



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

## **Minutes of a Governance Committee Meeting held in the Committee Room, Ashurst Village Hall on Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> March 2011 at 2.30pm**

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**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Cllrs Mrs Jeffreys, Mrs Soyke, Parker and Pendleton

**OFFICER PRESENT:** Chris May – Clerk

There was one member of the public present

1. **Declarations of Personal and Prejudicial Interest:** None received
2. **Declarations of Lobbying:** None received
3. **Apologies for Absence:** All members present
4. The Minutes of the Meeting held on **30<sup>th</sup> September 2010**, having previously been forwarded to Members, were approved and signed.
5. **Public Open Session:** The meeting was adjourned.  
Mrs Ponsford asked what policy the Parish Council had on Freedom of Information (FOI). Cllr Mrs Jeffreys responded that the Council had no restrictions and all documents were public. Mrs Ponsford also asked about the annual audits and was informed that the figures were sent to the Audit Commission in Plymouth. She was informed that any public requests to the Commission were chargeable to the Parish Council. She then asked about the Internal Audit and was informed that it was normally held in April or May and asked if the date could be published and if members of the public could attend.  
The meeting was reopened.
6. **Matters arising from the minutes:** Cllr Mrs Jeffreys noted that the financial risk assessment policy had been completed but the non-financial risk assessment was yet to be done.
7. **Committee Chairman:** Cllr Mrs Jeffreys said that when the committee was formed a year ago she would chair for one year and would like to step down. She nominated Cllr Pendleton and Cllr Mrs Soyke seconded the motion. Cllr Pendleton accepted the Chair and presided over the rest of the meeting.
8. **Review of Internal Audit:**
  - a) Check on Financial Records - On the afternoon of the meeting the Clerk was requested to bring the Council's files containing the Minute Book; the Insurance Policy and HMRC Employer's Returns. The Minute book required two new pages of the minutes of the Full

Council meeting of 10<sup>th</sup> January 2011; the insurance policy file should contain copies of emails requesting additional items to be included in the policy. An enquiry would also be made before next year's renewal to check on the population of the Parish; the HMRC files were in order.

- b) Internal Auditor – The Clerk had met with the internal auditor on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2010 for the six monthly review and he had found no problems with the books. A date was to be set for the internal audit after the financial year end. The Clerk had been in contact with Mr Roberts and he had requested copies of files in advance.
- c) Virement Policy – The new bookkeeping system (RBS Alpha) had been in operation for almost one year and next year members would be more used to the layout. The Clerk believed it was important that a virement (transfer within budget headings) policy was necessary so that members understand when a transfer was necessary. The Policy was distributed to committee members before the meeting and it was agreed with the exception that an annual review date is inserted. The Policy is attached and will be recommended to Full Council at the next meeting.

#### **9. Risk Management – insurable risk:**

- a) Policy check – this had already been completed as part of the review of internal audit.
- b) The photographic check had been partly completed and copies were kept on the computer, however it was decided that a complete record was required and to be kept on file. **The Clerk to action.**

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

- a) Groundsman – the Clerk reported that the Groundsman had been performing his duties as required. A copy of his public liability insurance was requested for the file. **Clerk to action.**
- b) Parish Office – Cllr Mrs Jeffreys said that the Transfer of Land committee could be dissolved now as the last transfer of land has been completed.

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

- a) Review of standing orders – the complete review would be carried out at the next meeting which would be scheduled for May. The Clerk would circulate them before the next meeting.
- b) Health and safety review – A new policy was required and the Clerk was asked to find some templates so that the committee had a basis to work from. **Clerk to action.**
- c) Scheduling of meetings – A meeting was required in May to review the annual audit and it was proposed that meetings be scheduled for Aug/Sept, Nov/Dec and Feb/Mar.

**12. Items for Information** – The Clerk had met the Bank manager last week and he had proposed an interest bearing account for a one year term that would pay interest of say 2%. The Clerk asked if the committee considered this something that Full Council might consider. It was recommended to bring it to the attention of Full Council. The Clerk also requested guidance on how long general correspondence should be kept and it was decided, as a guideline, that one year was adequate.

The meeting closed at 3.35pm.

Chairman