



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

**Minutes of a Governance Working Group Meeting held on  
Monday 24<sup>th</sup> April 2023 at 7.30pm in the  
Parish Council Office, Langton Green Recreation Ground**

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**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Cllrs Mrs Lyle (Chair), Curry, Ellery and Rowe.

**OFFICERS PRESENT**

Mr C May – Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) and Mrs C Barrett – Assistant Clerk

**1. 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.

**2. To accept and approve apologies and reasons for absence**

Apologies had been received from Cllr Barrington-Johnson (prior commitment).

**3. Disclosure of Interests**

Mr May and Mrs Barrett declared an interest in item 10a relating to a review of staff salaries.

**4. Declarations of Lobbying**

There were none.

**5. Minutes**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Governance Committee meeting held on **27<sup>th</sup> February 2023** be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**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. Further updates were made to action points 1/23, 4/23, 5/23 and 6/23. 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 Internal Audit

- a) **Governance Check:** The RFO reported that the monthly governance checks were up to date. Cllr Barrington-Johnson had carried out the March check, the Internal Auditor carried out the April check and the next check would be carried out by Cllr Rowe.
- b) **Internal Auditor (IA):** The RFO reported that the IA had attended the office on 19<sup>th</sup> April and had carried out his bi-annual audit which included checking the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR). He had completed page 3 and signed the AGAR. Cllr Lyle was pleased to note that the Parish Council had been given a clean bill of health by the IA. Suggestions for improvement had been raised as follows:
  - To consider how the council accounted its Ear Marked Reserves and re-naming them to more specific headings. The RFO would investigate re-naming these accounts and make suggestions at the next meeting.
  - Full Council's approval of the 2021/22 internal audit had not been minuted. Cllr Lyle requested that the approval of the 2022/23 internal audit be listed as a stand-alone agenda item at the May Full Council meeting.
  - Full Council's approval of individual staff members' pay review had not been minuted. Cllr Ellery commented that this level of detail would have been included in the relevant Governance minutes. **RESOLVED** that future pay reviews would be fully minuted but would be redacted in the public minutes.

**RESOLVED** to recommend the reappointment of April Skies Accounting as the Internal Auditor.

- c) **Annual Audit (Mazars LLP):** Councillors checked the Annual Governance Statement (page 4 of the AGAR) and were satisfied that effective controls were in place. They further checked the figures on page 5 and found these to be in order. Councillors agreed to delegate the completion of the checklist on page 2 to the RFO and **RESOLVED** to recommend to Full Council that the AGAR be signed at the May Full Council meeting. The AGAR would be published on 2<sup>nd</sup> June on the Parish Council website ahead of the publication of the Exercise of Public Rights which will start on Monday June 5<sup>th</sup> and finish on July 14<sup>th</sup>.
- d) **Annual Audit** – The RFO asked councillors to consider engaging Rialtas to oversee future year end sign-offs to assist the Clerk. It was agreed that appointing Rialtas would provide additional support during the planned handover of RFO responsibilities to the Clerk. **RESOLVED** to recommend to Full Council that budget be provided for this item.
- e) **Statement of Internal Control** – Councillors checked and made amendments to the Statement. **RESOLVED** to recommend to Full Council that the Statement be approved and published on the Parish Council website.
- f) **Risk Assessments** – A new risk assessment was drafted relating to I.T. security. **RESOLVED** to add this to the Risk Assessment master document and recommend to Full Council for approval. Cllr Ellery requested that Cloudy I.T. be asked to confirm whether it was possible to recover files from ransomware attacks.
- g) **Data Protection Officer (DPO)** – **RESOLVED** to recommend to Full Council to reappoint Mrs K Neve as the Data Protection Officer (DPO).

## 9. Risk Management – insurable risk

- a) **Insurance Policy check:** No action required.
- b) **Review of Fixed Asset Register:** No action required. Cllr Lyle asked for it to be noted in the document footer that the Register had been reviewed in April 2023.
- c) **Photographic record of assets:** These were up to date.

## 10. Risk Management – working with others

- a) **Staff members:**
  - **Staff Salaries – To review the April pay award:** It was agreed to defer a decision until the next meeting when the Clerk would be present for the discussion.

- **Appraisals:** Cllr Curry reported that he had carried out appraisals for the Clerk and the RFO and circulated the appraisal notes to the Governance Committee for information.
- b) **Security:**
- **IT** – To consider locking into a reduced cost annual IT contract with Cloudy I.T.: Microsoft had increased its prices and Cloudy I.T. had advised committing to a less costly 12-month contract in place of the current monthly rolling contract. **RESOLVED** to recommend an annual contract to Full Council for approval.

**11. Risk Management – self-management**

- a) **Committees:** **RESOLVED** to defer a review of committees until after the May Annual Statutory meeting.
- b) **Policies:** The Clerk had circulated the Hugo Fox default Data Privacy policy, which could be found on the Parish Council website. An action point was set for the Clerk to investigate whether the website was backed up. **RESOLVED** to review the website provider in 2024.

**12. Items for information**

There were none.

There being no further items, the meeting closed at 9.06pm.

**Chair**

**Governance Committee**

Action No.	Action	Owner	Date created	Status
1/23	Organise Governance Checks as follows: April – Internal Auditor May – Cllr Rowe June – Cllr Ellery July – Cllr Lyle	Clerk	27/2	<b>Update</b>
2/23	Request Internal Auditor to send future reports to Chair, Chair of Governance as well as Clerk	Clerk	27/2	<b>Complete</b>
3/23	Confirm reduction in hours of RFO and increase in hours of Clerk to payroll	RFO/Clerk	27/2	<b>Complete</b>
4/23	Carry out Clerk’s and RFO’s appraisals	Cllr Curry	27/2	<b>Complete</b>
5/23	Investigate repurposing Rialtas account for the Asst Clerk (KH). If not possible request additional account and seek financial approval from Finance Cttee	RFO/Clerk	27/2	In progress
6/23	Ask Cllrs how they access SPC emails and documents and what their preference in IT equipment is. Obtain costings for upgraded technology	Clerk/Chair	27/2	In progress

7/23	Instruct Cloudy IT to turn on 2FA after elections	Clerk	27/2	TBA
8/23	Update Policy Review dates and put in councillors' folder	Clerk	27/2	<b>Complete</b>
9/23	Add following policies to April FC agenda for confirmation: Financial Control Investment Data Protection Plus Internal Audit Terms of Reference	Clerk	27/2	<b>Complete</b>
10/23	Establish new Grievance procedure – to be included in the Employee Code of Conduct	Clerk	27/2	In progress
11/23	Produce asset register of I.T. equipment	Clerk/Chair	24/4	TBA
12/23	Investigate the re-naming of accounts containing reserve funds in line with internal audit recommendations	RFO	24/4	TBA
13/23	Include the 2022/23 internal audit for approval as a standalone item on the May FC agenda	Clerk	24/4	TBA
14/23	Amend Statement on Internal Control as per Cllr recommendations and include for approval at May FC	RFO/Clerk	24/4	TBA
15/23	Include recommendation to appoint Rialtas for year-end sign-offs for approval at May FC	Clerk	24/4	TBA
16/23	Add IT Security risk assessment to master document and present for approval at May FC	Clerk	24/4	TBA
17/23	Present annual contract with Cloudy IT for approval at May FC	Clerk	24/4	TBA
18/23	Complete AGAR checklist (page 2) and publish AGAR on website on 02/06/23	RFO/Clerk	24/4	TBA
19/23	Ask Cloudy IT to confirm that they can retrieve files after ransomware attacks	Clerk	24/4	TBA
20/23	Add footnote to Fixed Asset register to say the register was reviewed in April 2023	Clerk	24/4	TBA
21/23	Investigate whether Parish Council website is backed up	Clerk	24/4	TBA