

Local Government Act 1972



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

Minutes of the Annual Statutory Meeting of Speldhurst Parish Council Meeting

Held at 7.3 pm on Tuesday 6th May 2025 at Langton Green Pavilion

MEMBERS PRESENT

Cllrs Curry, Cleaver, Ellery, Lyle, Norton, Rowe and Turner.

OFFICERS PRESENT

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

IN ATTENDANCE

There were no Borough or County Councillors in attendance.

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no members of the public present.

25/85 Election of Chair

There were no volunteers to take the role of Chair. The Clerk therefore put forward a resolution for the parish council to operate without a permanent Chair using a monthly rota of Councillors acting as Chair. It was **RESOLVED** that Cllr Curry would chair the current meeting and future meetings would be chaired on a rota basis. Cllr Ellery declined due to pressures of work and family commitments.

25/86 Election of Vice-Chair

It was **RESOLVED** to elect Cllr Rowe as Vice-Chair of the Parish Council. He signed the declaration of office which was then countersigned by the Proper Officer.

25/87 To enquire if anyone intends to record the meeting

The Chair advised that an audio recording had been started by the Clerk which would be used to ensure accuracy of minutes. Anyone who wished to speak should consider that their voice may be recorded and the recording could be requested via Freedom of Information.

25/88 To accept and approve apologies and reasons for absence.

Apologies had been received from Cllrs Dickens (work commitment), Leach (prior engagement), Littlefield (family commitment) and Tarricone (work commitment).

Apologies were also received from Borough Cllrs Sankey, Sharratt and County Cllr Moreland.

25/89 Disclosure of Interests

- The Clerk and Assistant Clerk declared an interest in item 25/99 a) regarding salaries.
- Cllr Lyle declared an interest in item 25/94 as a Governor of Langton Green Primary School.
- Councillors' ongoing disclosures were noted: Cllrs Curry, Ellery, and Rowe have shares in the Speldhurst shop and post office.

25/90 Declarations of Lobbying

Cllr Curry had been lobbied regarding the Community Hub renewal.

25/91 Minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 7th April 2025 – RESOLVED to approve that the minutes, previously forwarded to Members, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

25/92 Public Open Session

There were no members of the public present.

25/93 Borough and County Councillors' Reports

Borough Cllr Sharratt had sent the following report:

- Congratulations to new Kent County Cllr John Moreland who she looked forward to working with.
- Southern Water had agreed to attend a meeting to discuss sewage discharges into the Rivers Grom and Medway.
- TS Brilliant, Royal Tunbridge Wells Sea Cadets and Royal Marines Cadets had been awarded the Freedom of the Borough by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC).
- The Borough's Community Safety Partnership Action Plan for 2025-26 had been passed <https://democracy.tunbridgewells.gov.uk/mgA.aspx?M=5734&LLL=0>.
- The TWBC Annual Council would be held on 21st May when the new Mayor and Deputy Mayor for the year would be confirmed.
- Finally, she had been saddened to hear of the death of Alan Ford who for many years contributed nature watch articles to Langton Life and Rusthall Life, which had been much appreciated and helped educate residents about nature, how it was being impacted by climate change and what could be done to help it.

25/94 Clerk's Report

- Reminder to all councillors to make every effort to attend the Annual Parish Open Meeting.
- Amendment to Minute 25/50 – Full Council Meeting on 3rd March 2025 (Clerk's Report)

The original Clerk's Report stated that: "...a decision was taken by the Trustees to leave the front door unlocked at all times. This contravenes safety regulations which the nursery school are obliged to follow...". This statement is hereby **amended** to reflect the following clarification: "While it was reported that the front door being left unlocked conflicted with regulations, it should be noted that this refers specifically to internal requirements or policies that *Little Birches Nursery* said they were obliged to follow. There is **no suggestion** that the *Village Hall Trustees* were themselves in breach of any statutory safety regulations. The Nursery Manager was requested by the Trustees to provide specific details of the regulations in question but, at the time of writing, no further information has been received". The Council acknowledges that the original wording may have implied a breach on the part of the Trustees, which was not the intention, and this amendment is made to correct the public record accordingly. It was **RESOLVED** to agree this amendment.

For Information:

- Street Lighting Contract – 4% price increase for the 2025/26 street lighting maintenance contract.
- Federation proposal Consultation document – Broadwater Down and Langton Green Primary Schools.
- May KALC News was circulated.

25/95 General Matters – Actionable tasks that do not fall to a committee.

	Existing	Owner	Created	Status
22/25	Update the Policy for Use of Council Land on website.	Asst Clerk (KH)	07/04/25	Complete
23/25	Update the EWG Terms of Reference on website.	Asst Clerk (CB)	07/04/25	Complete
24/25	Include Environment Policy on next Full Council agenda.	Clerk	07/04/25	Complete
25/25	Transfer funds into savings account when precept arrives.	Clerk	07/04/25	TBA
26/25	Share councillor vacancies with organisations eg WI, U3A, LGVS, Thrive, Schools etc.	Clerk	07/04/25	TBA
27/25	Send invitations for APM. Councillors to pass on suggestions of invitees.	Clerk/Cllrs	07/04/25	In progress
28/25	Arrange meeting of Pavilion WG.	Clerk	07/04/25	Complete
29/25	Include item on next Full Council Agenda for discussion following Pavilion WG meeting and circulation to Cllrs for comment.	Clerk	07/04/25	Complete
30/25	Include renewal of Community Hub hire agreement on next Full Council agenda.	Clerk	07/04/25	Complete
31/25	Update Premises Licence to be held by Pavilion Working Group and confirm terms of reference.	Clerk	07/04/25	TBA
	New	Owner	Created	Status
32/25	Set up rota of councillors to chair future Full Council meetings.	Clerk	06/05/25	
33/25	Amend Terms of References for committees to reflect reduction in number of meetings.	Clerks	06/05/25	
34/25	Include Annual Return item on June FC agenda.	Clerk	06/05/25	
35/25	Include/update the following on the website and Cllrs' folder: Committee membership, Statement of Internal Control, Internal Audit ToFR, Fixed Asset Register, the following policies: Health and Safety; Transparency Code; Complaints; Documents, Records and Correspondence; Equality and Diversity / Disability Discrimination; Freedom of Information; Lone Worker; and Environment.	Clerk	06/05/25	
36/25	Notify staff and payroll of pay award.	Clerk	06/05/25	
37/25	Respond to Little Birches Nursery's request for higher replacement fence.	Asst Clerk (KH)	06/05/25	
38/25	Include links regarding Air Traffic Groups on website.	Asst Clerk (CB)	06/05/25	
39/25	Carry out virements from General Reserves to EMRs.	Clerk	06/05/25	
40/25	Confirm Community Hub renewal.	Clerk	06/05/25	
41/25	Establish review process for Community Hub.	Pav WG	06/05/25	
42/25	Confirm increased charges for Pavilion and update website.	Asst Clerk (CB)	06/05/25	
43/25	Establish Pavilion Licence Committee and confirm ToFR.	Clerk	06/05/25	

25/96 Appointment of Committees and KALC Representative:

It was **RESOLVED** to adopt the new committee and membership structure, as recommended by the Governance Committee and to update the Terms of Reference accordingly.

It was **RESOLVED** that Cllr Curry would remain as the KALC representative.

25/97 Annual Return

This item would be discussed at the June Full Council meeting. Cllr Lyle thanked the Clerk for all her hard work in preparing the accounts for audit, particularly under a new accounting rules.

25/98 The General Power of Competence

It was **RESOLVED** to re-adopt the General Power of Competence (LA2011 S1(1)) for the next term of office.

25/99 – Committees and Working Groups (WC) and other Reports

a) **Governance Committee** – Cllr Lyle, Governance Chair: A meeting was held on 28th April.

- The following items were **RESOLVED** on the recommendation of the Governance Committee:
 - Approval of the Statement of Internal Control.
 - Re-appointment of the Internal Auditor (IA).
 - Appointment of the Clerk as Data Protection Officer (DPO).
 - Confirm the Fixed Asset Register is correct.
 - Award all staff a 4% pay award, to be backdated to 1st April 2025, pension contributions remain the same. Cllr Lyle thanked the clerking team for their hard work.
 - Groundsman – increase in hourly rate from £15.93ph to £16.57ph.
 - Assistant Clerk (CB) – increase in hourly rate from £16.25ph to £16.90ph.
 - Assistant Clerk (KH) – increase in hourly rate from £17.80ph to £18.51ph.
 - Clerk – increase in hourly rate from £23.55ph to £24.49ph.
 - Approval of the following policies: Health and Safety; Complaints; Documents, Records and Correspondence; Equality and Diversity / Disability Discrimination; Freedom of Information; and Lone Worker.
 - Approval of the Internal Audit Terms of Reference.

Cllr Lyle thanked the clerks for their hard work updating the Fixed Asset Register.

b) **Highways Committee** – Cllr Norton, Highways Chair: There had been no meeting and no major matters to report.

c) **Amenities Committee** – Cllr Lyle, Chair: No committee meeting had been held; however a meeting had been held between Cllr Lyle, the Clerk, the Assistant Clerk (KH) and two representatives from the Langton Green Village Hall Charitable Incorporated Organisation (LGVHCIO) in an attempt to come to a shared understanding of the maintenance responsibilities of items surrounding the village hall.

- Cllr Lyle believed that Speldhurst Parish Council (SPC) is entitled to ask the LGVHCIO for a contribution towards the maintenance of the front carpark.
- According to the terms of the lease, the LGVHCIO is responsible to pay all the services (which covers the electricity in the bollards).
- Amendment to the Full Council minutes of September 2023: at the time of this meeting in 2023 it was believed that SPC was responsible for the fencing surrounding the nursery playground (patio) however information had since come to light which clearly shows that the Village House Nursery had the original fence installed in October 2007 after seeking approval for the specifications from LGVHCIO. LGVHCIO was entitled to permit this under its right to build enshrined in the leases with SPC. Taking the new information into account, it was **RESOLVED** that SPC is not responsible for the fence surrounding the patio area, although its consent is required for any changes or renewals.
- The LGVHCIO advised that the nursery school had enquired about a taller fence being installed around the patio area. In the absence of any information on a replacement fence, it was **RESOLVED** that the Clerk be given delegated authority to consent to a replacement fence up to 5 ft tall in the existing picket-style (not close-boarded) if an enquiry were to be received from the nursery school. Any such replacement would be at the cost of the party requesting it.

d) **Environment WG (EWG)** – Cllr Turner, Chair. There had been no meeting.

It was **RESOLVED** to adopt the Environment Policy as circulated.

e) **KALC (Kent Association of Local Councils)** – There was nothing to report.

f) **Air Traffic Issues** – It was agreed that links would be put on the website to various groups opposing Gatwick Airport's expansion, recommending that residents personally express their views.

25/100 Finance Committee – Report by Cllr Rowe. There had been no meeting.

a) **RESOLVED** to authorise the following interim payments made since the last meeting:

Unity Trust Bank: £491.40 T Bonard for EICR remedial work; £180* T Bonard for lighting repairs in office; £29.63 DD Talk Talk for Pavilion broadband; £230 JLM Pest Control for quarterly pest control; £126.95 DD KCC (KCS) for Photocopier rental; £701.73 DD N.E.S.T. for March Pensions; £74.56 DD BT for office phone and broadband.

Mastercard: £9 DD card charge; £31.20* Sainsbury's for black sacks; £119.98 Amazon for gate closer; £314.91 Amazon for Natural Roundup; £46.96 Langton Green Service Station for fuel for van.

b) **RESOLVED** To note decisions made under delegated authority which are starred above.

c) **RESOLVED** to approve the virement of funds into the following EMRs (Ear Marked Reserves) as agreed at Full Council on 6th January 2025:

Pavilion Legal Fees	£2,500
Parish Office Building Works	£750
CCTV	£1,625
LGRG Play Area	£5,000
LGRG Car Park	£1,000
Life Saving Appliances	£7,500

25/101 Accounts for Payment

RESOLVED that the invoices as listed below and checked by Cllrs Leach and Cleaver be paid.

Date Paid	Payee Name	Reference	Amount Paid	Transaction Detail
07/05/2025	Langton Green Charitable Trust	MT2937	16.63	Meeting Room Hire
07/05/2025	Knockout Print	MT2938	180.00	APM Boards
07/05/2025	Kidman's Ltd	MT2939	66.97	Plug, oil, air filter
07/05/2025	Brooklynn Monk	MT2940	110.00	Pavilion Cleaning
07/05/2025	Katie Neve	MT2941	79.90	Expenses
07/05/2025	Capel Groundcare	MT2942	142.20	Replace Broken Playground Eq
07/05/2025	Tivoli	MT2943	162.20	Canine Waste Removal
07/05/2025	M R Lawrence	MT2944	350.00	Mowing and Strimming
07/05/2025	AJL Roadmarking Ltd	MT2945	3,360.00	Car Park Repairs and Lining
07/05/2025	Cloudy IT	MT2946	268.32	Monthly IT Services
07/05/2025	RBS Software Solutions	MT2947	1,046.40	Accountancy Year End Closedown
07/05/2025	Talk Talk Business	DD	29.63	Pavilion Broadband
07/05/2025	April Skies Accounting	MT2949	429.25	Internal Audit
07/05/2025	Streetlights	MT2950	28.94	Street Lighting Maintenance
07/05/2025	Unity Trust Bank	DD	11.25	Monthly Bank Charges

07/05/2025	Cambridge Building Society	Transfer	50,000.00	Transfer within FSCS Limit
07/05/2025	Nationwide BS 35 dn	Transfer	20,000.00	Transfer within FSCS Limit
07/05/2025	CCLA Public Sector Deposit Acc	Transfer	10,000.00	Transfer within FSCS Limit
07/05/2025	Employees	MT2951	5,267.27	Salaries
10/05/2025	BT PLC	DD	28.64	Office Mobile
10/05/2025	N.E.S.T. Pension Scheme	DD	701.74	Pension Contributions
14/05/2025	KCC (KCS)	DD	126.95	Photocopier
15/05/2025	Hugo Fox	DD	11.99	Monthly Website Subscription
20/05/2025	EDF Energy	DD	595.71	Pavilion Energy
20/05/2025	HMRC	MT2948	1,562.86	Income Tax and NI
27/05/2025	UK Debt Management Office	DD	17,814.77	PWLB
28/05/2025	Veolia	DD	332.22	Waste and Recycling
30/05/2025	BT PLC	DD	74.56	Office Phone and Broadband

25/102 Update on Vacancies on the Council

There were two existing vacancies with a further vacancy when Cllr Lyle steps down at the APM. It was hoped the APM would attract new applicants. Cllr Curry agreed to write an article with the Assistant Clerk (CB) to put in the village magazines encouraging residents to respond.

25/103 Annual Parish Meeting (APM) 2025

- Councillors were reminded of their obligation to attend.
- Cllr Lyle agreed to host the meeting, and a run-through would be carried out on 12th May.
- Members voiced sadness that Alan Ford had passed away before being able to receive the KALC award. It was hoped a fellow member of EWG would receive the award post-humously on his family's behalf.

25/104 Speldhurst Chapel Project

An update on the project had been provided and circulated.

Cllr Rowe had attended the site recently and noted that work had progressed quickly and that currently the new shop was on track for an Autumn opening.

25/105 Planning Committee – Report provided by Cllr Cleaver, Planning Chair: A meeting had been held on 14th April and the minutes circulated.

25/106 Langton Green Recreation Ground (LGRG) and Pavilion

- An update on the Community Hub had been circulated.
- Shared matters with Langton Green Community Sports Association (LGCSA): There was nothing to report.
- To consider the renewal of the Community Hub (CH) Hire Agreement:
 - It was **RESOLVED** to offer the CH a further 12-month hire agreement starting 1/8/2025 based on the terms set out in the draft hire agreement.
 - The Pavilion Working Group had recommended following best practice by conducting an informal tender process in the manner of an “invitation to offer” for any future licence-based occupation starting 1/8/2026. While there were differing opinions regarding the value of proceeding without clarity on LGCSA's future intentions, councillors reached a consensus in favour of moving forward with the tender process.

- To consider the increase in charges for the hire of the Pavilion: It was **RESOLVED** that a flat increase to £22.50 ph for general hire and the introduction of a regular hire fee of £16.88 (a 20% reduction on the full hire fee) which included the Café proprietor, plus a utilities surcharge of £5 and a cleaning surcharge where applicable, would be implemented.
- To consider the cleaning costs of the Pavilion: It was **RESOLVED** to approve an increase to £23 ph plus materials.
- It was **RESOLVED** to establish a Pavilion Licence Committee with immediate effect with the Terms of Reference as circulated. It was **RESOLVED** to appoint the following councillors as members of the committee: Cllrs Curry, Dickens, Leach and Rowe.

25/107 Chair's Report

This item would be removed from future agendas.

25/108 Diary Dates – The following dates were noted:

- 12th May – Planning Committee
- 19th May – Annual Parish Open Meeting – ASVH – 7pm
- 2nd June – Full Council – LGVH

25/109 Items for Information

- Cllr Lyle said that school holidays should be considered when organising the rota for chairing Full Council.
- Cllr Ellery advised that he had attended the Speldhurst Village Hall Trustees' meeting and APM. They now have a nursery school open every day in the main hall which was accepting applications for pre-school children. A grant request for replacement decking may be submitted at a later date.

Members then proceeded to thank Cllr Lyle who would be stepping down from SPC after nearly ten years as a councillor and had provided invaluable advice and support during that time including chairing various committees and as Vice-Chair.

Appreciation was also expressed to Cllr Curry for his energy, enthusiasm and calm dedication whilst chairing SPC. Cllr Curry would remain a member of SPC, chairing the Planning Committee amongst other things.

There being nothing further to discuss, the meeting closed at 9.29 pm.

Chair