

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 3rd June 2024 in the Committee Room at Speldhurst Village Hall

MEMBERS PRESENT

Councillors Curry (Chair), Cleaver, Dickens, Ellery, Leach, Lyle (Vice-Chair), Rowe and Tarricone.

OFFICERS PRESENT

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

IN ATTENDANCE

Borough Councillor Sharratt was in attendance. Apologies had been received from County Councillor McInroy and Borough Councillors Britcher-Allan and Sankey.

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were 3 members of the public present.

24/110 To enquire if anyone intends to record the meeting

The Chair read out the following statement:

We have a computer here taking an audio recording of the meeting, which is used to ensure our minutes are accurate. The recording will be stored at least until the minutes have been finalised, then disposed of per our data protection guidelines. As with most council-held data, as per guidance from the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), the recording is considered publicly accessible information, so please consider this a 'hot microphone', as anything you say may be picked up by it and held on an inspectable record.

24/111 To accept and approve apologies and reasons for absence.

Apologies had been received from Cllrs Davies (personal reasons), Norton (holiday), Muress and Turner (family commitments).

24/112 Disclosure of Interests

Councillors' ongoing disclosures were noted:

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

24/113 Declarations of Lobbying

There were none.

24/114 Minutes of the Annual Statutory Full Council Meeting held on 7th May 2024

RESOLVED that the minutes, previously forwarded to members were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

24/115 Public Open Session

No one wished to speak.

24/116 Borough and County Councillors' Reports

Borough Councillor Sharratt introduced herself to those who had not met her. She reported that Cllr Nancy Warne had been made Mayor and Cllr David Osborne, Deputy Mayor of Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC). Cllr Sharratt advised that she had been appointed as a Cabinet Member for Carbon Reduction and Sustainability. Her final duty as a Cabinet Member of the Transportation Board before stepping down had been to write to Kent County Council (KCC) Highways and Transport Cabinet Member Neil Baker stating the case for a 40-30mph speed reduction in the A264 Langton Road.

Cllr Sharratt said she was passionate about the environment and climate change, and informed members that a new document on AONBs had been produced. Once finalised this would become a material planning consideration. This could be read on the High Weald Website.

There had been no further update on the indecent exposure incidents on Rusthall Common.

The Clerk read out the following updates from County Cllr McInroy and Borough Cllr Britcher-Allan:

County Councillor McInroy – Cllr McInroy was trying to engage with an appropriate highways engineer to visit and advise on some Highways Improvement Plan (HIP) items, as agreed with the parish council's Highways Committee at their last meeting.

Borough Councillor Britcher-Allan – Work continued to push KCC to look into a speed reduction on the A264 Langton Road, from 40 to 30mph.

Cllr Britcher-Allan was back on the Planning Committee and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The disabled parking bay at the top of Rusthall High Street outside St Paul's Church centre had been repainted and would become an enforceable blue badge holder-only parking spot enabling access to the high street facilities and walking paths on the Commons.

Rusthall Common's all-access path had been extended to meet up with Tea Garden Lane.

There was to be a clean-up and litter pick of the cold bath area on Tunbridge Wells Common outside The Forum on Saturday 1st June. Any interested volunteers could meet at 10.30 am at Fir Tree Road car park.

24/117 Chair's Report

Cllr Curry had been away and had nothing to report.

24/118 Clerk's Report

- All parish and town councils had received an email inviting them to order a free framed Portrait of HM King Charles for display in public buildings. The Clerk would ask the village halls if any of them would like to display the portrait.
- There had been bees flying in and out of the holes in the metal tubes on the climbing frame at Langton Green playground. The pest control company advised that these were solitary bees that sought out small holes to make individual hives but were not aggressive. They advised closing the playground temporarily, and sealing the holes so the bees would look for alternative accommodation. The bees had eventually dispersed, and the playground re-opened.

- It had been necessary for the CCTV maintenance company to install a new monitor due to a fault. The CCTV engineer had carried out a full maintenance check and was satisfied that the CCTV cameras themselves were recording as usual. He added that the cameras around the Pavilion may need changing in the next financial year. The Clerk would submit a more detailed report at the next appropriate meeting.
- The following had taken place or were in progress:
 - AGAR sent off to External Auditor
 - EICR testing at the pavilion
 - Repairs to Pavilion windows
 - Cleaning of the Changing Rooms at the Pavilion
 - Induction of new parish councillor
 - Defibrillators booked in for servicing

The Clerk would be on annual leave from 5th – 10th June and the Assistant Clerks would be available to help with any issues.

24/119 General Matters – Actionable tasks which do not fall to a committee.

Ongoing				
	Summary	Owner	Created	Status
07/24	Set up meeting to discuss ongoing relationship with LGCSA.	Cllrs Davies, Mures, Chris Allen & James Bowdidge	08/01/24	In progress
20/24	Contact TWBC Licensing regarding alcohol licence for the Pavilion.	Clerk	06/02/24	In progress
22/24	Accept quotation for the replacement of rubber matting in junior playground and replacement of spring clamps on Spring Moon at a total max cost of £13,000.	Asst Clerk (KH)	06/02/24	Closed – Re-Tendering in Progress
25/24	Undertake EICR report for Pavilion and provide original certificate.	Cllr Curry/Clerk	04/03/24	Complete
New – Items arising since last Full Council Meeting				
	Summary	Owner	Created	Status
37/24	Update the following (on website where applicable): Committee membership (tbc at 1 st cttee meeting) Risk Assessment AGAR submission and Inspection Period Statement of Internal Control Standing Orders Internal Audit Terms of Reference	Clerk	07/05/24	Complete
38/24	Transfer funds into new, Hampshire Trust account.	Clerk	07/05/24	Complete
39/24	Inform Payroll and Staff of pay awards.	Clerk/Chair	07/05/24	Complete
40/24	Transfer funds from Cambridge BS to Unity Trust Bank account (£20,000 per month for 3 months).	Clerk	03/06/24	
41/24	Add Cllr Norton as a signatory on the Cambridge BS account to replace retired RFO.	Clerk/Cllr Norton	03/06/24	
42/24	Allocate £30,680 in accounting system to the Speldhurst Chapel EMR.	Clerk	03/06/24	
43/24	Confirm Cloudy IT Renewal.	Clerk	03/06/24	
44/24	Confirm and pay grant of up to £1,000 to Langton Green Fete on provision of invoices.	Clerk	03/06/24	

45/24	Attend Speldhurst Chapel Project Meeting on 18 th June.	Chair	03/06/24	
46/24	Send SPC response on parking document on 3G pitch application.	Cllrs Curry and Lyle	03/06/24	
47/24	Investigate budget for Utilities.	Clerk	03/06/24	
48/24	Ask each committee/WG to consider the short risk assessments for their specific areas.	Clerk	03/06/24	
49/24	Accept quotation for replacement bollards in the LGRG car park and create a new accounting code under Amenities.	Asst Clerk (KH) and Clerk	03/06/24	
50/24	Circulate to councillors, wording regarding Air Traffic response to be sent to the Telegraph Reporter.	Cllr Tarricone	03/06/24	

24/120 Finance Committee – Report by Cllr Ellery

- There had not been a meeting since the last Full Council meeting.
- There had been no budget virements.
- Interim payments made since the last meeting:

Unity Account

Date	Payee Name	Reference	Amount Paid £	Transaction Detail
08/05/2024	Langton Green Charitable Trust	MT2692	20.50	Room Hire
13/05/2024	Hampshire Trust 95day	Transfer	85,000.00	Unity to HTN 95day acc
15/05/2024	Talk Talk Business	DD	27.54	Pavilion Broadband
16/05/2024	Unity Trust Mastercard	Cred Card	517.95	To bring balance to zero
17/05/2024	Southpoint Electrical Ltd	MT2693	*175.00	Henry Hoover for Pavilion
20/05/2024	Chris May	MT2688	116.88	Salary
20/05/2024	EDF Energy	DD	667.00	Pavilion Electricity
30/05/2024	BT PLC	DD	69.42	Office Broadband and Phone

Mastercard

Date	Payee Name	Reference	Amount Paid £	Transaction Detail
15/05/2024	S J Osborne & Son	MC429	*24.00	Keys for Pavilion Toilets
15/05/2024	Langton Pavilion Café	MC440	*1.00	To check card was working
16/05/2024	Unity Trust Bank	DD	9.00	Credit Card Charges
16/05/2024	Tesco	MC441	*6.80	Postage Stamps for Office

- Decisions made under delegated authority are starred above.
- It was **RESOLVED** to approve the transfer of funds from the Cambridge Building Society into the Unity Trust Bank account (£20,000 per month for the next 3 months).
- It was **RESOLVED** to approve Cllr Norton as a signatory on the Cambridge Building Society account as a replacement for the retired Responsible Financial Officer.
- It was **RESOLVED** to approve the allocation of £30,680 to the Speldhurst Chapel EMR (Ear Marked Reserve). The Clerk would confirm the 2 repayments a year to the Public Works Loan Board (PWLb).
- It was **RESOLVED** to approve the annual renewal of the parish council's contract with Cloudy IT for IT Services.
- It was **RESOLVED** to approve a grant of up to £1,000 to Langton Green Fete, on the provision of invoices, to go towards accessible Portaloos and waste disposal units.

24/121 Accounts for Payment

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

Date	Payee Name	Reference	Amount Paid £	Transaction Detail
04/06/2024	Broxap Ltd	MT2694	477.54	Litter Bin

04/06/2024	Michelmores LLP	MT2695	4,069.98	Speldhurst Chapel Legal Fees
04/06/2024	Brooklynn Monk	MT2696	210.00	Pavilion Cleaning
04/06/2024	John Allard	MT2697	230.00	Repair Pavilion Windows
04/06/2024	JLM Pest Control	MT2698	230.00	Quarterly Pest Control
04/06/2024	M R Lawrence	MT2699	835.00	Mowing and Strimming
04/06/2024	m:power accounting	MT2700	57.60	Pay Roll Administration - June
04/06/2024	Agrifactors (Southern) Ltd	MT2701	840.00	LGRG Pitch Maintenance
04/06/2024	Langton Life	MT2702	375.00	June/July Advert
04/06/2024	Tivoli	MT2703	140.63	Dog Waste Emptying
04/06/2024	Cloudy IT	MT2706	355.92	Monthly IT Support Services
04/06/2024	m:power accounting	MT2707	57.60	Payroll Administration - July
07/06/2024	N.E.S.T. Pension	DD	623.02	Pensions
10/06/2024	BT PLC	DD	26.93	Office Mobile
13/06/2024	KCC (KCS)	DD	73.57	Photocopier
20/06/2024	Employees	MT2705	6,275.59	Salaries
20/06/2024	EDF Energy	DD	667.00	Pavilion Electricity
22/06/2024	HMRC	MT2704	1,461.20	Income Tax and NI

24/122 Speldhurst Chapel Project

- Cllr Rowe reported that the chapel building was now registered with the Land Registry. An early draft of the lease had now been received.

The sellers had indicated they required 10% of the purchase price to be paid at the point of exchange. On finalising their design plans, the community shop team realised that the storage space originally allocated had not been large enough. It had therefore been necessary to allocate the space intended for the Community Hub to storage. This meant that the charity, which was to be set up to pay for the hub, would not now go ahead. The community shop would resume fundraising on 18th of June. Cllr Rowe estimated that the level of funds available should be known by the 3rd week in July. Hopefully, the same amount of money would be raised as had been pledged. The Elba Charitable Trust had assured that they would give their donation ahead of the fundraising conclusion.

Cllr Rowe estimated that the earliest point at which contracts would be exchanged would be mid-August. This would also be the point at which the community shop would need to sign the lease.

Cllr Rowe invited Mr Edward Pinnell, representing the Chapel Project, to give an update and he reported as follows:

 - Residents would be asked to convert their pledges to money and the final amount should be apparent by the 3rd week of July.
 - The building plans were now finalised and the planning application was on their to-do list.
 - A dedicated community hub space is still part of the building plans but not of the shape and size to allow for the charity application to proceed.
- Cllr Dickens asked if insulation was needed at the chapel, and Cllr Rowe explained that the community shop was fully responsible for the renovations and ongoing maintenance. Cllr Dickens added that she was thinking about the running costs for heating the community shop, and Mr Pinnell replied that the builders for the project had been tasked with insulating the building to make it energy efficient.

Cllr Rowe noted that as the landlord, the parish council had an obligation to ensure a sufficient EPC rating for the chapel building, and he would be grateful for Cllr Dickens's help with this.

Cllr Curry asked if the loss of gift aid that would have been made possible by the charity set-up would impact the total amount raised. Mr Pinnell explained that gift aid had not been factored into earlier projections.

- The parish council expenditure on the project to date was noted as £4,069.98.

24/123 Vacancy on the Council

The Clerk confirmed that despite further advertising no one had expressed an interest in the remaining vacancy. She asked councillors to spread the word among their neighbours and local contacts.

24/124 Appointment of Committee – To confirm committee membership.

Chairs and Vice-Chairs would be confirmed at the first committee/working group meetings. The following changes to committee membership were noted:

- Cllr Dickens would join the Planning Committee and Environment Working Group
- Cllr Norton would join the Air Traffic Committee
- Cllr Rowe would step down from the Planning Committee
- The Clerk asked that those who felt they had the capacity consider joining the Finance Committee. Cllr Curry offered to step down from Planning and join Finance if no one else stepped forward.
- It was noted that Cllr Ellery would like to join the Amenities Committee if a vacancy arose and a councillor from Speldhurst could replace him on the Highways Committee.

24/125 Planning Committee

- Report by Cllr Cleaver – A meeting was held on 13th May and the minutes were circulated. Members had considered 11 applications. They had objected to 3 and remained neutral on the rest.
- An update on the 3G Pitch Application at Langton Green Recreation Ground – Cllr Curry reported that Langton Green Community Sports Association (LGCSA) had submitted a new document to the TWBC planning portal relating to their 3G pitch planning application. This was a letter that had been drafted on 01/11/2019 by Cllr Lyle and signed by Neil Barrington-Johnson, the parish council Chair at the time. It related to 15 additional parking spaces the parish council had investigated creating in response to parking issues caused by weekend football on the existing grass pitches. The parish council had decided not to proceed any further due to cost and demand, however, it had been possible to create 2 or 3 additional spaces by moving storage containers and removing some charity recycling bins.
Initially, this letter had been posted on the portal un-dated, which made it look like a recent commitment by the parish council to provide extra spaces. At Cllr Curry's request, TWBC had added a date to the letter.
It was decided that further context should be added to the portal, and it was agreed that Cllr Lyle would draft this.
- It was **RESOLVED** to approve the Planning Committee Terms of Reference.

24/126 Langton Green Recreation Ground (LGRG)

- An update on the pavilion – Cllr Muress had met with 2 surveyors to show them around the Pavilion to receive quotations for a future maintenance report. One quote had been received and circulated, the second was pending.
- An update on the Community Hub – James Bowdidge had submitted a report on recent activities, and the Hub continued to make positive progress.
- Cllr Lyle noted the low utilities budget and the Clerk said she would investigate further.

24/127 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) **Governance Committee** – Report by Cllr Lyle: There had been no meeting. Cllr Lyle asked that each committee take on a relevant risk assessment for specific areas, to ensure that the parish council complied with best practices. Risk assessments would be distributed to the clerks, who would include them on the agenda for their next committee or working group meetings.

- b) **Highways Committee** – There had been no meeting. The Clerk reported that a lot of work was taking place in the council office. She added that payment for the damaged Speed Indicator Device (SID) pole had been made to KCC instead of the parish council, and she was now trying to recover the money.
- c) **Amenities Committee** – Report by Cllr Lyle. A meeting had been held on 20th May.
- It was **RESOLVED** to approve £5,572.30 expenditure on the first phase of replacement steel bollards for the car park.
 - It was agreed to defer the consideration of quotations provided by the Amenities clerk for replacement rubber matting in the junior playground.
 - Expenditure of £349 for self-closing hinges for the playground, and £388 for an additional litter bin to deal with overflow rubbish on the recreation ground was noted. This came from the committee's budget.
 - It was **RESOLVED** to approve a 'No Horses' sign for Langton Green Recreation Ground.
- d) **Air Traffic Committee** – Report by Cllr Curry. There had been no meeting. Cllr Curry would return the Chair role to Cllr Tarricone for the next meeting. Cllr Tarricone informed Members that a journalist had contacted him to ask his views on Gatwick Airport's northern runway application. After some discussion, it was agreed that Cllr Tarricone would email around a short statement for councillors' approval, before sending it to the journalist on behalf of the parish council.
- e) **Environment WG (EWG)** – There had been no meeting; the next meeting was scheduled for 30th July.
- f) **KALC** – Report by the Chair: The agenda for the next Parish Chairs' meeting (11th June) was in the folder. It was noted that Cllr Curry would be away and unable to attend.

24/128 Diary Dates – The following dates were noted:

5th-10th June – Clerk on annual leave

6th-12th June – Cllr Curry away

15th June – Speldhurst Village Fete – 11am-4.30pm

17th June – Planning Committee

24th June – Finance Committee

1st July – Full Council

6th July – Langton Green Village Fete – 12pm-5pm

24/129 Items for Information:

- Cllr Lyle reported that there had been a request to scatter ashes and add to the plaque on the park bench in Orchid Park, Roopers. It was agreed that this request could be dealt with under the Use of Council Land policy.
- It had been reported that The Green at Langton Green had been identified as a potential site for a telegraph pole. The Clerk would liaise with Open Reach to try and find out more about this.
- It had been agreed that the Community Hub and LGCSA could install hanging baskets outside the pavilion.

There being nothing further to discuss, the meeting closed at 9.04 pm.

Chair