

LITTLE ABINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

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COMPLIANCE WORKING GROUP

14 June 2018, 7.00pm.
27 West Field, Little Abington

MEETING NOTES

Present

Richard Allum
Sally Simmons
Isobel Smith
Genevieve Dalton (Clerk /RFO)
Note. John Ellis joined by phone to discuss the Village Maintenance Contract

1. **Apologies for absence:** None

2. **Declarations of interest:** None

3. **Village maintenance contract**

The contract with CGM is due to expire at the end of August 2018. It has not been working well for some time. There have been several changes of senior staff and it was difficult to find out who was responsible for the LAPC contract. It was clear at a recent site visit that the current contract specification is not tight enough.

The group made the following **recommendations** to the Parish Council:

- Extend CGM until end December 2018 noting the need for rigorous management. It was an opportunity for them to show they can improve their performance. **CLERK**
- The new contract should start in January 2019.
- Rewrite the contract specification ready to be discussed and agreed at the LAPC meeting in July. This includes a "contract on a page" map.
- Try splitting the contract into two parts A - verges and mowing including the PRVs and B – footpaths and village centre which would include sweeping leaves. Contractors will be able to quote for A + B and /or A only or B only .**RAJE and Clerk** will lead the process on behalf of the Parish Council.
- Request quotations in late July/ August. Anyone submitting a quote will be required to do a site visit and to provide at least one recent reference.
- A decision could be made at the Parish Council meeting in September, at a push October. This would allow some lead in time for a new contractor
- It seems to make sense practically and financially for the LAPC contract to cover all grass cutting. CCC pay LAPC £500 a year to mow verges on their behalf. **CLERK** to check mowing regimes with them. It is understood that SCDC will consider contracting out grass cutting. **CLERK** to contact them.

4. **Terms of Reference**

These were discussed. The Group **recommended** LAPC should adopt them.

5. **Policies and procedures**

5.1 Standing Orders

The standing orders have been updated based on the new NALC model and adapted to match current practice. The following points were noted.

- New mandatory sections in the model cover the new General Data Protection Regulations

- Local changes
 - limit meetings to 2½ hours, unless there is agreement to continue up to a maximum of 3 hours. The chairman will decide which items should be carried forward to the next Parish Council meeting.
 - Planning matters requiring lengthy consideration, or if there are several applications, to be covered at a Planning Committee meeting rather than a Parish Council meeting. One option could be for the Planning Committee to meet ahead of a Parish Council meeting.
 - Inquorate meetings should be cancelled or adjourned.
 - Staff management issues. The Clerk is the only employee. A clause recommending that CAPALC or LCPAS should be consulted if a disciplinary issue arose should be added.

The group **recommended** LAPC should adopt the new standing orders noting the points above.

5.2 Councillors' Travel allowances.

The group **recommended** LAPC should reinstate the policy for travel allowances for Parish Councillors for authorised travel outside the Parish Council boundary. An allowance of 20p a mile seemed realistic. They noted that the Clerk's mileage allowance is 10p.

5.3 LAPC policies and procedures - 2018 updates

All policies and procedures were reviewed and updated in 2017. The Clerk was not aware of any need to amend them and the group **recommended** they should stand.

Financial Regulations. It was **recommended** that RA or IS should sign off the monthly finance report and payments schedule.

6. 2017-18 Audit

6.1 Internal auditor's report.

There were no points of any significant concern.

- Objective B -the CWG has been reconvened
- Payment controls: the KA maintenance invoice has been found. One CGM invoice for £186 is missing but there are records to show that it was genuine and paid.
- Instructions for E-payment. The Lloyd's leaflet provides good step by step guidance. There is no need for a LAPC guide
- E banking - although he had not mentioned it in his report the internal auditor checked that all signatories had given their passwords and access details to the chairman in accordance with the financial regulations. They had not.
- E-Payment records. The Clerk will keep a printout from the online payment system with each invoice to confirm payment.
- VAT/ CGM credit note. This was a relatively small sum of money. It was **recommended** that the Parish Council should disregard this comment.
- Noted the need to complete items carried forward from last year's report i.e.
 - Document management and retention policy **CLERK**
 - Confirm security arrangements for the Parish Council website **JE/CLERK**
 - Tree survey
 - Assets inspection protocol **CLERK**
- Objective J Annual Return – **recommended** leaving the items that had been rounded down as they were. The totals add up.

6.2 Use of Skype. The internal auditor had raised this informally. The group **recommended** that LAPC should adopt an informal policy so that Parish Councillors who are in attendance via Skype can participate in discussion. They would not be involved in decision-making/voting or count towards the numbers for quoracy.

6.3 Draft Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR)

The group reviewed the return and **recommended** sign off

6.4 New audit arrangements.

The Group **recommended** applying for exemption from external audit if the 2017-18 audit is returned without any qualifications. It was noted that internal audit is mandatory.

6.5 Transparency Code

The Clerk said that in her view LAPC complies with the requirements of the Transparency Code. It is a statutory requirement but it is not clear how and if it is monitored. The only element that the new audit regime covered was confirmation of a website address. The Council Award is probably the only independent way to confirm compliance.

7 Risk Management**7.1 Asset Register**

This was felt to be an accurate record. It is understood that the strimmer might need to be replaced. **CLERK** to update replacement values based on equivalent items with prices from catalogues and/or web sites. This is required for insurance purposes.

7.2 Risk register There are some high/medium risk items. The group **recommended** not making any changes until risk mitigation actions have been completed.

7.3 Insurance market testing.

The three year contract with Came & Co ends this year. A new insurance policy will be required from 1 October 2018. The **group supported the Clerk's recommendation** to start market testing early so that the new arrangements were agreed before she went on holiday at the beginning of September. As well as the statutory and nationally agreed requirements the group **recommended** getting clarification on cover arrangements for children and for GDPR.

7 General Data Protection Regulations and document management

- GDPR would be discussed at the CAPALC meeting on 29 June. The group **recommended** that the Clerk should draft an action plan to demonstrate the intention to have policies and processes in place by 31 December 2018
- Document Retention and Management- Still work in progress. {Note. Sutton PC's policy was recommended at the CAPALC catch up day}

8 Any Other Business

- **Council Award Scheme.** LAPC had held Quality Council accreditation since 2005. It lapsed in 2016 when CAPALC apparently lost the application for the Council Award Scheme. They have no trace of it. The Group **recommended** LAPC should consider submitting a new application for the award. It would provide assurance of compliance with legal requirements and good practice and also adequacy of governance arrangements.
- **2019-20 Local Highways Improvement Scheme - Recommended** setting up a task and finish group. The public should be asked for their input if time permits
- **Clerks Job description and hours. Recommended** review at mid-year.

9 Next meeting TBA Approx. mid-year

Meeting closed 22:00