



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

**Minutes of a Governance Working Group Meeting held on
Tuesday 22nd February 2022 at 7.30pm**

Conducted online via Teams

MEMBERS PRESENT

Cllrs Mrs Lyle (Chairman), Barrington-Johnson, Ellery, Pate and Rowe.

OFFICERS PRESENT

Mrs K Neve – Clerk and Mr C May – Responsible Financial Officer (RFO).

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

No-one present intended to record the meeting.

2. To accept and approve apologies and reasons for absence

There were none.

3. Disclosure of Interests

Both the Clerk and RFO declared an interest in items 12a and 12b.

4. Declarations of Lobbying

There were none.

5. Minutes

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Governance Committee meeting held on **30th November 2021** 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 Action Points

The updated Action Points Table had been shared with councillors. The newly updated list of action points, incorporating the additional actions from this meeting, are shown at the end of these minutes.

8. Review of Working Groups

The Terms of Reference for Governance Committee, Internal Audit and Air Traffic Committee were reviewed, amended and updated to include the wording allowing committees to meet as working groups as agreed by Full Council on 6th December 2021 (Minute 21/236).

9. Review of Internal Audit

- a) **Check on financial records:** The RFO reported that a check had been made on 22nd February by Cllr Barrington-Johnson.
- b) **Internal Auditor (IA):** The RFO reported that David Buckett would be carrying out his 6 monthly audit on 20th April.
 - **Risk Assessments** – The Clerk and Cllr Mrs Lyle had attended a risk assessment training session run by TWBC. Work on establishing a set of relevant Risk Assessments was in progress. The Clerk and Cllr Pate would work together to update the existing Risk Assessment document for consideration at the next Governance WG meeting.
- c) **Annual Audit (PKF Littlejohn LLP):** There was nothing new to report.

10. Risk Management – insurable risk

- a) **Policy check:** There was nothing new to report.
- b) **Fixed Asset Register:** The Clerk reported that she was liaising with the insurance company regarding the re-valuation of the assets for insurance purposes and would report back further. The Chairman said that each Committee should be asked to undertake a review of the assets which fall within their remit.
- c) **Photographic record of assets:** The Clerk would include the two new laptops on the photographic record.

11. Quality Assurance Check

The Chairman reported that regular monthly checks on council payments to be approved at full council should take place by councillors, who were not already signatories, on a rota basis. Councillors could also check the bank reconciliations at the same time depending on the statement availability.

12. Risk Management – working with others

- a) **Staff members:**
 - **Staff Appraisals** – Had been completed and there would be a 6-month review for the Clerk. The Clerk was asked to set objectives and identify areas for professional development for and in agreement with the two Assistant Clerks.
 - **Staff Salaries** – This item was discussed at length but a decision was deferred for further information and to seek a comparison with neighbouring parishes, national wage inflation and, if available, NALC increases.
 - **Review of Office Layout** – The Clerk reported that, now staff were back working in the office full time again, and likely to be going forward, the layout of the office needed to be reconsidered to accommodate a proper workstation for the Assistant Clerk (CB). Permission was given to investigate and come back with costs.
 - **New laptop for Assistant Clerk (CB)** – The Clerk advised that a new laptop was needed for the Assistant Clerk (CB) as the current laptop did not have enough storage and the screen size was too small. The current laptop could be used by a councillor instead. Permission was given to investigate what specific equipment was required and come back with costs.
- b) **Pensions:** This item was discussed alongside the pay award for staff. A decision was deferred for further information and to seek a comparison with neighbouring parishes.
- c) **Security:** The RFO reported that SPC has two separate CCTV systems, one which covers the carpark and pavilion (maintained by Sunstone) and one for the office which is on a different system and not under a maintenance contract. The office system was very old now and no longer functioned properly and it had been recommended by the current system provider to incorporate it within the system that they serviced. They had also recommended upgrading two of the external domes. This item was deferred for further information and a cost comparison.
- d) **Payroll Provider:** The RFO reported that the payroll transfer was progressing.

13. Risk Management – self-management

a) IT:

Domain – The RFO reported that, because SPC is a '.gov.uk' we need to have the domain registered at a cost of approximately £60 per annum (paid every two years). We had been with CWCS but this was now in the process of being transferred to Cloudy IT to manage. The domain would remain in the name of SPC.

Bookkeeping system Rialtas – The RFO reported that the Rialtas bookkeeping system was currently only on his laptop and now that the Clerk was undertaking some basic financial training and is the manager in charge, she needs access to the system to make checks on the transactions for transparency and input if necessary. To have access to Rialtas on up to 5 computers would cost an extra £50 approximately per annum and would give resilience in the office. The office internet system, which effectively would become our Local Area Network (LAN), could be used. The challenge would be accessing the system working from home which Rialtas advise would require a Virtual Private Network (VPN). It was suggested that Rialtas be installed on the two standalone PCs and the Clerk's laptop. The RFO had looked into alternative providers of VPNs but they had been considered too expensive. Cloudy IT could accommodate the set up and their fee was £250 plus £64pm. Councillors discussed this item at length but deferred a decision for further information pending information from Rialtas as to whether they may be providing a cloud service in the future, and investigation as to alternative installers/providers.

b) **Standing Orders – Full Council** – It was agreed to recommend to Full Council that the Standing Orders – Full Council be approved with the amended wording on points 14 and 15 referring to the RFO and the inclusion of "working groups" at point 3x.

c) **Policies** – It was agreed to recommend to Full Council that the following policies be approved with the changes as indicated:

- **CCTV** – To include the new CCTV camera at the Pavilion and subject to clarification on the checklist.
- **Financial Control** – To include reference to the RFO and change of payroll provider.
- **Investment** – To include reference to the RFO and to update the list of banks. Cllr Rowe commented that if we retain the reference to our investments being covered by FSCS, that could preclude us from investing with CCLA. The Governance/Finance Committee will consider this point.

Councillors agreed to go over the 2-hour limit for the meeting to deal with the remainder of the business.

- It was agreed that the **Grant Awarding Guidelines** be considered by the Finance Committee before being brought back to the next Governance WG.
- It was agreed to defer the **Recording of meetings policy** for clarification on the length of time to keep the recordings.
- It was agreed to recommend to Full Council that the new **Equality and Diversity / Disability Discrimination** policy be created and approved.

14. Items for information

There were no items for information.

The meeting closed at 9.52pm.

Chairman

Governance Action Points

Action No.	Action	Owner	Date created	Status
2/21	Establish a set of relevant Risk Assessments.	Chairman, Clerk and Committee Chairmen. Training undertaken. Previous RA in Folder.	30/11	Clerk and Cllr Pate to work on this for consideration at the next Governance WG Meeting.
3/21	Contact the insurance company for their advice on the review of the value of the fixed asset register for insurance purposes.	Clerk Email sent to insurers. Reply in Folder. Work in Progress.	30/11	Seek volunteer at Full Council to assist with the review. Each Cttee to review items under their remit.
11/21	Arrange Electrical Inspection Certificate for Pavilion (paid for out of Pavilion budget/RRIM).	RFO	30/11	Carry Over
1/22	Update Standing Orders – Full Council and the Terms of Reference for approval by Full Council: Governance, Internal Audit, Air Traffic	Clerk	22/2	
2/22	Financial Reconciliation Check.	Cllr Barrington-Johnson	22/2	
3/22	Add photographs of two new laptops to the Fixed Asset Register.	Clerk	22/2	
5/22	Contact builders who worked on the Pavilion to find out how much it would cost to rebuild.	Clerk	22/2	
6/22	Set up rota of Cllrs to carry out Quality Assurance Check	Clerk	22/2	
5/22	Prepare a report on staff salaries and pensions for consideration at the next Governance WG meeting.	Clerk/RFO	22/2	
6/22	Investigate cost of new office equipment and lap top and present proposals for consideration at next Governance WG meeting.	Clerk/RFO	22/2	
7/22	Seek comparison quotation for the replacement CCTV system.	Clerk	22/2	
8/22	Report back on the Rialtas Webinar re Cloud system and submit proposals.	RFO	22/2	
9/22	Finance Committee to review the Grant Awarding Guidelines then bring back to Governance.	Clerk/RFO	22/2	
10/22	Arrange next meeting towards the end of March.	Clerk	22/2	