



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

## **Minutes of a Governance Committee Meeting held in the Council Office, Langton Green Recreation Ground on Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2013 at 10am**

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**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Cllr Pendleton (Chairman) Cllrs Mrs Jeffreys and Milner

**OFFICER PRESENT:** Chris May – Clerk

1. **To accept and approve apologies and reasons for absence:** Cllr Parker (sick relative)
2. **Disclosure of Pecuniary or Other Significant Interests:** There were none
3. **Declarations of Lobbying:** None received
4. The Minutes of the Meeting held on **15<sup>th</sup> October 2012**, having previously been forwarded to Members, were approved and signed.
5. **Public Open Session:** There were no members of the public present
6. **Matters arising from the minutes:** The Assistant Clerk will look in to the cost of purchasing an appropriate first aid box. The Assistant Clerk's name was yet to be added to the alarm company's register.
7. **Freedom of Information policy** – the policy was reviewed and changes will be made for the February Full Council meeting. **Clerk to amend.**
8. **Review of Internal Audit:**
  - a) Check on Financial Records – Cllr Pendleton had carried out a check of records in November and found the Freedom of Information Policy was in need of updating. Other monthly checks had been carried out and the records were found to be satisfactory. It was **AGREED** that the checks needed to be more robust and a checklist would be produced of all items requiring inspection. **Clerk to draft a checklist.**
  - b) Internal Auditor – The Internal Auditor had been to the Council in November and had sent in his report which had been circulated to Councillors.
  - c) Review of annual audit (Littlejohn LLP) – There was nothing to report.
9. **Risk Management – insurable risk:**
  - a) Policy check – the insurance policy arranged with Aviva through Came & Co was up for renewal at the end of March. The committee recommends staying with Came & Co for another three year period unless there is a substantial price change.

A representative of the company had visited the clerk in December and checked that our playground and tree inspections were in order. She recommended that all land owned by the Council is added to the Asset Register. **Clerk to update**

- b) The photographic check has been updated. The new notice board, cycle racks, fingerposts, bench, and ISS (if installed) would need to be added in due course.

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

##### a) Staff members – staff contracts

1. Update on Groundsman's duties and contract – the Clerk said that the new contract had been accepted by Mr Cooper and would take effect from January 1<sup>st</sup> 2013. He has started the playground inspections and is using the extra hours productively (mending gates and clearing snow). Cllrs asked that their appreciation of the work of snow clearing be passed on.
2. Review of Clerk's job description – the present description required one small amendment - to include updating the website. This will be put to Full Council for approval at the February meeting.
3. The clerk's annual appraisal is scheduled for Monday 28<sup>th</sup> January at 2pm. He indicated that he would like to try for CiLCA status. Councillors approved of this and recognised there would be some financial impact. The terms would be confirmed in due course.
4. Review of Assistant Clerk's job description – Cllr Mrs Jeffreys will draft a copy for circulation
5. The assistant clerk's annual appraisal is scheduled for Monday 28<sup>th</sup> January at 11am

##### b) Security – there was nothing further to report

- c) Councillors on a charitable trust – the clerk asked the question whether the Parish Council would like to be better informed of how the trust is performing. This information is confidential so we would have to seek their agreement. The clerk was asked to draft a letter to the local charitable trusts asking if they considered this to be a mutually beneficial step.

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

##### a) Health and Safety – The Clerk would make further investigations of a risk assessment programme.

- b) Press and Media policy – the clerk informed the committee of the need for a policy which will set a protocol for members and give guidance on the use of social networking sites (such as twitter and facebook). The use of either forum by the Council would be considered at a later date.

- c) Accounting procedure – the clerk brought to the attention of members that when using the present accounting system he had been netting figures (i.e. all cheques towards the trees in Speldhurst had been credited to the expenditure account to show a net figure). He was concerned that this did not show a transparent figure and Councillors agreed. From the next financial year all figures would be shown separately as debits and credits.

#### **12. Items for Information – there were none**

The meeting closed at 11.30am

Chairman