



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

**Minutes of a Governance Working Group Meeting held on Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021  
at 7.30pm  
Conducted online via Zoom Electronic Communication**

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**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Mrs Lyle (Chairman), Barrington-Johnson, Rowe, Pate and Ellery as an observer.

**OFFICER PRESENT**

Mr C May – Clerk (CM) and Mrs K Neve – Clerk (KN).

**1. Election of Chairman**

**RESOLVED** – That Cllr Mrs Lyle be re-elected as Chairman.

**2. To enquire if anyone present intends to record the meeting**

There were none.

**3. To accept and approve apologies and reasons for absence**

There were none.

**4. Disclosure of Interests**

Both Clerks declared an interest in item 12a.

**5. Declarations of Lobbying**

There were none.

**6. Minutes**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Governance Committee meeting held on **26<sup>th</sup> April 2021** be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**7. Public Open Session**

There were no members of the public present

**8. Review of WG Terms of Reference (ToR)**

As agreed at the Highways WG and Full Council, it was **RESOLVED** – that the word “committee” be replaced with “working group” was the only change to be made to the ToR. The Chairman and Clerk would also write an appendix stating that while the working group did not have the authority of a committee, it would adopt the same principles, making recommendations to Full Council when it could not operate in the usual way.

## 9. Review of Internal Audit

- a) Check on financial records: The Clerk (CM) reported that a check had been made on the payments made in May by Cllr Rowe. The Clerk (CM) had added the checklist to the Documents Folder.
- b) Internal Auditor (IA): The Clerk (CM) reported that David Buckett had completed his report from his visit in April and it had been circulated to councillors. There were no immediate areas for concern.
- c) Annual Audit (PKF Littlejohn LLP): The Clerk (CM) reported that signed off AGAR form had been received on 16<sup>th</sup> August from PKF Littlejohn. There had been one query regarding the description of a receipt from TWBC from a fund which had been rectified. The Chairman thanked the Clerk (CM) for his work on getting a blank AGAR.

## 10. Risk Management – insurable risk

- a) Policy check: The Clerk (CM) reported that the insurance had been renewed with WPS. The Chairman queried the buildings insurance which referred to an “electrical inspection certificate”. The Clerk (CM) would contact the broker for more information regarding this requirement.
- b) Fixed Asset Register: The Clerk (CM) reported that the Asset Register had been updated to include the SPC van. Cllr Barrington-Johnson suggested that the Clerk (KN) undertake a review of the current value of the assets to make sure they were current market value.
- c) Photographic record of assets: The Clerk (CM) reported that the photographic record of assets was up-to-date.

## 11. Quality Assurance Check

This item was deferred to a future meeting.

## 12. Risk Management – working with others

- a) Staff members:
  - Contracts for Clerks –
    - The Clerk (CM) reported that the Clerk’s (KN) contract needed to be finalised. **RESOLVED** – that Full Council be recommended to approve the inclusion of the following wording in the Clerk’s (KN) contract: “Your pay will be reviewed annually (upwards only) having regard to a) inflation, b) NALC rates and c) increased competence and responsibility”. The Clerk (KN) would aim to start CILCA in February 2022 as part of the contract and would be attending the annual Clerk’s Conference later this month.
    - The outgoing Clerk’s (CM) proposed reduction in working hours was discussed and it was **RESOLVED** – that Full Council be recommended to approve the Clerk’s (CM) request to reduce his working hours as follows: August - 25 hours, September - 20 hours, October - 15 hours and November - 10 hours. A new contract would be drawn up by the Clerk (KN) in October to be submitted to Full Council for approval.
    - The Clerk (CM) reported that the Assistant Clerk (CB) had requested to carry out some extra work outside the SPC work which would not impact on her SPC work. It was also recommended that she become a member of SLCC. Cllr Barrington-Johnson questioned whether her original contract included pension contributions and the Clerk confirmed that at the time she was employed she did not qualify for a pension, but she now does and pension contributions are being made by both employee and employer. Cllr Rowe asked the Clerk (KN) to look into changing the admin@ email address to reflect the Assistant Clerk role. It was **RESOLVED** – that Full Council be recommended to approve the request by the Assistant Clerk (CB) to carry out additional work outside SPC and her membership of SLCC be agreed.

- The Chairman requested that a confidential folder be organised with details of the employees' contracts including the latest updates. The Clerk (CM) said that this would be something that would be done under the new IT system.
  - Groundsman's working hours – The Clerk (CM) requested that consideration be given to increasing the budget for next year to increase the working hours for the Groundsman to cover the summer growing period. **RESOLVED** – that the Finance Committee be requested to increase the budget for 2022/23 to cover an increase in the Groundsman's hours from 1 to 2 working days per week during June/July/ August/ September.
  - The latest ALCC pay increases – The Clerk (CM) advised of the latest pay offer of 1.75% which was to be rejected by 3 unions. The Chairman requested that the Clerk (KN) set up a read only file of employee contracts and updates for members of Governance to access.
  - Delegation of authority to RFO – The Clerk (CM) requested that delegated authority be transferred to the Clerk (KN) and that the credit card be transferred to the new Clerk (KN). The WG agreed that the delegated authority should remain with the Clerk. **RESOLVED** – that Full Council be requested to approve the transfer of the credit card to the new Clerk (KN).
- b) Pensions: There was nothing to report
- c) Security: There was nothing to report.

### 13. Risk Management – self-management

- a) IT – Some Councillors were using the tablets provided by the Council and some were using their own devices.
- b) Committees – **RESOLVED** – that Full Council be recommended to reassign Cllr Ellery from Planning to Governance as Finance Committee Chairman. Cllr Ellery would remain a member of the Planning Committee until the members shielding because of Covid return to physical meetings, but he would only be called if needed.
- c) Policies – Standing Orders – Financial Regulations. There were many changes to be made because of the split role of Clerk and RFO. Preparatory work had been done but there were a number of minor grammatical changes that members required along with further changes to define the role undertaken by the RFO. It was hoped that a revised copy would be available for the September Full Council meeting, however it was agreed that it could be deferred until October if necessary. **RESOLVED** – that Full Council be recommended to agree and adopt the following policies: the revised Standing Orders – Financial Regulations; the revised Environment Policy and the draft policy on the use of Council land.
- The Clerk (CM) reported that a number of policies were due for review at the same time and asked that consideration be given to splitting these up into groups to spread out the reviews, which was agreed.
- The Chairman asked if a file could be made available for all committee/WG ToRs. It was agreed that this would be made available within the new IT system.

### 14. Items for information

The Clerk (CM) requested that the SPC van could be made available for use by other members of the team when not in use by the Groundsman. This was agreed in principle but only in exceptional circumstances and only for emergency use and if the insurance allowed. The Clerk (KN) would investigate.

The meeting closed at 21:10