



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

**Minutes of a Governance Committee Meeting held on
Monday 22nd April 2024 at 7.30pm in the
Parish Council Office, Langton Green Recreation Ground**

MEMBERS PRESENT

Cllrs Mrs Lyle (Chair), Curry, Ellery (7.33pm), Rowe and Turner.

OFFICERS PRESENT

Mrs K Neve – 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

There were none.

3. Disclosure of Interests

The Clerk declared an interest in item 10a relating to a review of staff salaries and withdrew from the meeting during consideration of this item.

4. Declarations of Lobbying

There were none.

5. Minutes

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Governance Committee meeting held on **29th January 2024** 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. 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 Clerk reported that monthly checks were up to date. Cllr Ellery had carried out the January check and Cllr Rowe carried out a check at the end of February. The Internal Auditor visited on 10th April. The May check would be carried out by Cllr Lyle.

- b) **Internal Auditor (IA)** – The Clerk presented the Internal Auditor’s report following his visit on 15th April.

He had signed off the AGAR with no comments. He had suggested the following:

- Repairs Reserve for Pavilion – Build up the Ear Marked Reserve (EMR). Councillors were aware of this situation and kept it under constant review. They were in the process of identifying surveyors to provide quotes for an assessment of future running and maintenance costs for the Pavilion.
- Update Asset register to include more detail. The Clerk undertook to review the Asset Register and include more details and keep copies of invoices of new items purchased.
- This would be the last year at which receipts and payments would be permitted, and the requirements of the Transparency Code would need to be followed once income and expenditure exceed £200,000. The Clerk undertook to research the additional obligations, training and the requirements prior to the year-end change over to accruals.

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

- c) **Annual Audit (Mazars)** – 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 Clerk and **RESOLVED** to recommend to Full Council that the AGAR be signed at the May Full Council meeting. The AGAR would be published on 31st May on the Parish Council website ahead of the publication of the Exercise of Public Rights which would start on Monday 3rd June and finish on 12th July.
- d) **Statement of Internal Control** – Councillors checked the Statement and **RESOLVED** to recommend to Full Council that the Statement be approved and published on the Parish Council website.
- e) **Risk Assessments** – Councillors reviewed and updated the risk assessment and **RESOLVED** to recommend it, with some new modifications and additions from this committee to Full Council for approval. Cllr Lyle referred to Zurich Insurance’s risk manual/guide which she had raised at the last meeting. She would be requesting each committee to review the risks relating to their remit and report back to the Governance Committee by the end of the year.
- f) **Data Protection Officer (DPO)** – **RESOLVED** to recommend to Full Council to reappoint Mrs K Neve as the Data Protection Officer (DPO). The Clerk would carry out refresher training on data protection.

9. Risk Management – insurable risk

- a) **Insurance Policy check** – The Clerk reported that the insurance policy was due for renewal on 1st August. Councillors requested the Clerk to seek three quotations and to ask neighbouring parishes for recommendations. The Clerk had received confirmation from the original builders that rebuild cost of the Pavilion remained at £708,750. Cyber insurance was discussed and considered, and councillors felt that the internal processes in place and the outsourcing of our IT and Accountancy support were currently sufficient and it would not be prudent or cost effective to take out separate cyber insurance.
- b) **Review of Fixed Asset Register** – See 8b) above. New items purchased included – tables, benches, dishwasher and cooker hood at Pavilion would be included within the current general contents’ description. The value of fixed assets had been increased by £4,680 on the AGAR. The replacement discus in the playground would be included within the £213,400, figure for playground equipment, desks and laptops under the office equipment figure.
- c) **Photographic record of assets** – The Clerk reported that the items listed above would be added to the photographic record.

10. Risk Management – working with others

- a) **Staff members:**

- **Staff Appraisals** – The Clerk reported that Cllr Curry had carried out her appraisal and she had carried out the remaining staff appraisals. The appraisal notes were presented to the Governance Committee for information.
 - **Staff Salaries** – To review the April pay award. The Clerk withdrew from the meeting during consideration of this item. Councillors **RESOLVED** to recommend to Full Council for approval the following pay awards:
Groundsman – increase in hourly rate from £15.17ph to £15.93ph
Assistant Clerk (CB) – increase in hourly rate from £14.29ph to £16.25ph
Assistant Clerk (KH) – increase in hourly rate from £16.00ph to £17.80ph
Clerk – increase in hourly rate from £20.33ph to £23.55ph
Councillors made these recommendations to acknowledge the efforts of the team during an exceptional year and to recognise the difference between skilled staff from the minimum wage. The Clerk’s increase was also in recognition of the fact that she is now undertaking another role as the Responsible Financial Officer, with the additional responsibilities this entails. Councillors appreciated having a stable team when there were several vacancies at neighbouring parish councils.
 - **Pensions** – To review the pension contributions. Councillors **RESOLVED** to leave the percentage contribution unchanged.
 - **Staff Hours** – To review the staff hours. The Clerk reported that there had been an increase in work to undertake the Pavilion bookings. The Assistant Clerk (CB) had offered to take this work over to release the Assistant Clerk (KH) but there would need to be an increase in her hours in order to continue with her own workload. Councillors suggested that overtime be charged for the additional hours (up to 2 extra hours per week) and a record of the hours undertaken be kept over the next three months with a report be brought back to the next Governance Committee meeting.
- b) **Security** – This item was deferred until the next meeting.

11. Risk Management – self-management

- a) **Councillor Vacancies:** The Clerk reported that there were currently two vacancies. A candidate was interviewed on 16th April and the councillors who carried out the interview would be recommending the candidate for co-option at the Full Council meeting on 7th May. Vacancies had been shared on noticeboards, the website, social media, word of mouth and the local primary schools.
- b) **Committees:** The Clerk reported that most Committee Chairs were due to change this year and presented the current membership list for the committee’s information. Councillors would be contacted to check they were happy with their current membership.
- c) **Policies:**
- **Standing Orders:** Councillors **RESOLVED** to recommend to Full Council the approval of the updated Standing Orders. Financial Regulations were also due for review and it was agreed that due to the pending issue a new set of National Association of Local Councils (NALC) Financial Regulations, the review should be postponed until councillors have the benefit of that review as advised by the Internal Auditor.
 - **CCTV Policy and Self-Assessment:** Cllr Lyle presented to councillors the completed Surveillance Camera Commissioner Self-Assessment which was a Government recommended link for best practice. Following the completion of the self-assessment, it may be necessary to update the current CCTV Policy which would be brought to the next Governance Committee meeting for councillors’ consideration.
- d) **Terms of Reference**
- Governance Check List. Councillors reviewed and updated the Governance Check List.
 - Internal Audit. **RESOLVED** to recommend to Full Council the approval of the Internal Audit Terms of Reference.

12. Items for information

- Dates of next meetings: 22nd July and 11th November 2024.
- Cllr Rowe asked if everything was in place should a Parish Poll be requested at the Annual Parish Open Meeting on 29th April. Cllr Curry confirmed that it was.
- Cllr Ellery thanked Cllr Lyle for her excellent chairing of the Governance Committee over the past three years.

There being no further items, the meeting closed at 9.35pm, councillors having agreed to an extension to the two-hour meeting limit.

Chair**Governance Committee**

Action No.	Action	Owner	Date created	Status
11/23	Produce asset register of I.T. equipment	Clerk/Chair	24/4	In progress
01/24	Organise Governance Checks as follows: February – Cllr Rowe March – Cllr Turner April – Cllr Lyle (superseded by Internal Auditor)	Clerk	29/01/24	Complete
02/24	Investigate re-build cost for Pavilion from original builders.	Clerk	29/01/24	Complete
03/24	Check with insurance company if they do CPI adjustments and what they increased the insurance on the Pavilion to.	Clerk	29/01/24	Complete
04/24	Investigate encryption protection on appropriate documents.	Clerk	29/01/24	In progress
05/24	Check all computers used by staff and councillors are running the latest systems. <i>The current computers are too old for Windows 11. Windows 10 is running and is supported by the manufacturer.</i>	Clerk	29/01/24	Closed
06/24	Investigate encryption on office computers and the need for an IT/Cyber policy and flag for review in 18 months.	Clerk	29/01/24	In progress
07/24	Compare NALC model contract with current SPC contracts.	Clerk	29/01/24	Complete
08/24	Emergency numbers list to be included on our website and shared on Facebook and look into building up a list of local people who might be able to help.	Clerk	29/01/24	In progress

09/24	Contact local schools and ask them to share the councillor vacancy with the with their parents/carers.	Clerk	29/01/24	In progress
10/24	Contact IOC regarding councillors' concern re providing meeting recordings for FOIs and offer for councillors to refresh vote on whether they are happy with recording.	Clerk	29/01/24	Complete
11/24	Future project – Share out to cttees the Risk Management Guide and ask them to look at relevant sections. Compare our current risk management to see if it needs to be included.		29/01/24	In progress
12/24	Organise Governance Checks: May: Cllr Lyle June: Cllr Turner July: Curry		22/04/24	
13/24	Contact relevant surveyor to assess future potential running and maintenance costs for the Pavilion.	Clerk	22/04/24	
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	
15/24	Research the additional obligations, training and the requirements prior to the year-end change over to accruals.	Clerk	22/04/24	
16/24	Add the following to the FC agenda: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Audit • Internal Audit Report • Reappointment of Internal Auditor • Statement of Internal Control • Risk Assessment (updated) • Appointment of Clerk as Data Protection Officer • Confirmation of Fixed Asset Register • Staff Salary Review • Staff Hours • Committee Membership • Standing Orders • CCTV Self-Assessment • Internal Audit Terms of Reference 	Clerk	22/04/24	
17/24	Book onto data protection refresher training course.	Clerk	22/04/24	
18/24	Seek quotations for insurance renewal.	Clerk	22/04/24	