



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

Minutes of a Governance Committee Meeting held on Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> January 2021 at  
10am  
Conducted online via Zoom Electronic Communication

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**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Cllrs Mrs Lyle, Barrington-Johnson, Rowe and Pate

**OFFICER PRESENT**

Chris May – Clerk

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

There were none

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

There were none

**3. Disclosure of Interests**

There were none

**4. Declarations of Lobbying**

There were none

**5. It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Governance Committee meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> November 2020 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman**

**6. Public Open Session**

There were no members of the public present

**7. Review of Internal Audit**

- a) Check on financial records: a check had been made on the payments authorised at the Full Council meeting in January. The clerk had delivered the papers to Cllr Rowe who had reviewed them. Although this was retrospective he was able to check the online payment instructions. The clerk will send the governance checklist to Cllr Mrs Lyle to see what other checks could be done remotely or safely alone in the office.
- b) Internal auditor (IA): Mr David Buckett had carried out his audit on 10<sup>th</sup> December and his report was reviewed. The report was satisfactory with no immediate issues. He had asked about the implications of Covid and how it had impacted the council, and there was a discussion whether this was a financial concern or how it was affecting the everyday working of

the council and what we were doing to mitigate it. It was noted that every committee reviews its budget at every meeting, which would include consideration of covid impact and related expenditure. Cllr Pate will look in to and suggest a risk assessment for returning to work. The clerk will forward any assessment already started.

The IA also mentioned a Statement of Internal Control (SIC) which some councils produce. SPC has various forms but not the same as the example he supplied. The clerk was asked to prepare a document for the next meeting and check it against the Governance checklist.

It was agreed that on future agendas for all meetings there should be a dedicated agenda item to consider Covid Compliance.

- c) Annual Audit (PKF Littlejohn LLP): There was nothing to report

#### **8. Risk Management – insurable risk**

- a) Policy check: It was noted that the van would need to be insured, added to the Fixed Asset Register and added to the photographic file
- 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 updated.

#### **9. Quality Assurance Check**

This is a new heading and Cllr Mrs Lyle explained that it was to look at broader risks to ensure that SPC is within the law and/or applicable guidelines or regulation and implementing best practice where reasonably possible.

She was concerned that the café has a risk assessment but SPC does not. Regarding CCTV – was the council doing everything correctly? Was it registered properly? Was it handling the Data Protection issues correctly?

Cllr Pate said he would prepare a procedure for the next Governance meeting which should be ready for the Full Council meeting in March to review. Cllr Rowe added that there must be a tangible benefit and it must add value and not just be a box ticking exercise.

The clerk would add LTN 40 to the Full Council file to enable the Documents Policy review to be completed.

#### **10. Risk Management – working with others**

- a) Staff members:
  - Staff appraisals had been completed
  - The clerk had prepared a job description detailing his duties. Cllr Pate would review the description
  - Cllr Rowe suggested that the position of clerk should be advertised, and Cllr Pate supported this, and it was agreed to ask Full Council for delegated authority to prepare an advert and to advertise on local government websites, locally in social media and in local newspapers. The advertisement would be worded so that the applicant could apply for the role with or without the RFO role, depending on experience. The clerk was asked to investigate the cost of an advertisement which would need prior approval.
- b) Pensions: There was nothing to add.
- c) Security: The LGCSA container had been unlocked and the clerk was asked to chase up security

#### **11. Risk Management – self-management**

- a) There were two items for discussion. There are continuing issues with tablets and Cllr Pate was having problems with his tablet and accessing a laptop for use with m365. It was agreed to purchase a suitable laptop for his use, but it would be a Council laptop and could be used elsewhere if required. The purchase was authorised by delegated authority. The second issue was the, yet to be arranged, approach to Cloudy IT, which the clerk said needed a mixture of IT literate Councillors and others not so knowledgeable. Cllr Barrington-Johnson volunteered, and the clerk would ask one other.

- b) Committees – it was agreed to reduce the number of councillors on the Highways Committee by one or two. Cllr Rowe said he would like to come off the Planning Committee at some stage.
- c) Changes were suggested to the Terms of Reference (TOR), item 10, to clarify the wording.
- d) To review policies:
  - The clerk had changed the wording in the Standing Orders, section 11, so that he could review dispensations. Changes to reflect the TW Agreement would be made once the wording was agreed on the Planning Committee TOR.
  - Changes were made to the Grants Policy, and a new short form application form will be created for repeat grant requests
  - There were no changes to Financial Control but during this period it was questioned who has access to the office and how they can check bank reconciliations. Councillor Barrington-Johnson agreed to let Councillors into the office on request to carry out checks, as agreed from time to time.
  - It was agreed to defer the Virement Policy to the next Governance committee meeting.
  - An update was required to the Investment Policy to reflect up-to-date balances.

## **12. Items for information**

There were none.

The meeting closed at 12.47pm

Chairman