

Local Government Act 1972



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

**Minutes of a Finance and Governance Committee Meeting held on
Monday 21st July 2025 at 7.30pm in the
Parish Council Office, Langton Green Recreation Ground**

MEMBERS PRESENT

Cllrs Rowe (Chair), Cleaver, 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).

1. Election of Chair

RESOLVED that Cllr Rowe is appointed Chair of the Finance and Governance Committee.

2. Election of Vice-Chair

RESOLVED that Cllr Cleaver is appointed Vice-Chair of the Finance and Governance Committee.

3. 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 Committee meeting.

4. To receive and approve apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Tarricone (work commitments).

5. Disclosures of Interest

Councillors' ongoing disclosures were noted:

Cllrs Ellery and Rowe have shares in the original Speldhurst shop and post office.

6. Declarations of Lobbying

There were none.

7. Minutes

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Finance Committee meeting dated 10th March 2025 and the Governance Committee meeting held on 28th April 2025, copies having previously been forwarded to Members, be approved and signed as a correct record.

8. Public Open Session

There were no members of the public present.

9. Review of Action Points

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

10. Finance Items

a) Interim Payments

Unity Trust Bank: £451.20 3 Counties Grounds Maintenance for monthly ground maintenance; £204 Mulberry & Co for Salary Administration.

Mastercard: £9 Monthly Credit Card Charges; £6.40 Wickes for Fly/Wasp spray.

No items were made under delegated power.

b) Financial position to review expenditure vs budget (including Pavilion) at 30th June 2025

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

c) Budget Virements

There were none.

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. The Clerk explained that the recently approved transfer of funds from the Nationwide Building Society Account had been a lengthy process, therefore, in order to test the withdrawal process it was **RESOLVED** to approve the transfer of £5,000 from the CCLA account into the Unity Trust Bank account.
- **To note that VAT claims will now be made quarterly rather than six-monthly** – The Clerk reported that, on the recommendation of the Internal Auditor, VAT claims would be made quarterly rather than six-monthly. A claim had been submitted on 1st July for the period 1st April – 30th June 2025 for £3,786.48.

e) Committee and Working Group expenditure

- **To consider the replacement of 3 of the parish council's defibrillators** – The Clerk reported that 3 of the parish's defibrillators were all approximately 10 years old and the main battery life expectancy was 10 years therefore replacement was recommended. The purchase of replacement defibrillators had been budgeted for. An application had been submitted under the British Heart Foundation scheme, the outcome of which was still awaited; however, successful bids were primarily aimed at placing defibrillators in areas that currently do not have one and assessment was based on local need. In the event that the bids are unsuccessful, it was **RESOLVED** to authorise expenditure of up to £4,000 for the purchase of 3 defibrillator units at a cost of £950 each, plus the cost of electrical installation.

f) Grant requests

- **St Mary's Church, Speldhurst** – **RESOLVED** that a grant of £1,000 be paid to St Mary's Church, Speldhurst for the purposes of annual churchyard maintenance.

- **St Martin's Church Ashurst – RESOLVED** that grants of £1,000 and £500 be paid to St Martin's Church, Ashurst, for the purposes of annual churchyard maintenance and towards the cost of the Ashurst Broadsheet, respectively.
- **Air Ambulance Charity Kent Surrey Sussex** – While councillors fully recognise the vital work carried out by the Air Ambulance and acknowledge its value, funding is limited and the council has agreed to prioritise support for local charities that directly benefit parishioners, in line with grant guidelines. It was therefore **RESOLVED** not to award a grant to the Air Ambulance Charity Kent Surrey and Sussex.

g) Update on the Speldhurst Chapel PWLB – Councillors noted the repayment schedule.

11. Governance Items

a) Governance Checks – The Clerk reported that the monthly checks were up to date. Cllr Curry had carried out the June check. The Clerk would contact councillors to arrange the following months' checks.

b) Internal Auditor (IA)

- **To consider the reappointment of the Internal Auditor – RESOLVED** – that the Council reappoints Mike Platten of April Skies as the Internal Auditor for the financial year 2025–2026, having considered and confirmed his independence from the Council and his competence to carry out the role, in accordance with proper practices.

The Clerk noted that although the appointment was previously approved at Full Council in May, the formal engagement letter had now been received and was recorded here for confirmation.

c) External Audit (Forvis Mazars LLP) – The Clerk reported that the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) had been submitted on 13th June ahead of the deadline and confirmation of receipt had been received.

d) Insurance Policy – The Clerk reported that four insurance companies were approached for quotes for both 1 year and 3-year terms. Three companies responded including the incumbent, Zurich Municipal. The quotes from the two new companies were not as comprehensive as Zurich Municipal and did not include all the insurable events requested by Speldhurst Parish Council (SPC). After careful consideration it was **RESOLVED** to renew the parish council's insurance policy for a further three years with Zurich Municipal at a cost of £4,162.30 for the first year from 1 August 2025.

e) Review of Fixed Asset Register – The Clerk reported that the Internal Auditor had recommended that fixed assets valued under £500 did not need to be included in the Fixed Asset Register. The register would be updated when time allowed in advance of the next audit.

f) Photographic record of assets – There was nothing new to report.

g) Risk Assessments for Committees – Councillors noted the risk assessments that had been completed for Oak Tree, Orchid and Pocket Parks, together with the updated CCTV risk policy, as requested at the last Governance Committee meeting.

h) CCTV – To consider the replacement of the cameras at the Pavilion – The Clerk reported that the council's CCTV provider, WJ Sunstone, had advised that the 4 cameras at the Pavilion had

deteriorated since last year and they had recommended their replacement. Councillors therefore **RESOLVED** to approve the acceptance of the quotation for the replacement of 4 CCTV cameras at the Pavilion at a cost of £2,090.50, including VAT.

- i) **Councillor Vacancies** – The Clerk reported that in addition to the current 3 councillor vacancies, Cllr Jade Dickens had now formally resigned from the parish council due to the ongoing issues surrounding the pavilion.

- j) **Committees** – Cllr Turner advised that he would be proposing at the forthcoming Environment Working Group (EWG), that the EWG be merged into the Amenities Committee, due to the current councillor and staff shortages.

k) **Policies**

Financial Regulations – The Clerk reported that the Model Financial Regulations had been updated to take account of The Procurement Act 2023 and The Procurement Regulation 2024, which came into effect earlier this year. Amendments were also required to reflect the new Finance and Governance Committee. Councillors therefore **RESOLVED** – to recommend to Full Council the approval of the amended Financial Regulations.

Standing Orders – The Clerk reported that amendments were required to reflect the new Finance and Governance Committee. Councillors therefore **RESOLVED** – to recommend to Full Council the approval of the amended Standing Orders.

l) **Terms of Reference**

Environment Working Group – deferred.

Amenities Committee – deferred.

- m) **New legislation re UK GDPR and Data Protection** – Assertion 10 for 2025/26 AGAR to consider the appointment of the Clerk as Data Protection Officer (DPO) – The Clerk reported that, having attended a webinar on new UK GDPR/Data Protection relating to the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR), she had learned that Parish and Town Councils were exempted from requiring a DPO (section 7 of the Practitioners' Guide), which councillors noted.

n) **Staff Members**

Staff Vacancy – The Clerk reported that both Assistant Clerks had now formally handed in their notice due to the ongoing issues surround the pavilion. She will be considering whether it would be more effective to merge the two roles into one position or to retain them as two separate part-time posts. Councillors said they would support her decision.

Staff Training – There was nothing to report.

12. Items for Information

- SPC – TWBC Assets
- CCLA Monthly Updates – noting change of corporate ownership.
- PWLB Audit Statement
- Practitioners' Guide 2025
- Date of forthcoming meetings:
 - Monday 8th September 2025 – Cllr Cleaver gave his apologies for this meeting.
 - Monday 25th November 2025 – budget setting meeting.

There being nothing further to discuss, the meeting closed at 8.28pm.

Chair

Finance Committee Action Points

Action Number	Action	Owner	Date created	Status
1/25	When precept is received, transfer funds into Cambridge/NW BS up to the £85k limit plus a further amount into CCLA leaving sufficient funds in Unity to pay monthly invoices and direct debits.	Clerk	10/03	Complete
2/25	Virement from General Reserves to Pavilion Maintenance and Playground Renewal/Repair EMRs before year end and report at next FC meeting for retrospective approval.	Clerk	10/03	Complete
3/25	Include Financial Regulations on the agenda for the next Finance Committee Meeting.	Clerk	10/03	Complete
4/25	Include Transparency Code on website, subject to further comments from the Governance Committee and clarification from the Internal Auditor re the Fixed Asset Register.	Clerk	10/03	Complete
5/25	Confirm and pay a grant of £250 to the Tunbridge Wells Counselling Centre.	Clerk	10/03	Complete
6/25	Explore the following training: • Conflict Resolution • Website Accessibility Refresher • Cyber Security	Clerk	10/03	In progress

Governance Committee Actions

Action No.	Action	Owner	Date created	Status
17/24	Book onto data protection refresher training course. <i>TWBC too busy but have given link to free ICO training.</i>	Clerk	22/04/24	In progress TWBC not possible
2/25	Seek quotations for insurance renewal.	Clerk	27/01/25	Complete
6/25	Organise Governance Checks.	Clerk	28/04/25	Complete
7/25	Send Internal Auditor Report to Governance Committee.	Clerk	28/04/25	Complete
8/25	Send AGAR to Governance Committee for review prior to June FC.	Clerk	28/04/25	Complete
9/25	Obtain an updated copy of the risk policy from the CCTV provider	Clerk	28/04/25	Complete
10/25	Include salary review; committee structure and membership; policies and terms of reference on FC agenda for approval.	Clerk	28/04/25	Complete
11/25	Update bank signatories.	Clerk	28/04/25	Complete
12/25	Book onto cyber security training.	Clerk	28/04/25	TBA
13/25	Include breakdown of work on website and at the APM.	Clerk	28/04/25	Complete
14/25	Recruitment drive for more cllrs – positive focus, quotes from new cllrs, share info.	ALL	28/04/25	Complete

Finance and Governance Committee Action Points

Action Number	Action	Owner	Date created	Status
	NEW	Clerk	21/07	
1/25	Arrange withdrawal of £5,000 from CCLA.	Clerk	21/07	
2/25	Process the purchase of 3 new defibrillators.	Asst Clerk	21/07	
3/25	Pay grants to the following: St Mary's Church, Speldhurst and St Martin's Church, Ashurst. Notify Air Ambulance their grant application was unsuccessful.	Clerk	21/07	
4/25	Arrange the following Governance Checks: July – Cllr Rowe, August – Cllr Turner, September – Cllr Cleaver	Clerk	21/07	
5/25	Confirm acceptance of insurance policy with Zurich.	Clerk	21/07	
6/25	Review fixed assets to remove those items under £500 and include in an inventory list.	Clerk	21/07	
7/25	Confirm acceptance of replacement CCTV cameras with WJ Sunstone.	Clerk	21/07	
8/25	Update Financial Regulations and Standing Orders on website and in councillors' folder.	Clerk	21/07	