



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

**Minutes of a Governance Committee Meeting held on
Monday 27th January 2025 at 7.30pm in the
Parish Council Office, Langton Green Recreation Ground**

MEMBERS PRESENT

Cllrs Ellery (Chair), Cleaver, Lyle, Rowe and Turner.

OFFICERS PRESENT

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

1. Election of Chair

RESOLVED that Cllr Lyle be Chair of the Governance Committee.

2. Election of Vice- Chair

RESOLVED that Cllr Cleaver be Vice-Chair of the Governance Committee.

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

Apologies were received from Cllr Curry who was unwell.

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 **18th November 2024** 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. Review of Internal Audit

- a) **Governance Check** – The Clerk reported that monthly checks were up to date. Cllrs Lyle and Ellery had carried out the last two checks. The Clerk would contact councillors to arrange the following months' checks.
 - **Payroll Provider** – The Clerk reported that Cllr Ellery had raised concerns regarding the discrepancies made by the current payroll provider when he undertook his recent governance check. They had since given notice and the Clerk recommended the appointment of Mulberry and Co as the replacement payroll provider. There would be an initial startup fee of £50 plus VAT and an annual fee of approximately £480 plus VAT. Councillors reviewed the alternatives researched by the Clerk and agreed that Mulberry appeared professional and best value.
RESOLVED that Full Council be recommended to appoint Mulberry and Co as the council's new payroll provider.
- b) **Internal Auditor (IA)** – The Internal Auditor's report from his visit on 25th November, which had been presented to Full Council in December, was circulated to councillors. There were three suggested actions which were in progress relating to: cyber security, payroll discrepancies and the introduction of the Transparency Code.
- c) **External Audit – Audited AGAR 2023/24 (Mazars)** – There was nothing new to report.

11. Risk Management – insurable risk

- a) **Insurance Policy check** – The Clerk reported that renewal quotations would be sought well in advance of the expiry of the current 3-year insurance policy (2022-2025) (August 2025) for presentation to the Governance Committee for consideration. The Clerk had contacted the current insurer to request what additional details were required to maintain the insurance cover during the building works to Speldhurst Chapel. A response was awaited.
- b) **Review of Fixed Asset Register** – The Clerk reported that the Fixed Asset Register was being updated to include more detail and would be available at the next meeting.
- c) **Photographic record of assets** – The Clerk reported that the photographic record was being reviewed in line with the updated Fixed Asset Register.
- d) **Risk Assessments for Committees** – The Clerk reported that each committee had been asked to carry out risk assessments for their remit. These would be brought to the Governance Committee when completed. The following Risk Assessments had been carried out, which councillors discussed in detail and amended to include recommendations and risk levels:
 - Amenities Committee – Pond at The Boundary – When the approved pond management works are carried out, a further assessment would be undertaken and actions such as the installation of warning signs considered.
 - Amenities Committee – Playground at Langton Green – A copy of the annual and quarterly playground inspection reports would be filled alongside this document.
 - Finance Committee – Fraud – Reference to the current processes and procedures would be included.The Clerk would keep a record on file.
The Clerk would also ask Langton Green Community Sports Association (LGCSA) for a copy of their risk assessment regarding the use of the sports pitches to keep on file.

12. Risk Management – working with others

- a) **Staff members** – The Clerk reported that staff appraisals were currently being organised. Staff pay awards would need to be discussed at the next meeting.
- b) **Security** – Cllr Curry had prepared a draft Cyber Security policy for councillors' consideration (see minute below) following the recommendation of the Internal Auditor. The Clerk suggested that this be included within the main Risk Assessment when it is reviewed.
- c) **Emergency Planning** – The Clerk reported that the council's website now included a link on the website for emergency planning and provided helpful information. Councillors suggested this be shared with residents on a regular basis.

13. Risk Management – self-management

- a) **Councillor Vacancies:** The Clerk reported that there remains one councillor vacancy on the parish council. Two residents had shown an interest; however, after following up with the residents they are not currently in a position to take on the role.
- b) **Committees:** There were no changes at this time. The Clerk requested a reminder be given to all councillors about the importance of attending meetings to ensure the committee were quorate.
- c) **Policies: RESOLVED** – That Full Council be recommended to approve the following policies: Cyber Security, Employee Code of Conduct and Kent Code of Conduct for Members. The Health and Safety Policy would be considered at a future meeting as further work was required to include the safety of the Groundsman.

14. Devolution – Cllr Curry and the Clerk had attended a presentation made on Devolution by the Leader of Tunbridge Wells Borough Council. The presentation was shared with councillors. At this stage it was not clear how parish councils would be affected.

15. Martyn's Law – The Clerk reported that Martyn's Law had been one of the items at the Clerk's Conference she had attended in November. A checklist was circulated which outlines actions that parish and town councils of all sizes can take to enhance their local terrorism preparedness. While not exhaustive, these steps align with the anticipated requirements of the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill, also known as Martyn's Law. As the requirements had not yet come into force, further guidance would be awaited from the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) and the Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC). The checklist could be shared with organisations arranging large events eg Village Halls, the Community Hub and Langton Green Sports Association.

16. To consider gathering data on parish council activities – Cllr Ellery had raised this at the January Full Council meeting to present to the public when explaining the precept as a high proportion of the precept included the cost of salaries. The Clerk presented an overview of the work that is undertaken for councillors' information. It was agreed that a percentage estimate of the Clerks' time spent on each area of work undertaken by the parish council should be compiled.

17. Items for information

- **Grant Funding** – The Clerk shared with councillors an A-Z list of popular UK grant funders open to parish and town councils.
- **Local Government Standards Consultation** – Councillors noted the consultation which was more applicable to larger councils.
- **AI** – Cllr Ellery suggested that the use of Co-Pilot may assist the Clerks.
- **Committees** – Cllr Turner raised the question of the number of current committees and the possibility of condensing.
- **Date of 2025 meetings** - Mondays:
28th April
21st July
10th November

There being no further items, the meeting closed at 9.05pm.

Chair

Governance Committee Actions

Action No.	Action	Owner	Date created	Status
14/24	Review the Asset Register and include more details and set up folder for copies of invoices of new items purchased.	Clerk	22/04/24	In progress
17/24	Book onto data protection refresher training course. <i>Possible TWBC session being organised.</i>	Clerk	22/04/24	In progress Chased TWBC
19/24	Organise Governance Checks: Sept: Cllr Curry - <i>Complete</i> Oct: Cllr Rowe – <i>Completed by Cllr Curry</i> Nov: Cllr Lyle - <i>Complete</i> Dec/Jan: Cllr Ellery - <i>Complete</i>	Clerk	22/08/24	Complete
27/24	Include link to TWBC emergency plan on SPC website.	Clerk/Asst Clerk (CB)	28/11/24	Complete
28/24	Seek further clarification from Internal Auditor on response from External Auditor.	Clerk	28/11/24	Complete
29/24	Include item on FC agenda regarding the insurance adjustment premium for the purchase of Speldhurst Chapel.	Clerk	18/11/24	Complete
30/24	Amend Car Park Risk Assessment to include ice and keep record.	Clerk	18/11/24	Complete
31/24	Include CCTV renewal on Dec FC agenda for approval.	Clerk	18/11/24	Complete
32/24	Email Cllrs to ask them to respond to “Remote Meetings” consultation.	Clerk	18/11/24	Complete
33/24	Include committee membership proposed changes on Dec FC for approval.	Clerk	18/11/24	Complete
34/24	Include amended Standing Orders on Dec FC for approval.	Clerk	18/11/24	Complete
35/24	Feed in proposed expenditure on salaries, pensions, NI, CCTV and IT to Finance Committee for their budgeting meeting.	Clerk	18/11/24	Complete
1/25	Include recommendation to appoint new payroll provider on February FC agenda.	Clerk	27/01/25	
2/25	Seek quotations for insurance renewal.	Clerk	27/01/25	
3/25	Include the following policies for approval on February FC agenda - Cyber Security, Employee Code of Conduct and Kent Code of Conduct for Members. Health and Safety to be brought to a future meeting.	Clerk	27/01/25	
4/25	Compile an estimate of Clerks’ time spent on each area of work undertaken by SPC.	Clerk	27/01/25	
5/25	Request a copy of their Risk Assessment for the sports pitches from LGCSA.	Clerk	27/01/25	