

Local Government Act 1972



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

**Draft Minutes of a Finance Committee Meeting held on
Monday 24th June 2024 at 7.30pm in the
Parish Council Office, Langton Green Recreation Ground**

The meeting commenced at 7.34pm to ensure there was a quorum.

MEMBERS PRESENT

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

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no members of the public present.

OFFICERS PRESENT

Mrs K Neve – Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer (RFO).

1. Election of Chair

RESOLVED that Cllr Rowe be Chair of the Finance Committee.

Cllr Rowe thanked Cllr Ellery for his contribution and efforts as Chair over the past 3 years.

2. Election of Vice-Chair

RESOLVED that Cllr Ellery be Vice-Chair of the Finance Committee.

3. 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.

4. To receive and approve apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Davies (family/professional commitments), Tarricone (unwell) and Lyle (ex-officio) (prior commitment).

5. Disclosures of Interest

Councillors' ongoing disclosures were noted:

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

6. Declarations of Lobbying

Cllr Curry had been mildly lobbied on the Speldhurst shop and post office.

7. Minutes

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Finance Committee meeting dated 18th March 2024, copies having previously been forwarded to Members, be approved, and signed as a correct record.

8. Public Open Session

There were no members of the public present.

9. Review of Action Points

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

10. Interim Payments

Unity Bank: £304.02 DD Veolia for Waste and Recycling Collections; £27.54 Talk Talk for Pavilion Broadband; £40.80 Unity Trust Mastercard to bring balance to zero; £60.26 DD Castle Water for Pavilion Water; £720 T Bonard Electrical Ltd for EICR; £375 Ashford Security for annual service and maintenance of emergency lighting, intruder alarm and fire alarm at Pavilion; £816 Langton Green Village Society for Grant for Fete.

Mastercard: £9 Unity Trust credit card charges, £59.57 LG Service Station for Petrol. Starred items were made under delegated power.

11. 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.

12. Financial position to review expenditure vs budget at 14th June 2024:

Summary sheets and detailed reports had been circulated prior to the meeting. The Clerk said that the figures included payments up until 14th June. The committee reviewed the figures which were in line with expectations. The Clerk reported that the outstanding balance for the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) repayment notice for the office building was £10,833.25. The loan ends at the end of May 2026 and the interest is payable twice yearly.

13. Financial position to review expenditure for the Pavilion at 14th June 2024

Summary sheets and detailed reports had been circulated prior to the meeting. The Clerk reported that the Pavilion Utilities budget had been set at £4,000 which was a guesstimate when setting the budget. The monthly direct debit payment is £667 so this code will be overspent at year end. Cllr Curry calculated that the projected energy cost for this financial year based on historic usage and on latest energy charges per the 2-year contract would be approx. £725.

The income from the Community Hub and Pavilion bookings received since they started in October 2023 were noted to give an indication of projected income for the rest of the year. No figure had been put into the budget as it was not known at the time the budget was set whether the Pavilion would be open. An overspend of £9,960 had been anticipated but the income from the bookings would offset this.

14. Budget Virements

There were none.

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

The Clerk confirmed that some bank accounts were slightly above the Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS) protection limit. Cllrs noted this and were satisfied with the current levels which present minimal risk. The terms and interest rates on the current bank accounts were noted.

It had been authorised at the June Full Council meeting to transfer £30,680 into the Ear Marked Reserve (EMR) for Speldhurst Chapel PWLB but agreed that it was not necessary to action now as the funds were already allocated in the budget.

16. Proposed/Planned/Planned Non-repeating Expenditure

This item has been introduced by the new Finance Committee Chair to create a list of potential non-standard or recurring future expenditures above £5,000, for the next 1, 2 and 3 years plus any unbudgeted expenditures identified for the current financial year. Initially the request would go to each committee (principally highways, amenities & pavilion) to provide this information. In effect they should have their own standing agenda item for this and then the Finance Committee would collate and keep track of this so it can be assessed in the context of the overall budget and precept. Full Council would be updated accordingly. .

17. 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.

Councillors noted:

- The Environment Working Group expenditure from funding received.
- The Rialtas Accounting system conversion to Income and Expenditure reporting which would be put on the July Full Council agenda for authorisation (£599 excl VAT).
- The expenditure of £325 (excl VAT) for replacement emergency lighting following the recent annual emergency light service by Ashford Security which had been agreed under delegated authority.

18. To review the following policies:

- **Financial Regulations** – The NALC (National Association of Local Councils) revised Model Financial Regulations had now been issued. The Regulations and had been adapted to suit Speldhurst Parish Council (SPC). **RESOLVED** - That the Finance Committee recommend approval of the updated Financial Regulations at the next Full Council meeting.

19. Grant Requests

- a) **Update on Speldhurst Community Shop PWLB (Public Works Loan Board)** – Cllr Rowe would provide an update on the Speldhurst Community Shop project at the July Full Council meeting. The Clerk reported that the latest interest rate was 5.22% on an EIP (equal instalments of principal) basis. This means the initial annual repayments would be £27,855.05 (£13,000 capital and the rest, interest, which would decrease over time). When this was first looked at, the annual repayments were projected at about £31,500.
- b) **St John's Church, Groombridge** – Towards annual churchyard maintenance. It was **RESOLVED** to approve a grant of £1,000 to St John's Church, Groombridge towards churchyard maintenance.
- c) **St Martin's Church, Ashurst** – Towards annual churchyard maintenance. It was **RESOLVED** to approve a grant of £1,000 to St Martin's Church, Ashurst, towards churchyard maintenance. The applicant had requested £1,500.
- d) **Ashurst Broadsheet** – Applicant requested £800 towards the cost of the production of the Ashurst Broadsheet. This item was deferred for further information and would be included on the July Full Council agenda for a decision.
- e) **Deborah Hargreaves** – Towards the cost of toilets for the Tunbridge Wells Fringe Festival. It was **RESOLVED** to approve a grant of £384 to Deborah Hargreaves towards the cost of toilets for the Tunbridge Wells Fringe Festival.
- f) **St Mary's Church, Speldhurst** – annual churchyard maintenance. It was **RESOLVED** to approve a grant of £1,000 to St Mary's Church, Speldhurst, towards churchyard maintenance.

- g) **Baby Umbrella** – Towards breastfeeding and early parenting support. This item was deferred to the July Full Council meeting for a decision.

20. To consider the insurance renewal quotation

The Clerk reported that the 3-year insurance policy (2022-2025) was due for renewal on 1st August. It was **RESOLVED** to renew the insurance policy with Zurich Insurance at a total cost of £3,569.62 which includes the Pavilion and motor insurance for the SPC van.

21. Governance Risk Assessment – Fraud

This item was deferred to the next Finance Committee meeting.

22. Staff and Training

It was noted that the Clerk would be undertaking future training to assist in the role of Responsible Financial Officer. The following training had been booked:
Introduction to Planning training with the Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC) for new councillor - £60.
VAT training for Clerk through KALC - £30.

23. Items for Information

- Date of forthcoming meetings:
 - Monday 23rd September
 - Monday 25th November
 - Dates for 2025 to be decided in line with the current year’s meetings.
- Cllr Rowe asked for the Finance Committee Terms of Reference to be included on the agenda for the next meeting so that it can be amended to include a statement of purpose of the committee.

There being nothing further to discuss, the meeting closed at 9.32pm.

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. <i>New Regulations.</i>	Clerk	20/11	Closed
01/24	Contact insurance company re replacement SID post. <i>Not necessary as new SID post is not of a higher replacement value.</i>	Clerk	18/03	Complete
02/24	Contact TWBC re precept separation.	Clerk	18/03	Complete

03/24	Ask George Mercieca if he can help with potential future maintenance costs for the Pavilion. Surveyors approached for quotations.	Clerk	18/03	Closed
04/24	Request FC to authorise virement from contingency to Pavilion. Will automatically transfer.	Clerk	18/03	Closed
05/24	Ask FC to authorise virement from Pavilion EMR to General Reserves.	Clerk	18/03	Complete
06/24	Ask FC to authorise retrospective virement from Highways EMR.	Clerk	18/03	Complete
07/24	Contact Hampshire Trust to see if they can offer a better interest account and put on FC agenda for authorisation. New account opened.	Clerk	18/03	Complete
08/24	Ask FC to authorise a new EMR for the LGVH grants.	Clerk	18/03	Complete
09/24	Look at current interest rates for PWLB and inform councillors.	Clerk/RFO	18/03	Complete
10/24	Notify We Are Beams regarding their grant request subject to seeking further clarification.	Clerk	18/03	Complete
11/24	Ask each Cttee/WG to include item on their agenda for Proposed/Planned/Planned Non-repeating expenditure.	Clerk	24/06	
12/24	Add the following on the July Full Council agenda: Expenditure for Rialtas Accounting System Conversion. Financial Regulations. Ashurst Broadsheet Grant Application. Baby Umbrella Grant Application.	Clerk	24/06	
13/24	Confirm and pay the agreed grant applications and update Grants Approved List.	Clerk	24/06	
14/24	Confirm and pay insurance renewal.	Clerk	24/06	
15/24	Add Governance Risk Assessment – Fraud and Terms of Reference to next Finance Committee meeting agenda.	Clerk	24/06	
16/24	Notify Governance Committee to review salaries & pensions and to provide a budget recommendation for the next financial year at their November meeting	Clerk	24/06	