



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

**Minutes of a Governance Working Group Meeting held on
Wednesday 9th November 2022 at 7.30pm**

Conducted online via Teams

MEMBERS PRESENT

Cllrs Mrs Lyle (Chair), Barrington-Johnson, Curry (ex-officio), Ellery, and Rowe.

OFFICERS PRESENT

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

1. Election of Chair

It was **RESOLVED** to elect Cllr Mrs Lyle as Chair of the Governance Working Group.

2. Election of Vice-Chair

It was not felt necessary to appoint a Vice-Chair.

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

The meeting was recorded for the purposes of writing the minutes. The recording would be deleted once the minutes of this meeting have been approved and signed by the Chair.

4. To accept and approve apologies and reasons for absence

There were none.

5. Disclosure of Interests

There were none.

6. Declarations of Lobbying

There were none.

7. Minutes

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Governance Committee meeting held on **27th April 2022** be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

8. Public Open Session

There were no members of the public present.

9. 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.

10. Future Meetings of the Governance Working Group

At the Full Council meeting on 6th June 2022 (Minute 22/121 refers) it had been resolved that the Air Traffic, Amenities, Highways and Governance working groups would include an agenda item at the beginning of their next meeting to decide whether to resume committee status and face-to-face meetings or defer for another six months. The exception was the Environment Working Group which would remain as a working group dedicated to a series of projects for the rest of 2022. Cllr Mrs Lyle had recommended that the Environment Working Group should aim for committee status and face-to-face meetings at some point in 2023. This was the first meeting of the Governance Working Group since that meeting, so a decision now needed to be made. Councillors **RESOLVED** to resume committee status and recommend to Full Council that the Terms of Reference be updated to indicate the change.

11. Review of Working Groups

Minute 22/121 further resolved to waive attendance at council meetings for Cllr Turner for a period of six months, as he was required to continue to shield for covid-related reasons. This dispensation would be reviewed at Full Council in December. Cllr Turner had notified the Clerk that he would still have to shield for a further 6 months. He has requested that the Environment Group continues as a working group for a further 6-month period and that he be given a further dispensation for not being able to attend meetings in person. The rest of the Environment WG had been consulted at the last meeting and they had confirmed that they would prefer to stay as a working group and meet remotely. Councillors **RESOLVED** to recommend to Full Council that the Environment WG continues as a working group and that Cllr Turner be given a further dispensation for not being able to attend meetings in person subject to him being a councillor after the elections in May 2023.

12. Review of Internal Audit

- a) **Governance Check:** The Clerk reported that the governance check had been carried out by Cllr Mrs Lyle. The next check was due to be carried out by Cllr Curry.
- b) **Internal Auditor (IA):** The RFO reported that further to the retirement of our IA, a new IA needed to be employed. He presented three options which were considered by councillors who **RESOLVED** to recommend to Full Council that, subject to satisfactory references, services April Skies be engaged as the council's IA until May 2023 when a review would take place.
- c) **Annual Audit (PKF Littlejohn LLP):** The RFO reported that all authorities are given the option to opt-out of the central procurement and appointment scheme and appoint their own external auditor for the next 5-year period. It was agreed not to recommend any change to the current status and SPC would remain as part of the scheme.

13. Risk Management – insurable risk

- a) **Policy check:** Cllr Mrs Lyle reported that there was a requirement under the insurance policy to organise an electrical inspection for the Pavilion every five years. Cllr Curry agreed to speak to Ranger Electrical.
- b) **Fixed Asset Register:** The Clerk reported that the list of assets had been allocated to each of the committees for re-evaluation and this exercise was now complete. The Clerk would send the insurance company the updated list which might necessitate an increase in the premium. Councillors were keen not to be underinsured.
- c) **Photographic record of assets:** The Clerk was in the process of reviewing the photographic record of assets.

14. Quality Assurance Check

Compliance with CCTV guidance: The Chair reported that she had worked through the guidelines to ensure compliance and had circulated the relevant documents to councillors. She planned to use the self-assessment document as the annual review in a year's time. The CCTV policy would need to be

reviewed at the next meeting as a result of the guidelines including how we protect data and what rights members of the public have to access their own images.

15. Risk Management – working with others

- **Staff members:** The Clerk withdrew from the meeting during consideration of this item. At the Full Council meeting on 4th April 2022 (Minute 22/85 refers) the pay award had been approved and the working group had reserved the right to review the overall pay award upwards if it became apparent that the award was not comparable with equivalent industry sector pay awards, and any changes would be backdated to 1st April 2022. The NALC pay award had now been confirmed as an increase of £1,925 from 1st April 2022 and with effect from 1st April 2023, an increase of one day to all employees' annual leave entitlement. After a full and lengthy debate and considering the NALC pay award, the current national wage and wage inflation expectations, councillors recommended, subject to Full Council approval, to increase the pay award from 4% to 7% to be backdated from 1st April 2022 for all staff. Councillors further recommended that the Clerk's hourly rate be increased to £19 per hour backdated to 1st October 2022 to acknowledge her recent achievement of the Certificate in Local Council Administration (CiLCA). The recommendations would be put to Full Council for determination.
 - **Pensions:** It was noted that councillors had agreed the working group's recommendation that an increase from 5% to 7% employer pension contribution be included in the budget for the financial year 2023/24. (Full Council minute 22/85 of 4th April 2022 refers.)
- a) **Security – CCTV:** There was nothing to report.

16. Risk Management – self-management

- a) **Committees – to review:** The Clerk reported that there were still incomplete committee memberships, and these could not be completed until the vacancies on the council were filled. It was agreed that the Defibrillator WG would be dissolved until next needed; the Police Liaison and the Local Plan WG were no longer relevant; and Footpaths WG would be dissolved and become part of the Highways WG. It was suggested that Full Council be asked to review some of the committees with a view to streamlining and to report back to the next Governance Committee. Councillors requested that the Finance Committee be asked to review their Terms of Reference, in particular with regard to the membership number.
- b) **Policies – to review the following Policies:**
- Standing Orders (changes proposed to align with Model SO which were updated by NALC in 2020)
 - Financial Regulations (changes proposed to align with the Model Regulations which were updated by NALC in 2019)
 - Health and Safety Policy (new)
 - Video Meeting Policy and Guidelines (changes proposed following cessation of Covid rules)
 - Media Policy (no changes proposed)
 - Training and Development Policy (new)
 - Co-option Policy (no changes proposed)
 - Code of Conduct (review requested by Full Council following Civility Pledge item)
 - Employee Code of Conduct (review requested by Full Council following Civility Pledge item)

RESOLVED – That Full Council be recommended to adopt the new policies and approve the policies listed above as amended where appropriate.

Councillors considered that SPC was fortunate in having a co-operative and respectful atmosphere: it was agreed that the Civility Pledge was not a required or recommended document for formal approval, and that the Code of Conduct and the Nolan Principles should be sufficient.

The Data Privacy Policy and the Data Protection Policy were deferred.

c) **Terms of Reference – to review the Air Traffic Terms of Reference.**

The Clerk recommended that item 7 of the Air Traffic Terms of Reference relating to the number of meetings to be held, be amended to read “Meetings will be convened as required.”

RESOLVED – That Full Council be recommended to approve the Air Traffic Terms of Reference as amended above.

17. Items for information

- The Clerk reported that changes had been made to the Joint Practitioners’ Advisory Group | Practitioners’ Guide 2022/23.

Councillors had agreed to the meeting being extended beyond the two-hour limit and the meeting closed at 9.45pm.

Chair**Governance Action Points**

Action No.	Action	Owner	Date created	Status
11/21	Arrange Electrical Inspection Certificate for Pavilion (paid for out of Pavilion budget/RRIM)	RFO	30/11	Carry Over until end of Summer
11/22	Update Committee Membership	Clerk	30/3	Pending new councillors
13/22	Report on Compliance with CCTV Guidance	Cllr Lyle/Clerk	30/3	In progress
21/22	Look to engage the services of a new Internal Auditor	RFO	27/4	In progress
27/22	Organise Governance Checks as follows: December – Cllr Curry January – Cllr Rowe February – Cllr Ellery	Clerk to send reminders	09/11	
28/22	Update Terms of Reference for Governance from WG to Committee status	Clerk	09/11	
29/22	Include the appointment of Internal Auditor on the December FC agenda	Clerk	09/11	
30/22	Notify Zurich Insurance of Updated Fixed Asset List	Clerk	09/11	
31/22	Include review of salary award on the December FC agenda	Clerk	09/11	
32/22	Include review of committee numbers on FC agenda	Clerk	09/11	
33/22	Include policies and Terms of Reference on December FC agenda for approval	Clerk	09/11	