

Local Government Act 1972



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

Minutes of the Full Council Meeting

held on Monday 5th September 2022 at 7.30pm in the Palmer Room, Langton Green Village Hall

MEMBERS PRESENT

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

OFFICERS PRESENT

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

IN ATTENDANCE

Borough Cllr Sankey was in attendance.

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no members of the public present.

22/170 Covid Compliance

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

22/171 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.

22/172 To accept and approve apologies and reasons for absence

Apologies had been received from Cllr Turner (Covid-related), together with County Cllr McInroy (work commitments), and Borough Cllrs Allen (work commitments), and Ms Willis (holiday).

22/173 Disclosure of Interests

Cllr Langridge's connection to Langton Life magazine (agenda item 18e) was noted for completeness, despite him not receiving any financial benefit from the publication.

22/174 Declarations of Lobbying

There were none.

22/175 Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on 1st August 2022

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

22/176 Public Open Session

There were no members of the public present.

22/177 Borough and County Councillors' Reports

- Borough Cllr Matthew Sankey was in attendance and provided the following information:
 - a) **School bus services** – whilst Bus 230 to Tonbridge had been saved for the academic year 2022/23, he is keen that the pressure is kept on Kent County Council (KCC) and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC) to ensure that all existing bus services are retained permanently.
 - b) He explained to members that the deletion of free parking within Tunbridge Wells had been abandoned.
 - c) **LGBCE Electoral Review of the Borough and Electoral System** – the Chair agreed that item 20 on the agenda could be discussed at this point and Borough Cllr Sankey asked councillors for their views. Cllr Barrington-Johnson said that in his view pairing the parishes of Speldhurst and Rusthall were a natural fit and that this should be supported. Other proposals would see Speldhurst split into several wards which would most likely reduce the existing harmony amongst the villages within the parish. Borough Cllr Sankey agreed with Cllr Barrington-Johnson and added that to split Speldhurst up would lead to an extremely complicated electoral process. It was then **RESOLVED** to delegate authority to Cllr Barrington-Johnson to respond to the consultation on behalf of Speldhurst Parish Council (SPC) supporting the joining of Rusthall and Speldhurst Parish Councils into one ward.
- Borough Cllr Lucy Willis had sent the following report with her apologies: A new project called 'Community Catalysts' is working to support small enterprises to provide care and support to older people, people with learning disabilities, people with physical disabilities and people with mental health conditions: they may work in people's own homes, support them to access the community or provide an activity in the local area that is available to these audiences.

22/178 Chairman's Report

There was nothing to report.

22/179 Clerk's Report

- **Thanks to the Team:** The Clerk thanked the team for their support whilst she is dealing with a broken ankle.
- **CiLCA:** She was delighted to inform councillors that she had completed her Certificate in Local Council Administration (CiLCA) qualification which means that SPC will continue to hold the General Power of Competence. Members expressed their congratulations.
- **Office Configuration:** The office had been reconfigured which meant that all clerks now had workstations.
- **Invite proposals from committees for future expenditure for budgeting purposes:** The Clerk asked all committee and working group (WG) chairs for proposals for future expenditure for the forthcoming year to facilitate the next round of budget setting.
- **Programme Meetings for the year:** Work would soon start on scheduling a programme of committee and working group meetings for 2023. The Clerks would be liaising with committee and WG Chairs.

22/180 General Matters**New - Items arising since last Full Council meeting**

	Summary	Owner	Created	Status
56/22	Meeting with Cllrs Barrington-Johnson and Mr Cornelius regarding LG carpark issues. <i>To be organised for end Sept/October.</i>	Clerk/Assist Clerk KH	04/07/22	In progress
59/22	Check Veolia invoices for refuse collections over the football fiesta weekend. <i>Results inadequate – matter to be closed.</i>	RFO/Clerk	03/08/22	Complete
60/22	Respond to LGCSA re £233 reimbursement to Pavilion Manager. <i>Reimbursement refused by LGCSA.</i>	Pav Man Cttee	03/08/22	Complete
63/22	Write to Pavilion Manager to inform her of significant future rent increase due to increase in energy prices. <i>Matter discussed with Pavilion Manager by Cllr Mrs Lyle.</i>	Pav Man Cttee	03/08/22	Complete

Ongoing

	Summary	Owner	Created	Status
27/22	Subbuteo World Cup event 2024. <i>Item being addressed by The Historical Society.</i>	Cllr Langridge	7/03/22	Complete
39/22	Look for new Internal Auditor and write to David Buckett expressing thanks for his work. <i>Letter to David Buckett sent. Contacted neighbouring parishes.</i>	Clerk/RFO	09/05/22	In progress
40/22	Include agenda item to decide on future meetings of air traffic, amenities, highways and governance WGs. <i>Discussed at all groups except Air Traffic WG which would request committee status at next meeting.</i>	Clerks	06/06/22	Complete
65/22	Increase subscription to Langton Life magazine by 25%.	RFO	05/09/22	TBA
66/22	Respond to the consultation on LGBCE Electoral Review.	Cllr Barrington-Johnson	05/09/22	TBA
67/22	Committee and WG expenditure proposals for 2023/24	Clerk	05/09/22	TBA
68/22	Programme of meetings for committees and WGs for '23	Clerk	05/09/22	TBA
69/22	Liaison with Mr Martin Russell regarding the new position of Pavilion Manager.	Cllr Mrs Lyle	05/09/22	TBA
70/22	Liaise with Borough Cllr Sankey regarding energy account advice.	Chair	05/09/22	TBA
71/22	Obtain professional advice on energy efficiency at the pavilion.	Chair/Cllrs Norton Rowe/Mrs Lyle	05/09/22	TBA
72/22	Check with the Monitoring Officer if SPC can advertise and interview for Mr Pate's and Cllr Langridge's vacancies at the same time.	Clerk	05/09/22	TBA
73/22	Vacancy candidate interviews	Chair/Cllrs Mrs Lyle/ Rajah	05/09/22	TBA
74/22	Send ideas for inclusion in the newsletter to Asst Clerk CB	All	05/09/22	TBA
75/22	Send suggestions for Love Where we Live Awards to Clerk	All	05/09/22	TBA
76/22	Organise CAB energy talks	Assist Clerk KH	05/09/22	TBA
77/22	Instruct Treeworks to fell tree in The Boundary, LG	Assistant Clerk KH	05/09/22	TBA

22/181 Finance Committee – Report by Cllr Ellery:

- a) Report by the Chair including any Committee Meetings held since the last Full Council meeting. Cllr Ellery said that there had not been a 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 none.
- d) To consider a grant application from St Mary's Church, Speldhurst for churchyard maintenance: It was **RESOLVED** to grant £1,000 to St Mary's Church, Speldhurst towards churchyard maintenance.
- e) To consider a request for an increase in payment of the Langton Life subscription: It was **RESOLVED** to increase SPC's monthly subscription to Langton Life from £300 by 25% to assist in meeting the increased costs of production.

22/182 Accounts for Payment – RESOLVED that the invoices as listed, be paid.

Payee Name	Ref	Amount £	Detail
m:power accounting	MT2308	96.00	Jul/Aug payroll
Cloudy IT	MT2309	277.38	Monthly payment
Knockout Print	MT2310	60.00	Defib signs
Agrifactors (Southern) Ltd	MT2311	174.00	July mowing
Prestige Plumbing Services	MT2312	960.00	Balance kitchen boiler
M R Lawrence	MT2313	70.00	Tree works
Kidman's Ltd	MT2314	17.21	Maintenance parts
Mr L Cooper	MT2315	33.00	Maintenance parts
Ranger Electrical	MT2316	1,176.00	Defib move
Langton Green Charitable Trst	MT2317	36.13	Meeting rooms
Tate Fencing Ltd	MT2318	423.01	LGRG Bin Area
JS Facilities Management	MT2319	139.50	Pavilion cleaning July
HMRC	MT2320	1,294.91	Tax & NI
KCC (KCS)	DD	50.22	Photocopier
BT PLC	DD	174.42	BB & Telephone
Employees	MT2321	4,812.69	Sept Salaries
EDF Energy	DD	537.00	Pavilion Electricity
Castle Water	DD	50.63	Pavilion water
Total:		£10,382.10	

22/183 Planning Committee – report by Cllr Rajah:

- A meeting had been held on 15th August when four applications had been considered, the minutes having been circulated.
- Councillors had reviewed their approach to the stance taken on applications and it had been agreed to continue with the existing policy of only supporting or objecting to applications if members felt strongly either way.
- A response had been received from the Conservation Officer at TWBC regarding trees on the Green at Langton Green advising that he was unable to help further. The matter would be discussed at the forthcoming Planning Committee meeting.

22/184 Langton Green Recreation Ground – report by Cllr Mrs Lyle:

- a) **To receive a report from the Pavilion Management Working Group**
The café had been closed during August which had allowed the boiler issues to be resolved.
- b) **To consider paying for the services of a manager for the Pavilion**
Cllr Mrs Lyle had discussed the matter in detail with the potential manager for the Pavilion who had requested a higher hourly rate to carry out the role of Pavilion Manager, bearing in mind certain challenges involved. It was **RESOLVED** to approve the requested hourly rate and Cllr Mrs Lyle would liaise regarding further details of the contract once known and report back to members for approval. Cllr Rowe said that it was important to make sure that the services of a Pavilion Manager would be provided under a contract that did not create adverse tax consequences for SPC.

c) **To discuss a proposition to fix the energy pricing contract at the Pavilion**

The Chair reported that the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) had approached Utility Aid in order to obtain a quotation however they had responded saying they are not currently generating quotes to fix energy prices. Borough Cllr Sankey offered to send the Chair details of a contact who has effectively helped him with his business energy accounts.

d) **To decide whether to proceed with an investigation into the energy efficiency of the boiler**

It was **RESOLVED** to obtain professional advice on how best to operate the pavilion boiler system most efficiently providing that all health and safety requirements are met (eg Legionnaires prevention) and that the cost of the advice was not prohibitive. Cllr Mrs Woodliffe said it was also important to consider the cost of administering such a scheme and Cllr Norton noted the importance of considering the environmental implications of any recommendations. Cllr Rowe said that the parish council would need to make some unprecedented budget decisions in the coming months which would involve extra research. It was agreed that Cllrs Curry, Norton and Rowe would speak to Prestige Plumbers for any advice they could give, and Cllr Mrs Lyle would speak to Hadene.

22/185 Vacancy on the Council

- a) The Clerk advised that Cllr Pate had submitted his resignation which was with immediate effect. The vacancy was currently being advertised with the deadline of 7th September for residents to call an election. If no requests are received, a vacancy for co-option could be advertised. The Clerk went on to advise that Cllr Langridge would be submitting his resignation and it was agreed that she would ask the Monitoring Officer at TWBC whether the two vacancies could be advertised and interviewed at the same time. Cllr Mrs Soyke advised members that she would be stepping down at some time before the elections in May.
- b) It was **RESOLVED** to delegate candidate interviews (should no election be called) to a working group consisting of Cllrs Curry, Mrs Lyle and Rajah for recommendation to the next appropriate Full Council meeting.

22/186 Committees and Working Groups

The Clerk said that it was the responsibility of each working group or committee to fill any vacancies which may arise as a result of the resignations. The Clerk asked all councillors to consider their options.

22/187 Newsletter

The Assistant Clerk (CB) had circulated a list of suggestions for inclusion in the next newsletter and the Clerk asked members to let her know if they had any further ideas or feedback. Cllr Langridge volunteered to write an article on behalf of the Environment WG which would include the biodiversity project at Pocket Park.

22/188 Love Where we Live Awards

The deadline for nominations was 25th September and the Clerk asked members to let her have any suggestions.

22/189 LGBCE Electoral Review of the Borough and Electoral System

This item was discussed under **22/177 c)**.

22/190 Citizen's Advice Energy Talks

The Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) had contacted SPC about a project they are running until 31st March 2023 called the Big Energy Saving Network project, where they deliver energy advice sessions to local community groups. Members supported the project and it was **RESOLVED** that SPC would liaise with the Café Proprietor to allow the use of the Pavilion to be offered on a Monday when the café is closed to facilitate a Big Energy Saving Network session. The Assistant Clerk (KH) had volunteered to liaise with the CAB and the café proprietor and the Assistant Clerk (CB) would be asked to advertise the event.

22/191 Working Group Reports

- a) **Governance WG:** There was nothing to report
- b) **Highways WG:** Cllr Langridge reported that a meeting had been held with KCC Highways on 9th August, which was extremely helpful, worthwhile and constructive and covered the following points:
- KCC are keen to support the yellow lines installation at the end of Ferbies and Cobhams, Speldhurst;
 - A request for 20mph in Bird in Hand Street, Groombridge had been declined as it is a conservation area which affects the signage permitted;
 - A request for a road crossing on the Langton Road in LG would not qualify due to the low volume of pedestrians using the traffic island crossings.
 - Footpath installation in Farnham Lane, LG would be addressed by the Highways WG.
- Cllr Norton asked if the Highways WG could look at bolder projects going forward.
- c) **Amenities WG:** It was **RESOLVED** to instruct Treeworks to fell and grind out the stump of the remaining oak tree at The Boundary, LG as part of the programme previously approved.
- d) **Air Traffic WG:** Cllr Barrington-Johnson said that despite the fact that there appeared to currently be a reasonable dispersal of flights, it was important not to get complacent.
- e) **Footpaths:** Cllr Langridge advised that the broken stile at Groombridge had been reported to KCC Highways and minor repairs were being carried out in Shadwell Woods and Went Farm by the landowners.
- f) **Environment WG:** There was nothing to report.
- g) **Defibrillator WG:** Cllr Curry said that the defibrillators in all sites originally identified by the WG were installed and registered. He asked members for feedback, and it was agreed that the current provision was considered adequate but would be monitored.
- h) **KALC:** The Chair reported that he had asked for the topic of glyphosate to be included on the agenda of the forthcoming Tunbridge Wells Chairs meeting of the Kent Association of Local Councils.

22/192 Diary Dates

- 12th September – Planning Committee Meeting
- 20th September – Highways Working Group Meeting
- 26th September – Amenities Working Group Meeting
- 3rd October – Full Council - SPVH
- 11th October – Finance Committee Meeting
- 17th October – Planning Committee Meeting
- 9th November – Governance Working Group Meeting

22/193 Items for Information:

- **Elections Act 2022** - The Clerk advised that voters would in future be required to show photo ID at polling stations. Members considered this an exclusionary policy.
- The Clerk had circulated the response received from County Cllr McInroy regarding the school bus service.

There being no further items the meeting closed at 8:48pm.

Chair