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 5th October 2026 in Speldhurst Village Hall.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Cllr Curry (Chair), Dickens (Vice-Chair), Bains, Barrington-Johnson, Cleaver, Ellery (arrived at 19:32), Farley, Leach, Littlefield, Norton and Turner.
H Chater (Clerk) and S Neve (Deputy Clerk – Minutes).

IN ATTENDANCE

Kent County Council Councillor John Moreland was in attendance.
Apologies were received from Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC) Councillor Standing, Councillor Sankey and Councillor Sharratt.

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There was 1 member of the public, 1 representative from Langton Green Community Sports Association and 1 representative from ACRE.

171/26 TO ENQUIRE IF ANYONE INTENDS TO RECORD THE MEETING

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

172/26 TO ACCEPT AND APPROVE APOLOGIES AND REASONS FOR ABSENCE.

There were none.

173/26 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

There were none.

174/26 RESIGNATION OF THE CHAIR.

It was noted that Cllr Curry would step down as Chair due to his future move from the Parish. He would continue on as a Councillor until this happens.

175/26 ELECTION OF CHAIR.

Cllr Barrington-Johnson has agreed to Chair the Council in the interim while we find a more permanent solution. He noted that he has been Chair of Speldhurst Parish Council for 6 years in the past and would like others to put themselves forward, as it is a rewarding position.

176/26 CHAIR TO SIGN DECLARATION OF OFFICE.

Cllr Barrington-Johnson signed the book.
It was agreed that Cllr Curry would continue to Chair this meeting

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177/26 DECLARATION OF LOBBYING.
There were none.

178/26 MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 7TH SEPTEMBER 2026.
It was **RESOLVED** to approve that the minutes, previously forwarded to members, be confirmed as a correct record and to be signed by the Chair after the meeting.

179/26 TO RECEIVE NOTIFICATION OF THE RESIGNATION OF COUNCILLOR BUTCHER
The Council noted the resignation of Councillor Butcher and were advised that the Council Monitoring Officer had been notified, and the appropriate steps had been taken to declare the vacancy.

180/26 PUBLIC OPEN SESSION
A member of the public raised concerns regarding overgrown hedgerows within the Parish. The member was advised that the Parish Council would report the hedgerows to Kent County Council for their Highways team to investigate and do any required works.

181/26 BOROUGH AND COUNTY COUNCILLORS' REPORTS
Kent County Councillor John Moreland
Reported that the known issues with the HIP Parish grants had been resolved, but advised the Council that the date provided was subject to change.
He also advised of the Bus Stop Grant that has a deadline of the end of October.

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Councillor Sharratt
Cllr Sharratt was absent from the meeting but had provided a written update stating the following;
Southern Water attended the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to discuss wastewater and sewage pollution. It was reported that the company appeared to have a clearer delivery plan than in previous years, supported by significant investment, including £150 million in Tunbridge Wells and a target of reducing storm overflow spills by 91.5%.
Members were also advised that grant funding may be available for Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) projects to help reduce surface water entering the sewer network.
The Council further noted recommendations from the South East Water Task and Finish Group, including the creation of a single point of contact for residents seeking information or reporting issues.
Finally, the Borough Councillor reported on a Safety Audit Walk of sections of the proposed Safer Walking, Wheeling and Cycling Route along Langton Road and Bishop's Down. Poor visibility after dark was identified as a concern, and feedback has been provided to the project team regarding the need for additional lighting.

182/26 CLERKS REPORT
The Clerk reported:

- Installation of bench for resident.
- Installation of dog waste bins delayed due to supplier issues.
- Tree survey completed to be discussed at next Amenities meeting.
- Waiting for installation date for playground matting.
- Defib and Bleed training sessions in November showing good number of bookings.
- Quotes being obtained for replacement of rotting fingerpost opposite The Hare.
- A contact for a deer warden for the Parish has been obtained and filed.
- A poster for recruitment in the lead up to elections has been designed and will be circulated to Councillors for feedback.

183/26 GENERAL MATTERS

The Clerk reported that the actionable tasks which did not fall to a committee had been completed or were near completion.

184/26 COMMITTTES AND WORKING GROUP (WG) AND OTHER REPORTS

a) **Highways Committee**

Cllr Norton noted the date of the upcoming meeting being 26th October. He advised there were many items to be discussed at the meeting for all 4 villages. There has also been a request made by Speldhurst Parish Council to the Kent County Council Highways Definition Team to establish ownership of the road between The Walks and Old Groombridge Green.

b) **Planning Committee**

- **26/02051/FULL – Orchard Cottage, Franks Hollow Road, Speldhurst**
  Proposal: Single storey rear and two storey front extension.
  Decision: Remain neutral, defer to Planning Officer.

c) **Amenities Committee**

Cllr Turner advised that there was an upcoming meeting on 12th October and he would report back to November Full Council meeting.

d) **Environment Working Group (EWG)**

Cllr Turner advised that there was an upcoming meeting on 21st October and he would report back to November Full Council meeting.

e) **Langton Green Recreation Ground Working Group (LGRG WG)**

Kerry from ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England) delivered a presentation outlining the history and role of ACRE in supporting local communities and parish councils. It was explained that ACRE's role is typically that of an independent facilitator, enabling residents to express their views openly without being presented with a predetermined proposal or completed plan.
Members were advised that the purpose of any future survey would be to identify the needs and priorities of local residents, rather than to seek views on a specific proposal such as an All Weather Pitch (AWP). The survey process would focus on understanding how residents wish to use the recreation ground and what facilities or opportunities they would like to see provided.
It was noted that ACRE's role is to listen to residents, gather community views and ensure that all feedback is captured and reported objectively, allowing residents the opportunity to express their opinions and aspirations for the site.

Cllr Farley provided an update on ongoing consideration of matters relating to the Langton Green Recreation Ground.

Members discussed the approach to future public consultation and agreed that it would be beneficial for residents to be presented with clearly defined options, together with the potential benefits, risks and financial implications associated with each. It was noted that the option of taking no action should also be included within any consultation material, with the consequences of that approach clearly explained. Members considered that presenting residents with structured options would enable more informed feedback to be gathered.

The importance of securing broad community engagement was emphasised. Members noted that consultation should utilise a variety of methods, including a household survey, public engagement events, social media and other forms of local outreach, in order to maximise participation and ensure that the Council receives views from as wide a cross-section of residents as possible.

Members discussed the forthcoming information sessions for councillors. It was confirmed that these sessions are intended to provide members with background information and assist their understanding

of the issues prior to consideration by Full Council. It was noted that the Working Group has no delegated decision-making powers and is only able to make recommendations to Full Council.

A concern was raised by Cllr Ellery regarding the transparency of the proposed information sessions and whether they should be held in public. Members noted the concern and agreed that advice would be sought regarding the appropriateness of the proposed arrangements. It was further agreed that Cllr Ellery's concern should be formally recorded in the minutes.

The Working Group also considered options for the distribution of any future consultation materials. Members noted the previous use of Royal Mail's Boundary Match service, which enables consultation documents to be delivered to specified addresses within a defined geographical area. Concerns were expressed regarding unaddressed leaflet distribution services, with members noting the potential for some households to receive materials erroneously while others may be missed. A preference was expressed for an addressed delivery method. It was agreed that further information and updated costings for the Royal Mail Boundary Match service and alternative distribution methods would be obtained and reported back to a future meeting before any decision is made.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- Further work be undertaken on consultation proposals, including the development of potential survey questions and consultation options.
- Advice be sought from KALC regarding the transparency and procedural arrangements for councillor information sessions.
- Updated information and costings be obtained for Royal Mail Boundary Match and alternative distribution methods.
- Recommendations relating to consultation and distribution arrangements be brought to a future meeting of the Council for consideration.

Cllr Norton stepped out of the meeting to take phone call at 20:44.

f) Pavilion Working Group
It was noted that the hire agreement was signed for 3 years with a 6-month break clause.

Cllr Morland, the ACRE representative and the LGCSA representative left the meeting at 20:45.

g) KALC
Cllr Curry advised that there was nothing to report as he had not been able to attend the latest meeting.

Cllr Norton re-joined the meeting 20:46.

166/26 FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
Cllr Cleaver reported that next year's budget is a work in progress and would be discussed in detail at the November Finance and Governance Committee meeting.

a) To note the detailed budget reports.
Councillors noted the detailed budget report in the folder.

b) Report on interim payments made since the last meeting.
There had been no new payments since the Finance and Governance Committee meeting.

c) To note decisions made under delegated authority.
There had been none.

d) Mayor's Toy Appeal – To consider making a donation.
It was **RESOLVED** to approve a £100 donation.

e) **To consider the transfer of funds from the Unity Trust Bank Account into the Savings Account following receipt of the half year precept.**
It was **RESOLVED** that the Clerk/RFO would transfer the funds into CCLA.

186/26 ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT
APPROVED – Cllr Curry had reviewed the payment and completed the Internal Governance Checks. He had asked to see the up to date Legionella reports which he would look at in the coming week.

187/26 AUDITED AGAR 2024-2025
To note the completion letter and notice for the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR). The notice of conclusion had been posted on the website and noticeboard as required by the audit process.

188/26 KALC COMMUNITY AWARDS SCHEME 2026
Noted that the Deputy Clerk was due to attend training for the KALC Community Awards Scheme. Councillors were asked to consider nominations. The award submission deadline is 30th January 2027.

189/26 UPDATE ON VACANCIES ON THE COUNCIL
It was noted that a potential applicant was due to contact the Clerk for more information.
A casual vacancy notice will be posted.

190/26 DIARY DATES

- 12th October – Amenities Committee meeting
- 19th October – Planning Committee meeting
- 26th October – Highways Committee meeting
- 2nd November - Full Council meeting
- 16th November – Planning Committee meeting
- 23rd November – Finance and Governance Committee meeting

191/26 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

- Cllr Norton noted the Councils appreciation for Cllr Curry and all he had achieved for the Parish during his time as Chair of the Council.

Chair closed the meeting at 20:56pm

Chair