

Local Government Act 1972



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

Minutes of the Full Council Meeting

Held at 7.30 pm on Monday 7th July 2025 at Ashurst Village Hall

MEMBERS PRESENT

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

OFFICERS PRESENT

K Neve, Clerk and C Barrett (CB), Assistant Clerk (minutes).

IN ATTENDANCE

County Cllr Moreland was in attendance. Cllrs Sharratt and Sankey had sent apologies, as both were attending a Borough Council meeting where findings of the Royal Victoria Place Shopping Centre public consultation would be discussed.

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were 8 members of the public present.

25/130 Election of Chair

In the absence of a permanent Chair, Cllr Rowe was elected to chair the meeting.

25/131 To enquire if anyone intends to record the meeting

The Chair advised that the Clerk had started an audio recording, which would be used to ensure the 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.

25/132 To accept and approve apologies and reasons for absence.

Apologies were received from Cllr Tarricone (work-related). The Clerk said that Cllr Norton would likely be late or unable to attend as he was traveling back from a holiday.

25/133 Disclosure of Interests

Councillors' ongoing disclosures were noted:

Cllrs Curry, Ellery, and Rowe had shares in the Speldhurst shop and post office.

25/134 Declarations of Lobbying

Cllr Curry had been lobbied about planning application 25/01292/Full – Ingleside, Ferbies, Speldhurst.

25/135 Minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 2nd June 2025 – RESOLVED to approve that the minutes, previously forwarded to Members, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

25/136 Public Open Session

Thijs Bax (Planning Agent) and Paul Lavendar (Highways Consultant) were attending to speak about planning application 25/01292/FULL – Ingleside, Ferbies, Speldhurst, and the proposed traffic calming measures relating to this application.

Thijs Bax spoke on behalf of the applicant, explaining that an application for the erection of four homes on the site of Ingleside was in progress. He was mindful of comments on the planning application portal about associated traffic calming measures and access onto Langton Road, and the street lighting needed to facilitate this, and Paul Lavendar would give more details about the scope of these intended calming measures. Thijs Bax said it had also been noted that the development should respond to the architectural style typical of the area. The application had been amended to reduce the height of dwellings, and the scheme had been rationalized to include more landscaping and green features. He emphasized that the plan was not to deliver low-quality housing, but to set a precedent for the proposed development on site 231 on the land behind, which was part of the Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC) local plan.

Paul Lavendar spoke on behalf of the applicant relating to the associated traffic calming measures. He said the proposal to use chicanes to reduce speed down to the 20mph speed limit would not need street lighting. It would rely on using reflectors and signage to warn motorists. He added that the proposed chicanes should avoid the need to remove significantly more hedges around the entry point to the site on Langton Road in order to provide enhanced visibility splays. If the application was approved, it would undergo a full safety audit by an independent auditor. The highway improvements would be developer-funded, and Kent County Council (KCC) would supervise.

Cllr Curry reported that he had raised the application with TWBC councillors because the parish council Planning Committee had never seen an application with a highways plan attached to it before. Borough Cllr Sankey then called in the application and requested it be put on hold while the highways plan was investigated. Now, KCC Highways had responded and explained their role in assessing the Highways Plan, and the hold had been removed.

A local resident asked if there had been any response on the traffic emerging from the site. Paul Lavendar said the measures would be adequate for through and emerging traffic, and KCC was content that the application was unlikely to worsen traffic on the road. They had made some recommendations, and Paul Lavendar had incorporated these into a drawing which would be added to the application. He confirmed there would be one additional junction.

Councillors expressed concern that the highways plan did not account for the congestion on this stretch of Langton Road, which was as much, if not more, of an issue as speeding, particularly at Speldhurst Primary School drop-off and pick-up time. There was no evidence in the application that the traffic calming positioning would ease congestion problems around Speldhurst Primary School, and there was concern that, if anything, this would be made worse. A local resident added that priority would be given to traffic heading out of the village towards Langton Green. It should already have that, and this would only exacerbate the situation. Furthermore, it was not yet known where the entry and exit points would be for site 231, the land proposed for development as part of the local plan.

Councillors urged Thijs Bax and Paul Lavendar to visit Langton Road at school drop-off and pick-up times to understand the congestion issue fully and to actively engage with Speldhurst Primary School. Thijs Bax said the primary school had not responded to an invitation to attend the meeting, but he would be very happy to contact them directly.

Two members of the public, Thijs Bax, and Paul Lavendar left the meeting at 8.03 pm.

James Bowdidge, of Langton Pavilion Community Hub, stated that the Community Hub had thus far declined to renew their hire agreement. The parish council's suggestion of going out to tender had been the last straw for everyone who had worked hard to build the Hub. He added that the Hub was the only stakeholder contributing financially to the pavilion. The hire renewal terms were agreed but the key issue the Hub wanted the council to grasp was the relationship with Langton Green Community Sports Association (LGCSA). The Hub was keen to work with LGCSA and the parish council to find solutions to bring in more income, while further building the community use of the pavilion, for example, looking at ways to use half of the building currently given over to unused changing rooms. James Bowdidge concluded that it would be great to all work together and find ways to generate income, but there was an issue that must be resolved, and if the parish council did not act, the Hub would reluctantly walk away.

James Ponsford, Chair of LGCSA, was present to listen but did not wish to speak.

Cllr Rowe thanked the speakers for their contributions and said he would bring the item relating to Langton Green Recreation Ground forward for discussion following county and borough councillor reports.

25/137 Borough and County Councillors' Reports

Borough Cllr Sharratt had emailed her report, as summarised by the Clerk:

- Cllr Sharratt had received good news about ongoing water quality testing on the River Grom by Project Ripple Effect. After much lobbying, Southern Water had placed a camera in the river and found that a large building had been mistakenly emitting sewage for some time. This issue had now been dealt with.

County Cllr Moreland:

- Several KCC committees were now up and running. The Environment and Transport Committee would sit in July, and Cllr Martin Brice (Tunbridge Wells South) would sit on the committee. Mike Martin MP had also asked Cllr Brice to act as a 'Traffic Tsar' for Tunbridge Wells with the aim of working with KCC and utility companies to coordinate and streamline future road works more efficiently.
- TWBC would allocate a £25,000 road safety grant to each parish with funds from Public Realm 2 enforcement penalties on Mount Pleasant.
- Broomhill Bank School was looking to increase its number of students by 20-25. It was anticipated that there would be an increase of approximately 7 private hire vehicles using Broomhill Road at drop-off and pick-up times. The school would also adjust its admission criteria. Broomhill Road would close between 8th and 31st August.
- Local government reorganisation – Cllr Moreland encouraged Members to engage with TWBC and the Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC) for clarity on its role in any future restructuring.

Cllr Rowe brought forward the agenda item relating to Langton Green Recreation Ground for discussion.

25/138 Langton Green Recreation Ground (LGRG) and Pavilion

- **To receive an update on the Community Hub** – An update about the Hub's activities had been circulated. The Clerk reminded councillors to let her know if they wished to attend the July community lunch by the following Wednesday.
- **To review and vote on a revised set of terms covering access and use of the pavilion by Langton Green Community Sports Association (LGCSA), as a basis for discussion with LGCSA** – After much discussion it was **RESOLVED** to approve the proposal to adopt a set of terms covering LGCSA's access and use of the pavilion that would be the basis for future discussions. The new terms continue to recognise the past contribution of LGCSA to the pavilion while being compliant with the legal arrangements. Importantly, the terms provide greater certainty of the availability of the pavilion for additional hires to increase revenue opportunities. The terms agreed are:

- SPC will offer free access and use of the pavilion on Saturday and Sunday, 08.00 – 13.00.
- SPC will offer free access and use of the pavilion for specified dates agreed between SPC and LGCSA, e.g., football fiesta.
- SPC will continue to offer free access to the Rec for their sporting activities, but without any obligation on SPC's part to provide an enhanced playing surface.
- At all other times, LGCSA can access and use the pavilion, if available and without priority, by making a booking in the normal way via the booking system and paying the same reduced frequent hirer rate as paid by the CH.
- SPC is not required to consult or obtain LGCSA approval in any matters relating to the pavilion, although SPC commits to engaging with LGCSA when appropriate, but will always retain the final decision-making authority.

James Bowdidge, Emma Howden, and Mark Gamble left the meeting at 8:50pm.

- **Responses to Social Media – to allow councillors to express any views and decide on any specific course of action** – It was agreed that the parish council would continue to use Facebook as a means of sharing useful information with residents. It was also agreed that the parish council should not use Facebook to engage over issues or respond to posts. Residents who wished to ask questions or express concerns should contact the Clerk or come to a public Full Council or committee meeting. A post to this effect had been 'pinned' to the top of the parish council Facebook page and shared on various community group pages.
- It was **RESOLVED** to approve the quotation, totalling £393.60 (including VAT) for remedial works on the emergency lighting and fire alarms at the Pavilion from Ashford Security following their annual maintenance visit.

James Ponsford left the meeting at 8:56 pm.

25/139 Clerk's Report

- **New Office Broadband and Phone Contract** – The previous broadband and phone contract with BT ended on 8th June 2025. Cllr Curry had assisted in securing a significant saving by switching to TalkTalk Business. The previous month's invoice from BT was £82.48, and the new contract with TalkTalk Business was set at £32.95 per month on a 24-month agreement, with a one-off activation charge of £9.95, increasing to £35.95 per month on 01/03/26 and £38.95 per month on 01/03/27.
- **Social Media** – The Clerk reminded councillors that they represented the parish council when commenting on parish matters and asked them to remember not to engage in backwards and forwards exchanges over social media.
- **Councillor Holiday Dates** – The Clerk reminded councillors to advise her when away so that the dates could be put in the shared calendar.
- **Staff Absence** – The Assistant Clerk, Kate Harman, was on annual leave until 9th July. The Clerk was on annual leave from 11th to 18th July and 26th to 29th August. The Assistant Clerk, Catherine Barrett, was on annual leave from 14th to 18th July. Her last day working for the parish council would be 5th September.
- The Clerk had circulated the Economic Development slides and information on grants from the Parish Chairs' meeting on 17th June.
- Broomhill Bank School was consulting on expanding its number of students from 318 to 490. The deadline for responses was 18th July.

25/140 General Matters – Actionable tasks that do not fall to a committee.

All items were either in progress or complete.

	Existing	Owner	Created	Status
25/25	Transfer funds into savings account when precept arrives.	Clerk	07/04/25	Complete

26/25	Share councillor vacancies with organisations eg WI, U3A, LGVS, Thrive, Schools etc.	Clerk	07/04/25	Complete
27/25	Send invitations for APM. Councillors to pass on suggestions of invitees.	Clerk/Cllrs	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	In progress
32/25	Set up rota of councillors to chair future Full Council meetings.	Clerk	06/05/25	Complete
33/25	Amend Terms of References for committees to reflect reduction in number of meetings.	Clerks	06/05/25	Complete
34/25	Include Annual Return item on June FC agenda.	Clerk	06/05/25	Complete
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	Complete
36/25	Notify staff and payroll of pay award.	Clerk	06/05/25	Complete
37/25	Respond to Little Birches Nursery's request for higher replacement fence.	Asst Clerk (KH)	06/05/25	Complete
38/25	Include links regarding Air Traffic Groups on website.	Asst Clerk (CB)	06/05/25	Complete
39/25	Carry out virements from General Reserves to EMRS.	Clerk	06/05/25	Complete
40/25	Confirm Community Hub renewal.	Clerk	06/05/25	Complete
41/25	Establish review process for Community Hub.	Pav WG	06/05/25	In progress
42/25	Confirm increased charges for Pavilion and update website.	Asst Clerk (CB)	06/05/25	In progress
43/25	Establish Pavilion Licence Committee and confirm ToFR.	Clerk	06/05/25	In progress
44/25	Include/update Council Policy for use of council land on website.	Clerk		Complete
45/25	Update residents on Groombridge Green re mowing of the Green.	Clerk/Cllr Norton	02/06/25	Complete
46/25	Include Annual Return on website and notice board and submit to external auditor.	Clerk	02/06/25	Complete
47/25	Respond to LGVS re hanging baskets.	Clerk	02/06/25	Complete
48/25	Remove Air Traffic item from future agenda.	Clerk	02/06/25	Complete
49/25	Add Cllr Turner as bank signatory.	Clerk	02/06/25	Complete
50/25	Transfer funds if necessary to Unity Bank Trust.	Clerk	02/06/25	Complete
51/25	Confirm renewal with Cloudy IT and pay invoice.	Clerk	02/06/25	Complete
52/25	Set up working group of councillors to look at next year's APM and potential change of focus. Contact other PCs on theirs.	Clerk	02/06/25	In progress
53/25	Organise for councillors to attend next Community Lunch.	Clerk	02/06/25	Complete
	New	Owner	Created	Status
54/25	Write to Chair of LGCSA regarding revised set of terms.	Clerk/Cllr Rowe	07/07/25	
55/25	Advertise job vacancy.	Clerk	07/07/25	
56/25	Write to solicitors regarding Pavilion.	Clerk/Cllr Rowe	07/07/25	
57/25	Include insurance renewal on Fin & Governance Cttee agenda.	Clerk	07/07/25	
58/25	Update Terms of Reference on website and Cllrs' folder.	Clerk	07/07/25	

59/25	Complete Local Government Reorganisation Survey.	Clerk/Cllr Curry/Cllrs	07/07/25	
60/25	Accept quotation from Ashford Security for remedial works at Pavilion.	Clerk	07/07/25	

25/141 Committees and Working Groups (WG) and other Reports: to include any meetings held since the last Full Council meeting, the draft minutes having previously been forwarded to all Members

- a) **Highways Committee** – The Clerk reported there had been no meeting; a meeting was scheduled for September. Cllr Norton and Cllr Turner would meet with the Clerk and Assistant Clerk (CB) the next day to discuss Highway Improvement Plan (HIP) items for the grant funding.
- b) **Amenities Committee** – Cllr Turner. There had been no meeting.
- c) **Environment WG (EWG)** – Cllr Turner, Chair. There had been no meeting; a meeting was scheduled for 23rd July.
- d) **KALC (Kent Association of Local Councils)** – Cllr Curry reported that the prospect of Government devolution had led to many Kent parish councils looking into assets in their parish which were currently owned by their borough council. The recreation ground at Southwood Road, Rusthall, located within the boundary of Speldhurst parish, was currently owned and maintained by TWBC. Cllr Curry said it would be advisable to talk with Rusthall Parish Council and raise this with TWBC. Although devolution was likely to be some time away, Cllr Rowe said the parish council should be cautious about taking on any more land.

25/142 Finance and Governance Committee – Report by Cllr Rowe. There had been no meeting.

- a) The detailed budget reports were noted.
- b) Report on interim payments made since the last meeting:
Unity Trust Bank: £75.31 Castle Water DD for Pavilion water; £293.18 DD Unity Trust Credit Card Payment; £849.08 DD NEST pension; £331.86 DD Veolia Waste Management; £12.45 DD Unity Trust Bank Account charges; £54 Knock Out Print for Notice; £3,052.80 Cloudy IT annual subscription; £16.63 Langton Green Village Hall for room hire; £2,877.60 The Living Forest for tree and pond management works; £60* Barnard Pest Control for wasp nest removal; £82.48 DD BT for office phone and broadband; £480* Ashford Security for Pavilion Alarms and Lighting Contract.
Mastercard: £9 DD card charge; £4.98* Trade Point for electrical socket for Pavilion; £24.16* BP for petrol for machinery; £36.81* LG Service Station for fuel for van.
- c) The decisions made under delegated authority, starred above, were noted.
- d) **Renewal of Insurance Policy** – It was **RESOLVED** to delegate authority to the Finance and Governance Committee to vote on the Clerk's recommendation regarding the renewal of the council's insurance policy at the next committee meeting on 21st July. The reason for this decision was that insurance companies had been slow to respond to the Clerk's request for quotations, and the current insurance policy expired before the next Full Council Meeting. If a sufficient number of quotations to make a comparison and compile a shortlist had still not been received in time for the Finance and Governance Committee meeting, it was resolved to delegate further authority to the Vice-Chair, Cllr Rowe, and the Clerk to make a final decision on which policy to go for.
- e) **Staff Vacancy** – The Clerk had worked closely with the Assistant Clerks, Kate Harman and Catherine Barrett, to identify the type of work and working hours required from the new staff member who would be recruited to replace Catherine Barrett. They had agreed that the parish council should advertise for a Parish Council Administrator, who would work 3 more hours a week but on a slightly lower salary. The current workload would be allocated between the new administrator and the remaining clerks. It was **RESOLVED** to approve this proposal, and the Clerk could now go ahead with advertising the vacancy. It was further **RESOLVED** to approve Cllrs Curry, Rowe, and Dickens to jointly interview prospective candidates who had successfully passed a first interview with the Clerk and Assistant Clerk, Kate Harman. Cllr Turner would act as back-up for the second interview.
Cllr Cleaver thanked Catherine Barrett for her hard work and led a round of applause.
- f) **To consider the amended Terms of Reference (ToR) for all committees and working groups** – It was **RESOLVED** to approve amendments relating to those committees where a reduced number of meetings per year had been agreed.

The Clerk would amend the reference to a Pavilion Management Group to a Pavilion Working Group in the Amenities ToR, and the final bullet point in the Finance and Governance ToR.

- g) It was **RESOLVED** to approve a spend of up to £2,500 on further legal advice on the ownership of the Pavilion building.

25/143 Accounts for Payment

It was **RESOLVED** that the invoices as listed below and checked by Cllr Dickens be paid.

Date	Payee	Reference	Amount	Transaction
08/07/2025	Ashurst McDermott Hall Sports	MT2972	60.00	Hire of Village Hall
08/07/2025	Mrs M Logan	MT2973	34.50	Pavilion Cleaning
08/07/2025	The Living Forest Ltd	MT2974	464.40	Clearance of Fallen Tree
08/07/2025	M R Lawrence	MT2975	350.00	Mowing and Strimming
08/07/2025	Agrifactors (Southern) Ltd	MT2976	840.00	LGRG Pitch Maintenance
08/07/2025	JLM Pest Control	MT2983	230.00	Quarterly Pest Control
10/07/2025	Parish Online	MT2977	240.00	Mapping Software
10/07/2025	BT PLC	DD	28.64	Office Mobile
10/07/2025	Talk Talk Business	DD	29.63	Pavilion Broadband
14/07/2025	KCC (KCS)	DD	126.95	Quarterly Photocopier Rental
15/07/2025	Tivoli	MT2978	162.20	Canine Waste Removal
15/07/2025	Seal Calibration Ltd	MT2979	500.40	AED Health Check x 3
15/07/2025	Hugo Fox	DD	11.99	Monthly Website Subscription
15/07/2025	Unity Trust Mastercard	CreditCard	75.05	To bring balance to zero
17/07/2025	Castle Water	DD	80.54	Pavilion Water
20/07/2025	Viking Direct	MT2980	161.94	Stationery and Pav Toilet Roll
20/07/2025	EDF Energy	DD	790.74	Pavilion Electricity
20/07/2025	Employees	MT2981	5,831.34	Salaries
20/07/2025	HMRC	MT2982	2,139.31	Tax and NI
28/07/2025	Veolia	DD	262.48	Waste and Recycling Removal
31/07/2025	Unity Trust Bank	DD	12.60	Bank Charges

25/144 Update on Vacancies on the Council – There were 3 vacancies to fill. The deadline for residents to call an election for the latest vacancy was on 16th June; with no election called, a co-option notice had been posted on 17th June, and the deadline for applications was 7th July. The Assistant Clerk, Catherine Barrett, had dedicated the parish magazine articles to councillor vacancies and published multiple posts on the website and social media. There had been no applications so far.

25/145 Speldhurst Chapel Project – An update had been circulated. Cllr Rowe said the building works were progressing well, and he would visit the site the following Friday.

25/146 Planning Committee – Report provided by Cllr Curry, Planning Chair. A meeting was held on 16th June, and draft minutes circulated. Cllr Curry said there was nothing of note to report.

25/147 Local Government Reorganisation Survey; to consider the council's response – It was **RESOLVED** to delegate authority to Cllr Curry and the Clerk to take on responsibility for completing the survey. Cllr Curry would email a summary of its contents to councillors.

25/148 Diary Dates

- 14th July – Planning Committee meeting
- 21st July – Finance and Governance Committee meeting
- 23rd July – EWG meeting
- Rota for Chairing Full Council Meetings:
 - **August** – Simon Norton
 - **September** – Rebecca Leach
 - **October** – Giles Littlefield
 - **November** – Jade Dickens
 - **December** – Richard Ellery TBC
 - **January** – Domenico Tarricone
 - **February** – John Turner
 - **March** – Paul Curry

25/149 Items for Information

- **Notice of the Submission of the Southborough and High Brooms Neighbourhood Development Plan** – Regulation 16 Consultation from 11th June to 25th July 2025
- **Police Chief Inspector Andy Brittenden** – Sent an email thanking Speed Watch volunteers
- **KALC News** – The KALC June and July newsletters (circulated)
- **Parish Chairs Agenda and Minutes** – The agenda for the parish chairs' meeting on 17th June and the minutes from the previous meeting (circulated)
- **Adult Social Care Prevention Framework Consultation** - Kent County Council consultation on the draft Adult Social Care Prevention Framework, deadline for responses 14th July 2025 (circulated)
- **CAGNE Gatwick** – June and July Bulletins (circulated)
- **Gatwick Area Conservation Campaign ("GACC")** – Newsletter (circulated)
- **Royal Victoria Place Survey** – Update documents (circulated)
- **Email re Cycling and Scootering to and from School** (circulated)
- Cllr Turner informed Members that there would be a discussion at the next EWG meeting about whether to merge the EWG with the Amenities Committee.

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

Chair