



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

**Draft Minutes of a Governance Working Group Meeting held on
Tuesday 30th November 2021 at 7.30pm**

Conducted online via Zoom Electronic Communication

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 item 11a.

4. Declarations of Lobbying

There were none.

5. Minutes

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Governance Committee meeting held on **1st September 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 Working Groups

Due to the coronavirus pandemic the Council had previously assigned some committees as working groups to enable electronic meetings to continue. The Governance WG considered whether to recommend to Full Council that these WGs should continue for another 6 months or to revert to committee meetings, which meet in person. Councillors agreed that due to a spike in covid numbers locally and the new variant, it would be sensible for this arrangement to continue. The working groups would continue to make recommendations to Full Council. This would be reviewed at the annual meeting in May. Full Council would therefore continue to meet in person and make decisions based on the recommendations of the working groups. Finance and Planning Committees would also continue to meet in person and make decisions.

8. Review of Internal Audit

- a) **Check on financial records:** The RFO reported that no checks had been made by councillors since May. The Chairman agreed to carry out a check next week.
- b) **Internal Auditor (IA):** The RFO reported that David Buckett had completed his report from his visit on 10 November and it had been circulated to councillors. There were no immediate areas for concern.
 - **Risk Assessments** – The RFO reported that this issue had been raised by the Internal Auditor. The Chairman agreed to work with the Clerk and the Committee Chairmen to establish a set of relevant Risk Assessments.
- c) **Annual Audit (PKF Littlejohn LLP):** There was nothing new to report.

9. Risk Management – insurable risk

- a) **Policy check:** The Clerk reported that the insurance company had confirmed that the “electrical inspection certificate” was a standard condition for any property with public access and was to ensure that the writing was up to date and checked every 5 years. The Clerk would contact the broker for more information regarding this requirement. The Chairman confirmed that the electrical inspection would be carried out in 2022, which would be 5 years after the building was completed.

The Clerk also reported that the motor insurance company for the SPC van had confirmed that any person who is driving the vehicle on the order of and with the permission of the policy holder, is entitled to drive, providing that person driving has a licence to drive the vehicle and is not disqualified. The use was for social, domestic and pleasure purposes and for the business of the policy holder excluding commercial travelling. Councillors agreed that the Clerk should be the nominated person to give permission. It was agreed to recommend to Full Council to delegate authority to the Clerk to give permission to drive the SPC van if required.
- b) **Fixed Asset Register:** The RFO reported that Internal Auditor had advised that the value of assets held by a local council did not alter in value and should be recorded as the original purchase price, net of VAT. The usual depreciation and appreciation do not apply to council property, as set out in The Practitioner’s Guide. The value of assets for insurance purposes was different and required a review. The RFO agreed to contact the insurance company for their advice. The two new laptops needed to be added to the register.
- c) **Photographic record of assets:** The Clerk (CM) reported that the photographic record of assets was up to date.

10. Quality Assurance Check

This item was deferred to a future meeting after the risk assessments are in place (see above discussion about risk assessments under 8b).

11. Risk Management – working with others

- a) **Staff members: Contracts for Clerks –**

The Clerk reported that it had come to her attention that there were anomalies in the staff contracts mainly regarding notice period and sick leave. New contracts were required for the new position of RFO and newly promoted Assistant Clerk. A lengthy discussion took place, and councillors felt it appropriate to follow the NALC model contract and that staff be consulted on the proposed changes to their contracts. The Clerk agreed to prepare new contracts for each member of staff to sign. The main changes were that the Assistant Clerks’ notice period be reduced to four weeks and that sick leave for all staff be adjusted in line with the NALC recommendations.

It was agreed to recommend to Full Council in January to approve the amended contracts for the Clerk, RFO and two Assistant Clerks, following consultation with those staff members.

- b) **Pensions:** There were currently no new issues, but the RFO reported that the pension contributions would need to be reviewed with a view to an increase in the council's contribution in 2023/24.
- c) **Security:** The Chairman reported that the new CCTV had been installed at the Pavilion.
- d) **Payroll Provider:** The RFO reported that our payroll provider had notified us that he was retiring at the end of March 2022. He had asked other local Parish Councils for recommendations and M:Power had been recommended, the cost of which was in line with our current provider. There was a set up cost of approximately £100 plus a monthly cost of approximately £40. It was agreed to recommend to Full Council that M:Power be contracted to act as SPC's payroll provider.

12. Risk Management – self-management

- a) **IT** – The Clerk acknowledged councillors' frustration that the new IT system did not currently work like the old system. The Assistant Clerk (CB) was working hard to organise a similar system so that councillors feel comfortable with it. Cllr Curry had been helping to provide some procedure notes which would be distributed to councillors.
- b) **Policies** – It was agreed to recommend to Full Council that the following policies be approved with no changes:
 - **Grant Awarding Guidelines** – During the discussion councillors suggested that there should be a cross reference to these guidelines within the Finance Committee Terms of Reference.
 - **Co-option Policy** – There was some discussion about the questions and to include a rudimentary check of candidates on social media, but no changes were suggested.
 - **CCTV Policy** – no change.
 - **Media** – It was agreed that recording of meetings did not sit within this policy but should be included within the Video Meeting Policy and Guidelines. No change.

It was agreed to investigate establishing an Equality and Diversity / Disability Discrimination Policy. The Clerk would look at the NALC website for a template.

- c) **Electric Vehicle Charging Point Agreement** – Councillors discussed the wording of the draft contract which KCC had produced in advance of making a final decision in January. Councillors had some concerns about the terms of the agreement, and it was agreed to recommend to Full Council that a working group of councillors, comprising Cllrs Barrington-Johnson, Mrs Lyle and Turner, be set up to carry out an initial review of the contract, and to make a recommendation to Full Council.

13. Items for information

There were no items for information.

The meeting closed at 21:24

Chairman

Action Number	Action	Owner	Date created	Status
1/21	Carry out a check on the financial records.	Chairman	30/11	TBA
2/21	Establish a set of relevant Risk Assessments.	Chairman, Clerk and Committee Chairmen	30/11	TBA
3/21	Contact the insurance company for their advice on the review of the value of the fixed asset register for insurance purposes.	RFO	30/11	TBA
4/21	Add the two new laptops to the fixed asset register.	RFO	30/11	TBA
5/21	Prepare new contracts for the Clerk, RFO and two Assistant Clerks.	Clerk	30/11	TBA
6/21	M:Power be employed to act as SPC's payroll provider following Full Council agreement.	RFO	30/11	TBA
7/21	Cross reference the Grant Awarding Guidelines in the Finance Committee Terms of Reference.	Finance Committee	30/11	TBA
8/21	Include recording of meetings within the Video Meeting Policy and Guidelines.	Clerk	30/11	TBA
9/21	Look at NALC website for a template for an Equality and Diversity / Disability Discrimination Policy.	Clerk	30/11	TBA
10/21	Carry out initial review of the Electric Vehicle Charging Point Agreement.	Cllrs Barrington-Johnson, Mrs Lyle and Turner	30/11	TBA