



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

Minutes of a Governance Committee Meeting held on Monday 9th November 2020 at
1.30pm
Conducted online via Zoom Electronic Communication

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mrs Lyle, Barrington-Johnson, Rowe and Pate

OFFICER PRESENT

Chris May – Clerk

1. Election of Chairman

RESOLVED that Cllr Mrs Lyle was 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

There were none

5. Declarations of Lobbying

There were none

6. It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Governance Committee meeting held on **22nd June 2020** be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman

7. Public Open Session

There were no members of the public present

8. Matters Arising from the minutes

There were no matters arising that were not on the agenda and it was agreed that this heading would be deleted from future agendas

9. Review of Internal Audit

- a) Check on financial records: the checks in 2020 had not been carried out due to the coronavirus outbreak but, because it was going on longer than was envisaged, it was considered that some

checks should be brought back in. The clerk suggested that the invoices could be checked by a councillor, even after payments had been authorised. He would try and send them to a councillor (but not either of the two that had authorised the payments) digitally but if not practical then he would deliver the originals. Cllr Mrs Lyle and the Clerk will discuss what and how other financial checks could be done remotely, for discussion at the next meeting.

It was agreed to explore what checks could be done while in a lockdown scenario and the clerk agreed that the original list needed a review and update.

- b) Internal auditor (IA): Mr David Buckett was due to conduct a six-monthly review on 26th November. During his last audit he noted that SPC had published the unaudited Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) one day late on its website (notice boards were correct).
- c) Annual Audit (PKF Littlejohn LLP): The auditors commented on the AGAR that SPC had incorrectly completed the return. It had completed a “Yes” in the column which asked if SPC had provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors’ rights. Because the unaudited accounts were published on the website one day late it should have answered “No”.

The Governance Committee, on behalf of SPC, acknowledged the error and will try and ensure it does not happen again.

10. Risk Management – insurable risk

- a) Policy check: The policy has been circulated to all members for review and the premium is payable in July. The clerk will add the vehicle insurance in future.
- b) Fixed Asset Register: The register had been updated and agrees with the Insurance documents.
- c) Photographic record of assets: Pavilion contents have now been photographed and will be updated.

11. Risk Management – working with others

- a) Staff members: Staff had been working from home since the coronavirus outbreak and all meetings were being managed via electronic video. The clerk said that while the work was being completed at home it was not comparable to being in an office environment and the latest lockdown had put any move back to office working on hold.
The issue of how to re-open the office and manage social distancing while keeping the environment safe was acknowledged. The committee asked if the staff could produce a risk assessment, based on current rules, to enable this to move forward (once we were allowed to do so)

There was some discussion on how meetings would be held after May 2021 when the current regulations governing council meetings are up for review.

The clerk confirmed that he wanted to leave the role of clerk by November next year and was giving the council one year’s notice for them to organise a replacement. He said that he was willing to stay on as RFO, should it suit the council, working reduced hours of say 10 hours pw. Training was going to be a more difficult proposition if the lockdown scenario was maintained well in to 2021. It was agreed that the search for a replacement would begin after the next meeting which will be held in February by which time the current staff will have been asked if they would be interested in the role. An up-to-date job description was to be produced and an inquiry made into the legalities of advertising the role.

Cllr Rowe asked that the financials be investigated at the next Finance Meeting.

- b) Pensions: There was nothing to add.
- c) Security: There was nothing to add.

12. Risk Management – self-management

Policies:

- Media – input had been received from the two assistants and all amendments accepted. Cllr Rowe asked if it should include a link as to “how to report content” and if it would incorporate the new Breakthrough e-newsletters content. It was suggested it include an extra sentence to say that “any media communication will be compliant with GDPR”
- CCTV – it was agreed to delete the two appendices A&B
- The clerk will also add the Documents policy for approval at Full Council as it was omitted from the July agenda.
- **RESOLVED** that a new section be incorporated under this agenda heading for the future entitled “Quality Assurance Check” and would involve governance/quality assurance checks on SPC’s internal procedures and actions. The Clerk, Cllr Pate and Cllr Mrs Lyle will discuss how to set up and implement this. The first check will be the completion of the CCTV checklist that had featured as Appendix B to the CCTV policy.

13. Items for information

Councillors asked for a new file in the “read-only” file for Governance documents, which would include all useful information such as insurance documents and council policies. Check lists and risk assessments would also be included.

The meeting closed at 3.23pm

Chairman