



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

**Minutes of a Governance Working Group Meeting held on
Thursday 2nd November 2023 at 7.30pm in the
Parish Council Office, Langton Green Recreation Ground**

MEMBERS PRESENT

Cllrs Mrs Lyle (Chair), Curry, Rowe and Turner.

OFFICERS PRESENT

Mrs K Neve - Clerk

1. To enquire if anyone present intends to record the meeting

The meeting was recorded for the purposes of writing the minutes. The recording would be deleted once the minutes of this meeting have been approved and signed by the Chair.

2. To accept and approve apologies and reasons for absence

Apologies had been received from Cllr Ellery (childcare).

3. Disclosure of Interests

There were none.

4. Declarations of Lobbying

There were none.

5. Minutes

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Governance Committee meeting held on **10th July 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 updated Action Points Table had been shared with councillors. The newly updated list of action points, incorporating the additional actions from this meeting, are shown at the end of these minutes.

8. Review of Internal Audit

- a) **Governance Check:** The Clerk reported that Cllr Turner had carried out the last two Governance checks. Cllrs Rowe and Lyle would carry out the November and December checks respectively.

- b) **Internal Auditor (IA):** The IA would be visiting on 8th November to carry out the interim audit. The Finance Committee had considered the renaming of the Ear Marked Reserves, as recommended by the IA at his last visit on 9th October 2023, which would be reported to Full Council on 6th November 2023.
- c) **Annual Audit (Mazars):** The audited AGAR for 2022/23 was reported to councillors at the 4th September Full Council meeting and the notice of conclusion has been posted on the website and noticeboard as required by the audit process.

9. Risk Management – insurable risk

- a) **Insurance Policy check:** The committee noted that the 3 year insurance policy, taken out in 2022, was renewed on 1st August 2023 and reported to the 7th August Full Council meeting. The increase in cost was clarified by Zurich and reported to the 4th September Full Council meeting. Cllr Lyle expressed her disappointment that there had been a price increase despite being on a fixed term policy; however noted the clarification given by Zurich Insurance.
- b) **Review of Fixed Asset Register:** There was nothing new to report.
- c) **Photographic record of assets:** There was nothing new to report.

10. Risk Management – working with others

- a) **Staff members:** The Clerk reported that the Governance Committee's recommended 7% pay increase for staff, backdated to 1st April 2023, had been approved at the Full Council meeting on 7th August 2023. The previously agreed increase from 5% to 7% employer pension contribution (Full Council minute 22/85 of 4th April 2022 refers) had also been backdated to 1st April 2023. It had been reported at the Full Council meeting on 2nd October 2023 that there were two major projects currently impacting the clerking team's workload, namely the Pavilion Review, pavilion bookings and the Speldhurst Chapel Project, which meant they were beyond full capacity.
- b) **Security**
 - **IT:** The Clerk reported that two-factor authentication had now been enabled on all staff and councillors. The review of how councillors access their emails had been completed and Cllrs Leach and Tarricone were the only two councillors who had expressed interest in using a council owned tablet. Cllr Curry had re-set all the tablets held in the office, two of which had been offered to Cllrs Leach and Tarricone. Cllr Rowe indicated that any new councillors joining the council should be requested to use their own equipment rather than purchasing new or offered one of the existing tablets.
 - **Website:** The Clerk reported that, after free use for some time, Hugo Fox, Speldhurst Parish Council's website provider, had introduced a charge for their website provision. Full Council had approved the purchase of their bronze package at a cost of £9.99 per month, excluding VAT. It was noted that the cookie permission was now in line with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) law.

11. Risk Management – self-management

- a) **Councillor Vacancy:** The Clerk reported that Cllr Scarbrough had resigned at the last Full Council meeting on 2nd October 2023. A notice to fill the casual councillor vacancy by co-option was published on Friday 20th October 2023 and will expire on Thursday 9th November 2023. If no objections are received by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, the vacancy can then be advertised for co-option (for another 14 working days). There is an item on the 6th November 2023 Full Council agenda recommending a working group of councillors to interview prospective candidates is established. Cllr Curry said that councillors should not feel pressured to accept candidates if they were not the right calibre and, if necessary, readvertise.
- b) **Committees:** The Clerk reported that there were a number of committees requiring additional councillors following the recent resignation. An item would be included on the 6th November 2023 Full Council agenda regarding the membership.
- c) **Policies:** There were no policies currently due for review.

12. Items for information

- Cllr Curry reported that:
 - He had received a large number of texts on his personal mobile phone from external parties and he had notified them that any correspondence should go through the Clerk's email address.
 - Now that SPC Pavilion Ltd had been formally dissolved, an application should be made to Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC) for zero rating for the Pavilion. Cllr Lyle asked the Clerk to check with Companies House and HMRC to confirm beforehand.
 - Advice had been sought from the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) following the recent Freedom of Information (FOI) Request received for the Pavilion Review. It was noted that SPC's policy was not to publish FOI responses.
- Cllr Turner commented that SPC should have disaster management in place (eg in cases like the recent storm). The Clerk and Chair agreed to establish a list of emergency numbers and useful contacts (eg UK Power Network, SE Water, Kent Highways etc) to be distributed to councillors.
- Cllr Lyle asked for a reminder from the Governance Committee to be made to councillors to notify the clerking team if they are unable to attend scheduled meetings so that they were able to establish whether there was a quorum for the meetings.

There being no further items, the meeting closed at 8.15pm.

Chair

Governance Committee

Action No.	Action	Owner	Date created	Status
11/23	Produce asset register of I.T. equipment	Clerk/Chair	24/4	In progress
12/23	Investigate the re-naming of accounts containing reserve funds in line with internal audit recommendations	RFO	24/4	Complete
22/23	Organise Governance Checks as follows: July – Cllr Ellery <i>was carried out by Cllr Turner</i> August – Cllr Scarbrough <i>Has now left and the October check was carried out by Cllr Turner</i>	Clerk	10/7	Complete
23/23	Ask Cllrs with SPC tablets if they wish to continue using their tablet and offer to help with log-in on their own device.	Clerk/Chair	10/7	Complete
24/23	Ask Cloudy IT to turn on 2FA for all Cllrs after the August Full Council meeting.	Clerk/Chair	10/7	Complete
25/23	Submit amended Employee Code of Conduct to August Full Council.	Clerk	10/7	Complete
26/23	Include staff salary recommendation on August Full Council agenda.	Clerk	10/7	Complete
27/23	If agreed, notify Payroll of the new salary award – backdated to 1 st April 2023.	Clerk	10/7	Complete
28/23	Check that Payroll have adjusted the pension contribution.	Clerk	10/7	Complete
29/23	Write to employees re new salary following Full Council decision.	Clerk/Chair	10/7	Complete
30/23	Organise Governance Checks as follows: November – Cllr Rowe December – Cllr Lyle	Clerk/Cllrs Rowe and Lyle	02/11	
31/23	Chase Cloudy IT regarding 2FA – requirement to use an App.	Clerk	02/11	
32/23	Ask Finance Cttee to consider additional EMRs for other Amenities items (eg replacement fencing and car park bollards).	Clerk	02/11	
33/23	Apply to TWBC requesting zero rating for Pavilion following dissolution of SPC Pavilion Ltd after checking with HMRC/Companies House.	Clerk	02/11	
34/23	Remove SPC Pavilion Ltd sign from outside the front of SPC Office.	Clerk	02/11	
35/23	Establish List of emergency numbers for disaster management.	Clerk/Chair	02/11	
36/23	Remind Cllrs on behalf of Gov Cttee to confirm their attendance at scheduled meetings or submit their apologies in advance so a quorum can be established.	Clerk	02/11	