



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 Wednesday 18th May 2011 at 7.30pm**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Cllrs Mrs Jeffreys, Mrs Soyke and Pendleton

OFFICER PRESENT: Chris May – Clerk

1. **Election of Chairman:** Cllr Mrs Jeffreys nominated Cllr Pendleton and Cllr Mrs Soyke seconded the nomination.
2. **Declarations of Personal and Prejudicial Interest:** None received
3. **Declarations of Lobbying:** None received
4. **Apologies for Absence:** Cllr Parker (family engagement)
5. The Minutes of the Meeting held on **31st March 2011**, having previously been forwarded to Members, were approved and signed.
6. **Public Open Session:** There were no members of the public.
7. **Matters arising from the minutes:** It was noted that the non-financial risk assessment was yet to be done, however it was agreed that this would be completed after the office was open.
A copy of the Groundsman's public liability insurance was on file.
8. **Review of Internal Audit:**
 - a) Check on Financial Records – It was agreed prior to the meeting by Cllr Pendleton and Cllr Mrs Jeffreys that this check be waived in light of the Annual Audit review where records were being checked.
 - b) Internal Auditor – The Clerk had arranged to meet with the internal auditor on 26th May and Mr Roberts had requested that no member of the public be present but that a copy of his report would be available if required.
 - c) Review of Annual Audit (Audit Commission) – The income and expense for the previous year had been in excess of £200,000 therefore a Notice of Appointment of Date for the Exercise of Electors' Rights to inspect the accounts prior to submission needed to be posted. The clerk confirmed that this had been done on all notice

boards and the front page of the website. Councillors checked the clerk's figures against the figures produced by RBS Alpha bookkeeping system and found them to be correct. Councillors approved the Governance statement and **RECOMMENDED** that Full Council approve the Accounts subject to the Internal Auditor's agreement.

9. Risk Management – insurable risk:

- a) Policy check – it was noted to check whether the War Memorial was insured.
- b) The photographic check had been completed and copies were kept on the computer and on file. An index was required and it was to be dated and checked by the Amenities committee. The committee recognised and noted the work of the clerk in preparing the photographic file of the assets.

10. Risk Management – working with others

- a) Parish Office – Cllr Mrs Jeffreys presented a draft loan agreement and asked for the format and details to be checked. It was **AGREED** that it was suitable for the purpose and the **clerk would re-type it with the Council's logo**. A cheque was to be made out for the loan amount of £50,000.
- b) Staff members – The clerk said that he felt that the assistant clerk was underpaid, especially when she had had to cover for him during his holiday. The committee **AGREED** to recommend that for future long periods she would be paid the additional hours at the clerk's rate and her salary would be reviewed at the annual time. He also requested that the committee consider that the contracts and compensation be reviewed when the office was ready and take into account the loss of office payments and the relative lack of flexibility of office hours.
- c) The committee felt that the work with V J Coomber on the office was progressing well.

11. Risk Management – self-management

- a) Review of standing orders – the clerk had made two amendments to each of the Standing Orders and the Financial Regulations and it was **RECOMMENDED** that they be put forward to Full Council for approval.
- b) Freedom of Information (FOI) – The clerk had prepared a draft detailing the Parish Council's FOI policy based on the Information Commissioner's model publication scheme. The committee went through the document with recommendations and changes and requested that the clerk prepare a final version for approval at the next Full Council meeting in June.
- c) NALC Legal Briefing – Future Code of Conduct review – it was noted and when it became law the changes would be adopted.
- d) Health and safety review – refer minute item 7

12. Items for Information – The clerk said that the committee should consider more policy statements in the future and that ones to be considered were a complaints policy and a press and media policy. He said that he was sure that the Council should register for the Data Protection act and would look in to this and report.

The meeting closed at 9pm.

Chairman