



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

**MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 1<sup>st</sup> June 2020 at 7.30pm  
CONDUCTED ONLINE VIA ZOOM ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION**

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**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Cllrs Barrington-Johnson (Chairman), Milner, Mrs Podbury, Mrs Soyke, Mrs Lyle, Mrs Woodliffe, Ellery, Rowe, Turner, Pate, Scarbrough and Rajah

**OFFICERS PRESENT:** Mr C May – Clerk, Mrs K Harman – Assistant Clerk and Mrs C Barrett – Admin Assistant

**IN ATTENDANCE:** County Cllr McInroy and Borough Cllrs Stanyer and Ms Willis

**MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC:** There was one member of the public present.

**20/86 Welcome by the Chairman:** Cllr Barrington-Johnson welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**20/87 To enquire if anyone intends to record the meeting:** No-one present intended to record the meeting.

**20/88 To accept and approve apologies and reasons for absence:** There were none.

**20/89 Disclosure of Interests:** There were none

**20/90 Declarations of Lobbying** Cllr Pate and Cllr Mrs Podbury had been lobbied by members of the public regarding planning application **20/00972/FULL**.

**20/91 Minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> May 2020** – It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on **4<sup>th</sup> May 2020** be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**20/92 Borough and County Councillors' Reports**

Cllr McInroy advised the following:

- KCC had been granted £8m to spend on Highways by central government. Cllr Stanyer said he understood that TWBC's share would be £135,000 which was disappointing, the assumption being the grant would be divided equally between the twelve boroughs. Cllr McInroy will investigate.
- Tunbridge Wells Waste and Recycling Centre had re-opened and the booking system was going well.
- He was interested to hear how the re-opening of schools had gone so far.

Cllr Stanyer advised the following:

- Some shops would be re-opening on 15<sup>th</sup> June following the latest government guidance with many safety measures being put in place such as automatic doors and one-way systems. RVP will be limited to 500 people at a time.
- TWBC's budget was tight following a reduction in parking revenue but was slowly starting to increase again. £1.2m had been granted by Government to reduce the deficit.
- A recent fire in Sevenoaks waste centre meant waste collection lorries had been diverted to North Farm causing queues and delays however Urbaser had caught up on collections over the weekend.
- The demand for Covid-19 related services like food parcels had dropped and some staff have been diverted back to their original jobs.
- He anticipated a slow return to normal council life with committee meetings proposed in the next two weeks.

Cllr Willis reported the following:

- She had been liaising with the Planning department over an application in Speldhurst.
- 97% of eligible businesses applied for grants and had been paid.
- TWBC were now expected to plan their next steps for rough sleepers, some of whom were in temporary accommodation at the Russel Hotel.
- There was now a dedicated Covid-19 Committee, with representatives included from parish councils and KCC. The Committee focuses on how to survive these difficult times, help those residents affected, protect the health of Care Workers and prioritise those in need.
- Brighton & Hove buses would resume soon.
- Hospitality and Personal Care would resume no earlier than 3<sup>rd</sup> July and Leisure 4<sup>th</sup> July.

Cllr Soyke reported the following:

- The main road through Bidborough was closed for up to 15 days because of a sink hole which Southern Water was investigating.
- She thanked the Clerk for his actions to get the drains repaired on the A264 between Ashurst and Langton Green.

Cllr Podbury reported that she was a member of the Covid-19 Committee.

**20/93 Public Open Session** – Mrs Ruth Ritson, a resident of Leggs Lane who had experienced flooding during the heavy rains earlier in the year, attended to ask councillors questions regarding the drainage project on the recreation ground. Cllr Barrington-Johnson advised her that recently the level of the swales had been adjusted which it was hoped would help and confirmed that the storm drain which was discovered during the excavation works was being used to assist drainage on the Recreation ground. Cllr Pate explained that following delays due to lockdown, he had spoken to a consultant and a small working party had met earlier that day. It was agreed that after further scoping of the project to address issues identified by SPC, which should also cover points raised by Mrs Ritson, an independent review of works to date would be undertaken. Cllr Pate estimated a six-week turnaround for this. He emphasised that doing nothing was not an option as far as SPC was concerned. Mrs Ritson would update her neighbours and requested the Clerk keep her updated and notified of future meetings.

**20/94 Clerk's Report:** The Clerk referred Councillors to the details in the report he had circulated prior to the meeting.

- Co-option of a new Parish Councillor: An election had not been called and SPC could therefore co-opt - the vacancy period would end on 17<sup>th</sup> June. It was agreed that Cllrs Barrington-Johnson, Milner and one other would carry out the interviews. There had been one application so far.
- At the May Full Council meeting, Councillors had expressed a preference to support local charities and, on this basis, the Clerk and Chairman had made a donation of £500 to TWBC's charity Lend A Hand under delegated authority. Councillors were in support of the donation.
- Staff hoped to return to the office, but they were working the necessary measures that must be taken before doing so.

**20/95 Finance Committee – Report by Cllr Mrs Lyle**

- a) There had not been a meeting of the Finance Committee since the last Full Council meeting and it was anticipated one would be held soon.
- b) Report on Budget Virements – there were none.
- c) Report on interim payments made since the last meeting from UTB: £12,500 to LGCSA; £20,000 re-deposit to HTB; £9.00 to Mastercard and £500\* to Lend a Hand  
From Mastercard: £70.32\* weed killer; £39.73\* strimmer and other tools; £14.39\* Zoom
- d) Report on decisions made under delegated authority – are \* above
- e) Bank Mandates: The Clerk was bringing bank signatories up to date and trying to make the system more efficient by enabling him to speak to the banks on SPC's behalf. It was **RESOLVED** to remove ex-councillors Mr Parker and Mrs Jeffreys as signatories and add Cllr Mrs Lyle and the Clerk as new signatories for HSBC and Cambridge Building Society. Going forward signatories would be Cllr Barrington-Johnson, Cllr Milner, Cllr Mrs Soyke, Cllr Mrs Lyle, and Mr C May.  
The Clerk said that in future third-party payments will only be made from Unity Trust Bank, all other institutions will only pay the UTB account or by cheque payable to SPC. The Financial Standing Orders would be changed to reflect this.
- f) To advise of the upgrade to Zoom and the pricing plan: The Clerk had investigated various options and it was agreed that Zoom would be the most suitable for SPC's use. A monthly premium contract had been taken out under delegated authority by the Chairman and the Clerk.
- g) It was **RESOLVED** to grant St Martin's Church £1,000 towards churchyard maintenance and £600 towards the village broadsheet.

**20/96 Accounts for Payment –**To authorise the payment of invoices as listed

Payee Name	Reference	Amount £	Detail
Viking Direct	MT1813	68.38	Stationery/Masks
M R Lawrence	MT1814	645.00	Mowing and maintenance
KALC	MT1815	60.00	Training
Treework	MT1816	1,128.00	Fell Ash Tree LGRG
BeSure	MT1817	608.40	Annual Maintenance
Speldhurst Village Hall	MT1824	13.23	Meeting Room Feb
Mr L Cooper	MT1825	23.76	Expenses
Mr R Lawrence	MT1826	160.00	Mowing
BT PLC	DD	172.76	Broadband & Tel
EDF Energy	DD	357.00	Pavilion electricity
Catherine Barrett	MT1818	652.08	Salary
Mr L Cooper	MT1819	671.95	Salary
Kate Harman	MT1820	783.00	Salary
C May	MT1821	1,629.27	Salary
N.E.S.T. Pension Scheme	MT1823	167.98	Pension contributions
HMRC	MT1822	2,457.94	Tax and NI
		<b><u>£9,598.75</u></b>	

It was **RESOLVED** to pay the invoices for June and authorise the electronic payments and sign the cheques drawn on Unity Trust Bank.

**20/97 Langton Green Recreation Ground (LGRG)**

- a) To receive a report from the Management Committee: Cllr Mrs Lyle had been speaking to the café proprietor who was about to sign an updated occupational license. They had been looking at the measures needed to re-open Langton Green Pavilion Café using outdoor space and it was decided, by delegated authority, to use money from the Business Support Grant to buy lightweight folding chairs and tables. These cost £280 and were returnable if unsuitable.
- b) Update on the progress of traffic management and parking: This would be reviewed once football had re-started.
- c) To receive an update on the drainage project: There were no further updates.
- d) Recycling: The Clerk said the groundsman had reported that both recycling bins were full. He had asked for collections to re-start as the nursery was re-opening.

**20/98 Parish Council transport:** To consider a vehicle for the use of the Council: The Clerk reported that the Groundsman had recently replaced his private vehicle with a much smaller one which was unsuitable for transporting SIDs and vegetation cuttings. A vehicle was needed as a matter of urgency as the growing season had started if maintenance work was to be carried out. Councillors discussed different options and it was **RESOLVED** that the Clerk and Cllr Pate would investigate both the most efficient short and long-term solutions to provide a vehicle for the Groundsman's use and report to the Finance Committee which is due to meet this month.

**20/99 Request from LGVS to investigate a permanent solution for the annual Christmas tree installation:**

Cllr Barrington-Johnson advised that the current system was not effective, and a suitable alternative needed to be found. It was **RESOLVED** that the LGVS could investigate a permanent solution for the annual Christmas tree installation and report back to SPC.

**20/100 Benches in the Parish – to consider a campaign to repair and replace some of the dilapidated benches:**

The Clerk asked if SPC could investigate the condition of benches throughout the parish, establish costs, ownership and repair/remove where necessary, being sensitive to those which were in memory of a resident. Councillors considered this a good idea and it was agreed the Clerk would make an inventory and report back.

The Clerk reported that Cllr Lyle had left the meeting at 8.25.pm due to family commitments.

**20/101 Chairman's Report - an update report on the Covid-19 issue**

TWBC is considering how to recognise those who had shown outstanding support for their communities during the Covid-19 outbreak. Cllr Barrington-Johnson suggested Councillors send nominations and the reason for the nomination to the Clerk. Cllr Mrs Podbury said the initial idea had been a medal or coin, but there was still discussion about what form the recognition would take. Cllr Mrs Podbury would find out the deadline for nominations and if it was sooner than the next Full Council meeting, The Clerk, Chairman and Vice-Chairman decide who to nominate from the shortlist.

TWBC had continued to alert Cllr Barrington-Johnson and the Clerk of individuals in the parish who needed support with shopping and prescriptions while self-isolating. They had then passed their details on to the village support groups in Langton Green and Speldhurst.

Cllr Barrington-Johnson had been made aware of households in the parish who were struggling financially due to the impact of Covid-19. The Church had been supporting certain people by donations and crowdfunding, but money was running out. It was **RESOLVED** that SPC would donate specific one-off amounts to church funds in the parish to help its churches continue to support households experiencing financial hardship. The first payment would be £800 to All Saints Church and further information was awaited from Speldhurst and Ashurst.

Cllr Barrington-Johnson concluded that despite government guidelines for social-distancing relaxing, we were still some way from a return to normality and should continue to use Zoom meetings in the mid-term.

**20/102 Committee Reports: to include any Committee Meetings held since the last Full Council meeting, the Draft Minutes having been previously been forwarded to all Members**

- a) **Governance** – report by Cllr Milner: There had not been a meeting since last Full Council meeting. The Clerk proposed a meeting in late June/early July to look at a number of issues including the AGAR if he could arrange a remote audit.
- b) **Planning** – report by Cllr Ellery: Cllr Ellery confirmed at the last Planning Committee meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> May that he would be happy to continue as Chairman, having reached the end of his interim period. At this meeting, Councillors considered eleven applications, remained neutral on seven, supported two listed applications to improve, and objected to two. On their decision to remain neutral on planning application **20/00972/FULL**, Seandale, Stockland Green Road, Cllr Ellery said Councillors had agreed the complex calculations that needed to be applied when greenbelt applications did not meet a particular guideline, were best left to the Planning Officer. He said they were further hindered by not being able to visit the property. However, they had submitted a comment requesting that a landscaping scheme was considered properly.
- c) **Highways** – report by Cllr Pate: There had been no meetings since the last Full Council meeting. Cllr Pate said that it has been reported that Burrswood has been sold and he considered it an opportunity to see if S106 money might be available to help fund the improvements on the Hill. Cllr Scarbrough reported that his son had been involved in an accident crossing the A264 from Barrow Lane to Farnham Lane. He was hit by a car and taken by air ambulance for a check-up but was thankfully all right. He brought it to the attention of the Council so that it can take into consideration when looking at future strategies for the road. The Chairman said that during the Covid-19 period less cars meant that some were speeding, and that Speed Watch had not been allowed to be carried out.
- d) **Amenities** – report by Cllr Rowe: There had not been a meeting of the Amenities Committee since the last Full Council meeting and he asked the Assistant Clerk to organise one later this month.
- e) **Air Traffic** – report by Cllr Barrington-Johnson: There was nothing to report.
- f) **Footpaths** – report by Cllr Milner: A resident of Danemore Farm had improved access for walkers by cutting up trees which had been blocking the footpath and Cllr Milner would install a metal gate. Cllr Podbury had reported seeing posters on a recent woodland walk which invited walkers to report problems with the footpaths to KCC – a similar system would be considered for Speldhurst parish. A resident had compiled a list of local walks and it was agreed this would be put on the village and SPC websites for residents' use.

At 9.30pm the Chairman requested permission to continue the meeting which was agreed.

- g) **Environment Working Group**: There was nothing to report.
- h) **KALC**: There was nothing to report.

**20/103 Other matters arising from the minutes of 4<sup>th</sup> May 2020**: There were none.

**20/104 Diary Dates**: Planning Committee Meeting: Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> June at 7.30pm.

**20/105 Items for Information**

- The Clerk reported that the stallholders of a mini market which had been running in Fordcombe asked if they could operate in Langton Green Village Hall Car Park on Saturday mornings. The Clerk would find out more about what this would involve.
- Cllr Rowe said that Groombridge Post Office was due to close in September and the Parish Council was asking for an increase of £30,000 on their precept to fund one in the Parish Offices.
- Cllr Mrs Woodliffe commented that with some of Langton Green Primary School's pupils returning to school, there would be more footfall around the village hall. The FA had also issued guidance on grassroots football, which was likely to increase the groups of people using the recreation ground.

There being no further items the meeting closed at 9.40 pm.

**Chairman**