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Established 1894

MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF THE GOVERNANCE & OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE
HELD IN THE PARISH COUNCIL OFFICE
ON THURSDAY 26 MAY 2016 AT 19:30

Present: **Councillors Susan Francis; Lee Hamilton-Street; Norma Harris; John Oldfield; Peter Thompson.**

In attendance: **Rob Martin – Parish Clerk**
Paul Barley – Deputy Clerk
Councillor Mike Hill-Smith

Action

16/001 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN
Councillor Hamilton-Street was proposed as Chairman by Councillor Francis, seconded by Councillor Oldfield.

The election was carried out by a show of hands and Councillor Hamilton-Street was unanimously **ELECTED** as Chairman.

16/002 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN
Councillor Oldfield was proposed as Vice-Chairman by Councillor Francis, seconded by Councillor Thompson.

The election was carried out by a show of hands and Councillor Oldfield was unanimously **ELECTED** as Vice-Chairman.

16/003 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE
None.

16/004 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY AND NON-PECUNIARY INTERESTS
No declarations were made.

16/005 APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 1 MARCH 2016
The minutes of the meeting of 1 March 2016 were **AGREED** as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

16/006 PUBLIC CONSULTATION
There were no members of the public present.

Councillor Francis took the opportunity to confirm to the Committee that Sylvia Verrinder had written to her in her capacity as Chairman of the Parish Council to confirm her retirement from the Parish Council on the morning of the present meeting, which had been accepted.

The Committee wished to record its thanks to Miss Verrinder for her seven years of dedicated work as a Parish Councillor.

16/007 CLERK'S REPORT

It was noted that a date had now been set for the Clerk to meet Councillors Francis and Oldfield for the purposes of setting performance objectives which, once agreed, would be subject to an interim review in six months, and a year-end review after 12 months. **Clerk/JO/SF**

16/008 2015/2016 FINAL ACCOUNTS AND ANNUAL RETURN

The Clerk noted that this was an opportunity to comment on the accounts and annual return at greater length than time at a PC meeting would allow.

Councillor Thompson expressed concern about how the Council's reserves were treated on its balance sheet and noted that reserves needed to be set against an asset renewal programme.

The Clerk noted that, following the recent exercise undertaken by the office in updating the asset register and ascertaining reinstatement/replacement values for the Parish Council's assets, the reserves policy could be much more closely aligned with an asset renewal programme.

Following discussion, it was agreed that Councillor Thompson would have a meeting with the Clerk in early course, in order to discuss this further. **Clerk/PT**

16/009 2015/2016 INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT

The Committee noted the report received from the Internal Auditor, RS Hall & Co.

Councillor Thompson noted that an audit plan needed to be formulated and agreed for the coming financial year. The Clerk noted that he would talk to RS Hall & Co in order to take this forward. **Clerk**

It was noted that standing orders should be reviewed every six months in accordance with standard business practice. **Committee**

It was noted that in addition to the existing controls on BACS payments, it would be desirable for spot checks on these, and the monthly bank reconciliations, to be done twice a year. Councillor Thompson agreed to take this forward. **PT**

Concerning bank account signatories, the Deputy Clerk noted that these now needed to be reviewed, as Sylvia Verrinder had been a signatory prior to her resignation, and further signatories were now needed. This would require some not unduly onerous KYC formalities to be completed for non-Lloyds Bank customers.

Following discussion, it was **AGREED** that Councillor Francis and the Chairman of the Committee would be added to the bank mandate, although it was not envisaged that Councillor Francis, as the incumbent Parish Council chairman, would sign to authorise payments in the ordinary course of events. **Deputy Clerk**

It was also **AGREED** that Councillor Roger Phelon would be approached to establish whether he was willing to act as a signatory, and the Deputy Clerk was instructed to make enquiries accordingly. **Deputy Clerk**

16/010 ASSESSMENT OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF INTERNAL AUDIT

The Clerk noted that the Committee, and the full Parish Council, were requested to:

a) consider the effectiveness of the Internal Auditor in the last year with reference to attached analysis, and
b) consider the reappointment of RS Hall & Co as the Internal Auditor for the 2016/2017 financial year.

It was **AGREED** that, noting the comments under the previous item about audit planning for the coming year, the Committee was satisfied with the effectiveness of the Internal Auditor.

Concerning the reappointment of RS Hall & Co, on a proposal by Councillor Francis, seconded by Councillor Oldfield: That RS Hall & Co be reappointed as Internal Auditors to the Parish Council – unanimously **AGREED**. **Clerk**

16/011 RISK ASSESSMENT POLICY

The Committee noted the Risk Assessment Policy document that had been circulated prior to the meeting.

The Clerk noted that various attempts had been made to look at the matter of risk assessment policy over the years, but with limited progress. Risks to the Parish Council that required to be assessed came in the form of business risks (including legal and financial risk) and physical risks (including grounds staff working practices, Parish Council events and so forth). The Clerk noted that the Administrator, Claire Fullman, was being trained in risk assessment.

The Chairman noted that letters of concern should be employed where policies were not being followed.

Following discussion it was **AGREED** that a higher-level document needed to be prepared, which in hierarchical terms would sit above the policy document already circulated. There was a need to consider business risk management and other forms of risk management; it would be desirable for guidance to be issued to the Clerk in that regard. **Clerk/ Committee**

16/012 GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

The Clerk provided an update on progress with regard to the framework document and referred the Committee to the draft Employee Handbook, which had been prepared from ACAS guidance and suggested templates.

The Clerk noted that guidance would be welcomed from the Committee as to its view of the order of priority for the numerous policies that were required.

The general view was that employee matters should be dealt with first, along with Health & Safety. The draft Employee Handbook was a good start in this.

The Clerk noted that whilst he, as the Proper Officer of the Parish Council, had the responsibility of dealing with staffing matters day to day, the Committee should give consideration to the formation of a Sub-Committee to assist with that.

The following votes were taken:

On a proposal by Councillor Francis, seconded by Councillor Thompson: That a recommendation be made to the full Parish Council to adopt the employee handbook as a living document – unanimously **AGREED**. **Clerk**

On a proposal by Councillor Francis, seconded by Councillor Thompson: That the Members' Code of Conduct and Protocol be dealt with next – unanimously **AGREED**. **Clerk**

16/013 PARISH COUNCIL WEBSITE

The Clerk advised that the process of uploading content to the new site was well in hand, and on present information would be completed, and the new site made live, by early July 2016. **Clerk**

16/014 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Committee's next meeting will take place on Wednesday 27 July 2016 at 7.30pm in the Parish Office. **All**

Meeting ended at 20:55.

.... Date...

Chairman