

Local Government Act 1972



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

**Minutes of a Finance Committee Meeting held on
Monday 18th March 2024 at 7.30pm in the
Parish Council Office, Langton Green Recreation Ground**

MEMBERS PRESENT

Cllrs Ellery (Chair), Cleaver and Rowe with Lyle (ex-officio).

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no members of the public present.

OFFICERS PRESENT

Mrs K Neve – Clerk and Mr C May – Responsible Financial Office (RFO).

1. 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.

2. To receive and approve apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Davies and Tarricone (prior commitments). Apologies were also received from Cllr Curry (ex-officio) (prior commitment).

3. Disclosures of Interest

There were none.

4. Declarations of Lobbying

There were none.

5. Minutes

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Finance Committee meeting dated 20th November 2024, copies having previously been forwarded to Members, be approved, and signed as a correct record.

6. Public Open Session

There were no members of the public present.

7. Review of Action Points

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

8. Interim Payments

Unity Bank: £43.79 Castle Water DD for Pavilion Water; £1,1f85.61 KCC for Replacement SID Post in Groombridge; £30.45 Unity Trust Bank Charges; £136.99 Unity Trust Mastercard; £46.25 Langton Green Village Hall for Room Hire; £84* KALC for Planning Conference; £65.55* Mrs K Harman Expenses; £64.35* Mrs C Barrett Expenses; £41.40* Mrs K Neve Expenses.

Mastercard: £9 Unity Trust Monthly Credit Card Charges.

Starred items were made under delegated power.

9. Clerk's Report

The Clerk reported that the bank reconciliations were up to date and had been checked and signed by a councillor which was noted by the committee, as required by the Internal Auditor.

The Clerk had been notified of several price increases which the committee noted (including EE (office mobile), Tivoli (dog waste emptying) and Rialtas Cloud (accounting system)).

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC) had indicated that the Council Tax bills did not permit any other information so it would not be possible to show the PWLB (Public Work Loan Board) for Speldhurst Chapel separately.

Councillors noted the reassurance from the Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC) regarding Kent County Council's (KCC) financial situation.

10. Financial position to review expenditure vs budget at 29th February 2024:

Summary sheets and detailed reports had been circulated prior to the meeting. The Clerk said that the figures included payments up until 13th March. The committee reviewed the figures which were in line with expectations.

11. Financial position to review expenditure for the Pavilion at 29th February 2024

Summary sheets and detailed reports had been circulated prior to the meeting. The Clerk reiterated that there was going to be a deficit this year which would exceed the money in the Ear Marked Reserves (EMR) Pavilion account. In addition to using the Pavilion EMR, the deficit could be reduced further by using the remaining funds in the contingency budget of £9,300. This would leave a deficit of £6,181. The overall budget has a surplus of £6,162 which balances the deficit on the Pavilion. This will mean that there will be no impact on General Reserves.

Next year it has been budgeted for a £9,960 overspend because no income had been budgeted for. The income to be received from the Community Hub and other hirings will offset this and possibly exceed this.

12. Budget Virements

RESOLVED – That the following virement be made:

£8,943 from Pavilion EMR to General Reserves.

The Clerk would seek retrospective approval from Full Council for the above virement and in addition, the virement from Highways EMR for the payment of the replacement SID post (£988.01). The Clerk reported that the insurance company had confirmed settlement.

It had been suggested that a further virement of £9,300 be made from contingency to Pavilion. This money will be left in the contingency account and will transfer to General Reserves at the close of the year.

13. Banking and reserves – to consider the present banking arrangements.

The Clerk confirmed that all accounts were within the Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS) protection limit. The Clerk presented a report on research into savings accounts available but many restricted access to the funds and did not provide a substantial increase in interest rates to the accounts currently held. The Chair asked the Clerk to investigate longer term investment options with Hampshire Trust.

It was **RESOLVED** to recommend to Full Council that an EMR set up for the Langton Green Village Hall grants (£25,000) which had already been approved.

14. Committee and Working Group expenditure – to consider expenditure recommended by committees and working groups and be notified of expenditure made under delegated authority. To make recommendations to Full Council where necessary.

RESOLVED to renew CPRE membership at a cost of £60 and delegated authority be given to the Clerk for the annual renewal.

15. To review the following policies:

- **Financial Regulations** – The Internal Auditor had advised that NALC (National Association of Local Councils) was going to issue an updated template for Financial Regulations this year so the committee decided to wait until this was available. It was noted that although still valid the references to the RFO would need to be changed after April 2024. The Clerk was asked to confirm with the Internal Auditor that this was acceptable.
- **Internal Financial Control System (IFCS)** – The Clerk asked councillors whether they were comfortable that babysitting expenses were included in the IFCS despite the guidance from KALC that there should be a full allowances policy. Councillors agreed that as this was covered by the IFCS and they did not want to preclude future councillors from joining the council if they were not able to make a babysitting claim for attendance at evening meetings should it be needed. The Clerk reported that no claims had been made to date.
- **Grant Awarding Guidelines** – The Clerk reported that the guidelines were not due for renewal until 2026 but asked councillors to consider including the following wording at the end of the guidelines: “The successful applicant will promote the fact that SPC has contributed towards the project, where appropriate.”

16 Grant Requests

- **Update on Speldhurst Community Shop PWLB (Public Works Loan Board)** – Cllr Rowe, who was leading the project for SPC, had reported to Full Council on 4th March that SPC had made an offer of £300,000 for the Chapel to the owners which had been accepted. The approval for the PWLB expires end of January 2025 and the loan would not be drawn down until all parties were ready to complete. The RFO was asked to find out the current interest rates for the PWLB.
- **We are Beams** – providing support services to families of children and young people with physical, learning or sensory impairment. The Clerk would ask We are Beams to demonstrate clear local benefit, the number of local families supported and whether the training would be held in the Tunbridge Wells area. Subject to satisfactory clarification, it was **RESOLVED** by a majority to grant £250 to We are Beams.

17 Staff and Training

The training costs for the Assistant Clerks were noted.

18 Items for Information

Date of forthcoming meetings:

- Monday 24th June
- Monday 23rd September
- Monday 25th November

There being nothing further to discuss, the meeting closed at 8.57pm.

Chair

Finance Committee Action Points

Action Number	Action	Owner	Date created	Status
30/23	Amend Fin Regs 6.5 to be non-specific and submit to FC for approval.	Clerk	20/11	TBA
01/24	Contact insurance company re replacement SID post.	Clerk	18/03	
02/24	Contact TWBC re precept separation.	Clerk	18/03	
03/24	Ask George Mercieca if he can help with potential future maintenance costs for the Pavilion.	Clerk	18/03	
04/24	Request FC to authorise virement from contingency to Pavilion.	Clerk	18/03	
05/24	Ask FC to authorise virement from Pavilion EMR to General Reserves.	Clerk	18/03	
06/24	Ask FC to authorise retrospective virement from Highways EMR.	Clerk	18/03	
07/24	Contact Hampshire Trust to see if they can offer a better interest account and put on FC agenda for authorisation.	Clerk	18/03	
08/24	Ask FC to authorise a new EMR for the LGVH grants.	Clerk	18/03	
09/24	Look at current interest rates for PWLB and inform councillors.	Clerk/RFO	18/03	
10/24	Notify We Are Beams regarding their grant request subject to seeking further clarification.	Clerk	18/03	