



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

**Minutes of the Highways Committee Meeting held on Tuesday 27th February 2024
In the Parish Council Office, Langton Green**

MEMBERS PRESENT Cllrs Norton (Chair), Turner (Vice-Chair), and Cleaver, with Mr Langridge.

BOROUGH AND COUNTY COUNCILLORS PRESENT: County Cllr McInroy.

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC: There were none.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Mrs K Neve, Clerk and Mrs C Barrett – Assistant Clerk (CB) (minutes).

1. **To enquire if anyone present intends to film, photograph and/or record the meeting**
The Clerk recorded the meeting for administrative purposes.
2. **To receive and approve apologies and reasons for absence**
Apologies were received from Cllr Ellery (work) and Cllr Muress (on holiday). Cllr Norton reported that Cllr Dooley had resigned from the parish council and Mr Whittaker had stepped down from the committee, both due to professional and personal commitments.
3. **Disclosure of Interests**
There were none.
4. **Declarations of Lobbying**
There were none.
5. **Minutes of the meeting held on 21st November 2023 – RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Highways Committee meeting dated 27th November 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.
6. **Public Open Session**
There were no members of the public present.
7. **Review of action points**
The action points were reviewed and points 5/23, 12/23, 19/23, 26/23, 29/23, 30/23, 31/23, 32/23, 33/23, 34/23, 35/23, and 36/23 were marked as closed or complete. Points 1 - 12/24 were to be actioned.
8. **Review of Highways Committee's Budget** – to review the expenditure to date.
There had been an expenditure of £55 since the last meeting. A budget of £30,000 was in earmarked reserves for the committee's use. There were currently two potential developments in Old Groombridge

where it would be appropriate to request S106 developer contribution funding, and Cllr Norton said the committee should continue to prepare traffic-calming solutions so that they were prepared when the time came to make these requests.

9. Highways Improvement Plan (HIP) (including consideration of any new issues by village taking into account correspondence, recent accidents, Speedwatch, and media)

a) Ashurst

- **HIP item A3, A264 into Ashurst:** Cllr Norton said that Cllr Tarricone had been unable to progress with Speedwatch due to other commitments. It was **RESOLVED** to agree that Mr Langridge and Mr Barrington-Johnson would run initial Speedwatch sessions in Ashurst. If, after these sessions had gone ahead, Ashurst residents still did not volunteer to help, the Speedwatch item would be archived. The Clerk would advise the Trustees of Ashurst Village Hall and the Assistant Clerk would put this information in the village magazine.

It was noted that the Clerk had chased up with the Community Safety Unit (CSU) at Tunbridge Wells Police, asking them to carry out enforcement sessions in Ashurst and other speeding hot spots in the parish. In addition, Cllr Norton had contacted the Chief Inspector through the contact form on the Tunbridge Wells Police website. His inquiry had been referred to the CSU and he had received a prompt assurance that officers would attend. In these communications, Cllr Norton reiterated that there was both Automated Traffic Count (ATC) evidence from Kent County Council (KCC) and data from Speedwatch that clearly indicated speeding issues in the parish. Members agreed that visible police intervention and the issue of speeding tickets would be a valuable addition to the other measures being planned.

b) Old Groombridge

- **HIP item OG5, B211 Groombridge Hill:** Cllr Norton gave some context to Cllr McInroy about road safety issues in Old Groombridge. The road was used by walkers, cyclists, school, and farm traffic in addition to drivers passing through the village. Kent County Council (KCC) had previously pointed out that there were issues attached to implementing traffic-calming measures in a conservation area.

Cllr Norton had followed up with the Community Engagement Officer at KCC after the last committee meeting. The officer had confirmed that ATC data showed that traffic speeds needed to come down before more significant measures could be considered. He had suggested refreshing the 30mph roundels and clearing vegetation by the 30mph sign, to make it more visible. Cllr Norton had pushed back on the price quoted for this work, and KCC had then agreed to pay out of their highways maintenance budget. The work had now been done and an action point was set for the Clerk to email KCC to thank them. Two new taller 30 mph repeater signs had also been suggested and Full Council had approved the design fee for this.

Cllr Norton said that these measures were helpful but not enough on their own to tackle road safety and speeding issues. He asked Cllr McInroy if he would be able to arrange a meeting onsite at Old Groombridge and other priority locations in the parish, to find out what else they could suggest. Cllr McInroy said that it might take time to arrange but he would investigate finding a senior engineer and/or project manager to visit sites in both Old Groombridge and Langton Green. He would speak to the KCC Highways Manager to identify the right person. Members agreed that it was not always possible to visualize a design solution from a map, but that having an engineer visit these sites in person could be invaluable in establishing what was possible. An action point was set for Cllr Norton to follow up with Mr Myles about Speedwatch sessions.

c) Langton Green

- **HIP item LG9, Speldhurst Road/Lampington Row/Winstone Scott Avenue:** An ATC had shown serious speeding issues on Speldhurst Road in the vicinity of the parish council's proposed pedestrian crossing. The KCC Community Engagement Officer had suggested repainting roundels and refreshing signage. KCC had helpfully offered to meet the design costs of this work. Cllr Norton had replied to say yes to this suggestion and asked what other measures could be suggested.

The Clerk had chased the Schools Travel Planner to find out Langton Green Primary School's travel plan had been finalized. Many of the items included in the plan's first draft had supported the need for a crossing. The Schools Travel Planner had said that it was an essential piece of work in persuading KCC to continue looking at the feasibility of a crossing. The Clerk would follow up again with Cllr Lyle, who was Chair of the Governors at the primary school and had chased the travel plan once already.

There was a question about the ownership of the land outside Courtenwell, where the proposed crossing would be located. The Clerk was waiting to hear from one of the residents about whether they knew who owned it.

Cllr Cleaver said there should be funding for a crossing from central government as part of its active travel initiative. Cllr McInroy suggested liaising with the Economic Development Manager at Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC), and an action point was set for the Clerk to contact her.

The Clerk had chased KCC about barriers at the entrances to Langton Green Primary School on Lampington Row and would follow up again. She noted that despite her continued chasing, progress on this HIP item - the parish council's top priority in their application to KCC - had slowed.

HIP item LG8a, land at Farnham Road under the ownership of Miller Homes/permissive path:

Cllr Turner and Mr Langridge had walked Farnham Lane and noticed the grass verge was slippery underfoot. There was an added danger presented by cars exiting driveways and hitting anyone walking on the grass verge. Cllr Turner felt that legal advice should be sought on the question of liability if the parish council suggested that walkers use the grass verge, and someone then had an accident. It was **RESOLVED** to seek advice from the legal department at KCC on this point and to contact Miller Homes again to clarify their position.

- **HIP item LG10, A264 Langton Road layby outside Cheyne House:** Mr Langridge reported that the planters were due to be installed on the pavement shortly. He added that the parking issue in the layby had improved slightly, thanks to repeated attendance by traffic wardens who had issued a number of fines to repeat offenders.

d) Speldhurst

- **HIP item SP12, Penshurst Road between Northfields and Langton Road:** Cars parked on the bend and at pinch points on the road continued to be an issue. The Assistant Clerk had contacted Hams Travel after social media comments about the regular bus driver of the 285-bus having trouble accessing the bus stop at Southfields. The Assistant Clerk would follow up again with Hams Travel to see if she could meet with the bus driver and look at the parts of Penshurst Road where he had the most difficulty passing. The bus also had difficulty passing parked cars on Speldhurst Road where the road narrowed outside the entrance to Langton Green Village Hall. Members agreed that it was important to avoid losing the 285-bus route to Speldhurst.
- **HIP item SP13, Speldhurst/Etherington Hill:** KCC had confirmed that it would not be possible to site a Speed Indicator Device (SID) at this location. The item would be kept on the HIP until the next meeting and if there were no further updates on speeding or Road Traffic Accidents (RTA's) it would be archived.

10. Non-HIP issues

- **Finger Posts – Broom Lane and Burnt House Lane/Farnham Lane:** The Clerk had received quotes for new posts, which were priced at £400-500 per post. KCC had advised that they were unable to pay for this, but there was a possibility that this might change if their budget increased. Cllr Norton suggested this might be something the Langton Village Society might wish to sponsor given the difficulty of obtaining public funding.
- **The junction of Northfields and St Mary's Lane (village hall side of St Mary's Lane)** had been visited by Cllr Ellery. Despite several road traffic accidents at this location, KCC had said that they could not put up any signs as St Mary's Lane was a private road. They advised that if St Mary's Lane residents undertook to put up signs, they did so at their own risk. An action point was set for the Clerk/Assistant Clerk to write to residents.

- The Clerk advised that double yellow lines had now been painted at the junction of Ferbies and Langton Road.

11. SID Read Outs

The Assistant Clerk had produced reports for the top of Ashurst Hill facing traffic traveling downhill into the village, and the bottom of Groombridge Hill facing traffic coming into the village from the Langton Green direction. It was noted that these reports continued to show speeding issues. An action point was set for the Clerk to ensure that the larger SID was deployed at the bottom of Groombridge Hill for the next round of reporting, as it appeared that the small SID ran out of charge more quickly resulting in incomplete data.

12. Footpaths/Public Rights of Way (PROW) – To receive an update from the Footpaths Co-Ordinator

- Footpath WT431, Groombridge Place – KCC Consultation. It was **RESOLVED** to agree that Cllr Norton would write to the Definitive Map Officer at KCC endorsing the establishment of a new Public Right of Way – numbered WT431 – at Old Groombridge subject to confirmation by Full Council on 4th March.
- The Assistant Clerk had shared a report concerning footpath issues and work undertaken since the beginning of the year. There had been progress on establishing landowner details, and she had been able to connect one landowner with the KCC Public Rights of Way Officer to replace damaged stiles with metal gates and alert another to a fallen tree, which had been removed.

13. Items requiring Full Council approval

Request approval for Cllr Norton to write to KCC endorsing the establishment of PROW WT431.

14. Issues for Communication to the Public

An action point was set for the Assistant Clerk to include a Highways update in the next month's parish magazines.

15. Items for information

- TW Public Transport Forum Meeting – Thursday 28th March 6.30pm.
- KCC's Consultation – Kent Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan.
- TWBC Cycle Route Project (confidential).
- National Highways "Let's Drive Safely" Road Campaign.
- Langton Green Community Sports Association (LGCSA) 3G Pitch Planning Application – highway concerns: Cllr Norton advised that concerns around Highways had been set out by the parish council's Planning Committee.
- Cllr Norton asked Members to look at finding a new Member of the Public to join the committee. While it would be helpful to have someone from Speldhurst or Ashurst, any interested individual with a desire to help improve road safety in the area would be welcomed.
- Cllr McInroy reported that one of KCC's cabinet members was addressing the coordination of planned road closures and emergency road closures by utility companies. For some time, road closures had taken place simultaneously around Speldhurst parish and the wider Tunbridge Wells Borough, leading to considerable traffic delays. It was hoped to find a solution that would prevent these clashes in the future.

There being nothing further to discuss, the meeting ended at 9.14 pm.

Action Points

Action Number	Action	Owner	Date created	Status
5/23	Coordinate volunteers for Ashurst Speedwatch.	Cllr Tarricone	07/03	Closed – not relevant for now
12/23	Provide Ashurst SID data to KCC.	Clerk/Asst Clerk (CB)	06/07	Closed
19/23	Provide SID data to KCC to back up HIP priorities.	Clerk/Asst Clerk (CB)	06/07	Closed
26/23	Two Cllrs to meet Asst Clerk/Cllr Norton on site at Northfields/St Mary's Lane- accidents.	Asst Clerk (CB)	06/07	Complete
29/23	Provide SID read-out for Ashurst and Groombridge for next meetings and include photos of all SID sites.	Clerk/Asst Clerk (CB)	06/07	Complete
30/23	Respond to KCC regarding ATC outcomes in Old Groombridge and Langton Green.	Cllr Norton	21/11	Complete
31/23	Produce a Q&A document to use in conversation with Farnham Lane residents about the informal pathway. Get committee approval before approaching residents.	Cllr Turner/Mr Langridge	21/11	Closed – not relevant for now
32/23	Liaise with Cllr Lyle about LG primary school Travel Plan. <i>She has chased.</i>	Clerk/Asst Clerk	21/11	Complete
33/23	Chase up barriers with KCC and ask zigzag line consultation question regarding Lampington Row. <i>KCC are currently assessing this.</i>	Clerk/Asst Clerk	21/11	Complete
34/23	Investigate cost of repairing finger posts.	Clerk/Asst Clerk	21/11	Complete
35/23	Archive HIP items SP6 and SP7.	Assistant Clerk	21/11	Complete
36/23	Add Speldhurst/Etherington Hill to Speldhurst HIP.	Assistant Clerk	21/11	Complete
1/24	Set up Speedwatch Sessions in Ashurst with Mr Barrington-Johnson.	Mr Langridge	27/02	TBA
2/24	Email KCC to thank them for the work done in Old Groombridge.	Clerk	27/02	TBA
3/24	Identify and ask a senior KCC engineer to meet with the parish council at road safety hot spots in Langton Green and Old Groombridge.	County Cllr McInroy	27/02	TBA
4/24	Contact Economic Development Manager at TWBC about central government funding for active travel initiatives (eg. pedestrian crossing on Speldhurst Road).	Clerk	27/02	TBA
5/24	Follow up with Mr Myles about Speedwatch sessions in Old Groombridge.	Cllr Norton	27/02	TBA
6/24	Follow up on all points relating to HIP Item LG9 – Speldhurst Rd/Winstone Scott Avenue/Lampington Row.	Clerk/Assistant Clerk	27/02	TBA
7/24	Seek advice from the legal department at KCC about grass verges at Farnham Lane, and contact Miller Homes again to clarify their position.	Clerk/Cllr Norton	27/02	TBA
8/24	Chase Hams Travel to ask about meeting the 285-bus driver to look at Penshurst Road.	Assistant Clerk	27/02	TBA

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9/24	Write to residents of St Mary's Lane, Speldhurst asking their thoughts about signage at the junction with Northfields.	Clerk/Asst Clerk	27/02	TBA
10/24	Put Large SID at bottom of Groombridge Hill.	Clerk	27/02	TBA
11/24	Write to the Definitive Map Officer at KCC endorsing the establishment of a new Public Right of Way – numbered WT431 – at Old Groombridge.	Cllr Norton	27/02	TBA
12/24	Write a Highways update for the next parish magazines.	Assistant Clerk	27/02	TBA