



**Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Conservators of Ashdown Forest  
Monday 19 March 2018 at 14.00  
Ashdown Forest Centre**

Present: Cllr R Stogdon (Chairman), Cllr S Tidy (Vice Chairman), Mr A Reid, Cllr M Ensor, Mr M Cooper, Mr J Spicer, Mr J Francis, Cllr C Hardy, Cllr F Whetstone, Mr C Smith and Mrs R St. Pierre.

In attendance: Mrs P Buesnel (Director) Mrs K Dirs (Clerk) Mrs L Meehan (Finance Officer).

Minutes were taken by Mr J Clow.

There were no members of the public present.

	Item	Action
01/18	<b>Apologies.</b>	
	There were apologies from Cllr R O’Keeffe, Mr P Glyn, Mr R Galley, Cllr J Barnes and Cllr P Holloway.	
02/18	<b>Declarations of any interest by Members of a Personal or Prejudicial Nature</b>	
	There were none	
03/18	<b>To approve the minutes of the Board meeting of 18 December 2017, and matters arising</b>	
	The minutes of the last meeting had been circulated and assessed by the Board for accuracy. <b>The minutes were duly received and were approved in accordance with Standing Order 2.6.</b>	KD
	The Committee entered Confidential Session	
	The Committee left Confidential Session	
04/18	<b>To receive the minutes of the Conservation Committee meeting of 5 February 2018</b>	
	The minutes of the meeting had been circulated and assessed by the Board for accuracy. <b>The minutes were duly received and approved in accordance with Standing Order 2.6.</b>	KD
	<i>04.01/18 Matters arising</i>	
	Mr Francis discussed an initial meeting with Natural England at the beginning of April 2018 to prepare a paper for the Public Consultation on the Grazing Plan. Staff will prepare a paper in conjunction with Footprint Ecology to be reviewed by the Conservation Committee before making a recommendation to the Board.	
	<i>04.02/18 Matters arising</i>	
	Mr Francis discussed concerns over grazing compliance with Natural England. Ms Field (Natural England) has suggested a temporary amendment, but this will only last for three months. Dr Mawdsley has suggested agreeing a revised plan with Natural England to resolve the compliance issues and will draft an addendum	NM
	<i>04.03/18 Matters arising</i>	
	Cllr Tidy discussed item 03/18 and the note by Mr Glyn (Chairman - Conservation Committee) about failure to carry out actions. She suggested that Committee members need more awareness of staff workloads and that care needs to be taken to make sure staff are comfortable to complete their assigned actions. The Board discussed the outstanding actions and pressures from staff shortages.	
05/18	<b>The Roads, Planning &amp; Amenities Committee meeting of 22 January 2018</b>	
	The minutes of the meeting had been circulated and assessed by the Board for accuracy. <b>The minutes were duly received and approved in accordance with Standing Order 2.6.</b>	KD
	<i>05.01/18 Matters arising</i>	
	Mr Spicer discussed the action to copy the Award maps. The Clerk confirmed it was in hand.	

	<p>The Committee entered Confidential Session</p> <p>The Committee left Confidential Session</p> <p><i>05.06/18 Matters arising – Forest Row Recycling Centre</i></p> <p>Mrs St Pierre enquired whether Natural England had responded to the public consultation about closing the Forest Row Recycling Centre. The Clerk confirmed she had written to James Seymour at Natural England and has not heard back. Mrs St Pierre confirmed the local MP was of the view that these sites should not close, so hopefully there will be a positive outcome.</p>	
<b>06/18</b>	<p><b>The Finance &amp; General Purposes Committee meeting of 12 March 2018</b></p> <p>The minutes of the meeting had been circulated and assessed by the Board for accuracy. <b>The minutes were duly received and approved in accordance with Standing Order 2.6.</b></p> <p>The Committee entered Confidential Session</p> <p>The Committee left Confidential Session</p>	
<b>07/18</b>	<p><b>To receive the Director’s Report</b></p> <p>The Director spoke to her report and highlighted the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staffing changes including the recruitment of the Forest Centre Office and Business Development Manager to replace James Clow.</li> <li>• Efforts by the whole team at the Forest Centre to provide 24-hour cover during the recent adverse weather conditions.</li> <li>• The award of a grant from the Chalk Cliff Trust for £5000 towards several public events to raise awareness and understanding about the Forest, its wildlife and management.</li> <li>• A grant from LoCase to replace the lighting in the Tractor Shed and workshops.</li> <li>• Supporting the Friends of Ashdown Forest with their publicity and promotion for the Friends Wood and a membership drive.</li> <li>• A meeting held between the members of the Conservation Working Group and Wealden District Council (WDC) Officers to discuss issues with the proposed SAMMS legal agreement. The suggested amendments were forwarded to WDC for consideration.</li> <li>• The cut in the grant from East Sussex County Council from £13,000 to £10,000.</li> <li>• An unsuccessful funding meeting with Crowborough Town Council, but high hopes for the meeting with Withyham Parish Council at the end of March.</li> </ul> <p>Mr Reid congratulated the Director and staff for their efforts in developing relationships and building support for the Forest through the Parish Liaison meetings.</p>	
<b>08/18</b>	<p><b>To receive the Clerk’s Report</b></p> <p>The Clerk spoke to her report. She highlighted the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Commoners Meeting scheduled for 2nd March 2018 was postponed by the Commoner Conservators to 16th March 2018 due to the weather. This second date was subsequently deferred, and the Commoner Conservators made the decision to reinstate the meeting process as per the East Sussex Act 1981, with a new date scheduled for 11th May 2018.</li> <li>• A successful prosecution on 26 January 2018 for an offence under Bye-law 6 of the Ashdown Forest Act 1974</li> <li>• A total of 76 Bye-law breaches were reported in 2017/2018, compared to 43 breaches in 2016/2017. This extreme upsurge of incidents equates to a 76% rise year on year.</li> <li>• Property licences continue to increase with a rise in year on year applications of 25%. Licences in general (filming and activity) have seen a dramatic year on year increase of 45%, whilst permits (riding and wood) have yielded a 25% increase in take-up. Although such an increase in revenue is hugely positive, this does have implications on staff time.</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IT Upgrade: Knibbs (IT support) have now installed a new Server. All workstations are being upgraded to Office 365 Business Premium with the full suite of Microsoft Office 2016 applications.</li> <li>• Photocopier: The office photocopier/printer is now at the end of its life and the replacement parts have become obsolete. Rather than purchase a new photocopier/printer, it is intended to rent a model on a three-year contract.</li> <li>• The centre telephone system is now 15 years old and cannot handle the daily demands of a busy office environment. There is a clear need to streamline the general call handling for the office to provide a better experience for the callers whilst improving efficiencies for the staff. The proposal is to install a new system to increase the number of lines from two to four and convert them to digital ISDN2 and include an auto attendant (with selection), direct dial facilities and voicemail.</li> <li>• The new General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) are coming into force in May. The new regulations give increased privacy for individuals including the right to be forgotten and erased from records and the right to request a copy of personal data. The Clerk will be conducting a Data Audit for everyone that has access to and/or controls personal data.</li> </ul>	
<b>09/18</b>	<b>Governance Review</b>	
	<p>The Chairman gave an update on progress towards registering the new charitable company. He wrote in December 2017 to ascertain whether the charity could be registered before appointing two Directors. There has been no response. Once the charity has been registered the Directors will oversee the process of electing a new governing body. He has prepared a paper for the Board transferring the trustee of the Forest to the new Board. However, although the ESCC Cabinet has been briefed, they have not made a formal decision. <b>The Chairman agreed to circulate the paper. The Board agreed to progress the charity registration whilst waiting on a response from the Charity Commission.</b></p> <p>Cllr Whetstone discussed the lack of support received for ESCC on the approach to the registration process. <b>The Chairman agreed to raise it but highlighted the enormous amount of support received from Legal Services.</b> The Chairman discussed asking ESCC for funding and advice on the qualities and skills required from the new Directors. Mr Spicer reminded the Board that ESCC did say they would help with the “heavy lifting” and costs would be borne by them. Mr Reid discussed taking control and moving the process forward. He also highlighted opportunities for funding from the Resilience Grant and opening the door to more donations. <b>The Director agreed that a Governance Working party would be held before the next Board meeting.</b></p>	<p>RS</p> <p>RS</p> <p>PB</p>
<b>10/18</b>	<b>Any Urgent Item of which the Clerk has notice in order to pass to the elected Chairman</b>	
	<p>Mr Spicer discussed the decision to postpone the Annual Commoners meeting and restart the process to reschedule the meeting to Friday 11<sup>th</sup> May 2018. He highlighted the extra expense incurred and the complaints received by staff. Mr Smith formally apologised for the additional time and effort required by the staff and for the surprising reaction from some Commoners to postponing the meeting. He expressed his concern over the aggressive nature of some of the comments. Mr Spicer proposed that in future the election process should be managed by the Commoners and proposed appointing an independent person. <b>Mr Smith agreed and confirmed the item will be on the agenda for the Commoners meeting.</b> Mr Francis thought it gave the wrong image if staff were not involved but confirmed the Commoner Conservators would manage any conflict at the meeting.</p> <p>The Chairman discussed Mr Glyn’s comments about ensuring actions from Committee meetings are carried through and agreed.</p> <p>The Chairman formally thanked Philip Glyn who is retiring after 19 years’ service to the Conservators and the Forest, adding that he does not know anyone else who knows more about the Forest than Philip.</p> <p>The Chairman sent his best wishes on behalf of the Board to Cllr Peter Holloway.</p>	<p>CS</p>

This part of the meeting closed at 4:16pm.

Chairman \_\_\_\_\_  
June 2018

Clerk \_\_\_\_\_