Complete</b>
24/25	Confirm grants to St John's Church, Groombridge and the Speldhurst Parish History Society and update grants list.	Clerk	24/11	<b>Complete</b>
25/25	Order new oven for Pavilion.	Clerk	24/11	<b>Complete</b>
26/25	Renewal Rialtas Gold Scheme Member Yearend.	Clerk	24/11	
27/25	Update budget and circulate to committee members prior to December Full Council meeting.	Clerk	24/11	<b>Complete</b>
28/25	Put following on December Full Council agenda: Governance Checklist; Co-option Policy; Media Policy; Training and Development Policy; Video Meeting Policy and Guidelines.	Clerk	24/11	<b>Complete</b>
29/25	Renew CCTV annual maintenance agreement.	Clerk	24/11	<b>Complete</b>
30/25	Update Deputy Clerk's contract.	Clerk	24/11	<b>Complete</b>
31/25	Add item on December Full Council agenda for staff vacancy.	Clerk	24/11	<b>Complete</b>

1/26	Put the following items on next appropriate FC agenda: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update of signatories</li> <li>• Grant applications received</li> <li>• Policies for confirmation</li> <li>• Staff contracts for Clerk and Deputy Clerk</li> <li>• Confirmation of Data Protection Officer</li> </ul>	Clerk	26/01	
2/26	Confirm new Pavilion Broadband contract.	Clerk	26/01	
3/26	Clarify hourly rental for the short-term hire agreement of the Pavilion.	Clerk	26/01	
4/26	Contact Cloudy IT re their backup and retention policy.	Clerk	26/01	
5/26	Contact original builder of Pavilion for an estimated rebuild cost and ask insurance company what the premium would be at the reinstatement valuation.	Clerk	26/01	
6/26	Confirm the following grant requests: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Langton Life</li> <li>• Tunbridge Wells and District Samaritans</li> <li>• Speldhurst News</li> </ul>	Clerk	26/01	
7/26	Update photographic record of assets.	Clerk	26/01	
8/26	Draft AI Policy for next meeting.	Clerk	26/01	