

**Minutes of the
FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE
BOARD OF CONSERVATORS OF ASHDOWN FOREST**

Monday 1 August 2011
1430 Ashdown Forest Centre

Committee members present: Cllr F Whetstone (Chairman), Mr R Galley (*ex officio*), Mr P Glyn, Mrs D Hurrell, Cllr A Reid, Mr J Spicer, Cllr R Stogdon, Mr R Thornely-Taylor (*ex officio*), and Cllr S Tidy.
Minutes taken by Mrs R Marriott (Clerk)

Also present: Mr M Cooper

The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed Mrs Tidy to the Board. Her co-option to the F&GP Committee was formally proposed by Mr Thornely Taylor and the Committee unanimously agreed. There were no members of the public present.

20/11 Apologies.

Apologies had been received from Cllr J Barnes.

21/11 Declarations of any interest by Members of a Personal or Prejudicial Nature.

There were no declarations of an interest.

22/11 Financial Report (year to date) – FGP 06/11.

22.1/11 The Financial Report was presented by Mrs Hurrell. Her suggestion that the information be presented in a graphic format and with the addition of key performance indicators was welcomed. It was agreed that she would work with the Clerk and Mrs Temple and report back at the next meeting.

Action

DH RM

22.2/11 It was agreed that a detailed financial report of the Weald Forest Ridge Partnership Scheme should be produced at the end of the project.

RM

23/11 Matters Arising

23.1/11 Approach to Ashdown Forest Living regarding copy

The Clerk reported that Ashdown Forest Living welcomed copy about the Forest and it was agreed that copy should continue to be provided. It was noted that Ashdown Forest Life was widely read and professionally produced. The Chairman stated that the two magazines were totally different; Ashdown Forest Life was totally focused on the Forest whilst Ashdown Forest Living was an advertising magazine. He suggested that the Board consider sponsorship for Ashdown Forest Life when HLS funding stops in 2016. It was agreed that the subject would be revisited before the end of HLS funding.

23.2/11 Approach to Charles Hendry MP re VAT

Mr Thornely-Taylor reported that he had not had an opportunity to speak to Mr Hendry about the matter.

RTT

23.3/11 Verbal report from the working party set up by the extraordinary FGP Committee

The Minutes of the extraordinary FGP Committee will be circulated with other Minutes for the next Board Meeting.

RM

23.4/11 Cllr Reid reported that the FGP working party planned to meet with the Clerk and acting Forest Superintendent to determine the priorities for Forest management. Each member of the working party was looking at different aspects. Cllr Reid had undertaken to look at the Board's policies and priorities using the County Council's format of looking at the Board's duties and then matching resources. The Ashdown Forest Plan reflects the duties laid down in the Ashdown Forest Act and other legislation which affects the Forest

**FGPWP/
CM/RM**

and is organised according to the Board's committee structure. Cllr Stogden had undertaken to investigate the legal implications of all legislation affecting the Forest. He had looked at the HLS and HLF agreements with a view to determining any ongoing legal commitments and was working with County Council officers to examine the Ashdown Forest Trust deeds for any restrictive covenants that may apply to the management of the Forest. Mr Glyn's paper "Legislation and Government Policy relevant to Ashdown Forest" was also a very helpful source of information. Mr Spicer had undertaken to examine the basic budgets with a view to three scenarios: the current budget with a reducing contribution from ESCC; a reduction in the HLS budget prior to 2016 and finally, no replacement source of funds after HLS had finished. He was assuming that if income was reduced, the Board would have to prioritise its expenditure.

23.5/11 Mr Thornely-Taylor queried the responsibilities of the landowner, ie the Ashdown Forest Trust, as opposed to the Board. He suggested that others would be in a similar position, for example the Boards of the New Forest, Dartmoor and the Malvern Hills. He suggested that there may be a history of legal precedents already and it might be worth contacting these bodies. Mr Glyn commented that the management of heathland had been a statutory responsibility since 1981. It was the duty of the landowner under various statutes to preserve the landscape and the agri-environment schemes to date had all come from central government. The Ashdown Forest Act 1974 had been superseded by further Acts. In his opinion, should government funding cease, contractor work would stop. Cllr Stogdon thought the obligation to preserve the landscape would be on the Conservators as managers of the land.

RM

23.6/11 Mr Cooper informed the Committee that the Forest Centre Development working party was developing a fund raising structure. It was anticipated that this could be ongoing. Mrs Hurrell thought this could certainly be developed. Mrs Tidy asked if a risk log was produced for each meeting. It was agreed that this could be a useful management tool and merited some consideration.

RM/ST

23.6/11 Cllr Reid summarised the discussion as follows: the working party should clarify priorities and establish a budget and then take the model to the County Council. It would then be necessary to look for funds.

FGPWP

24/11 Scale of charges – resident's car parking – FGP05/11

24.1/11 Mr Cooper gave a brief background to the RPA Committee's recommendation that resident's parking charges should be introduced and sought the Committee's opinion for a suitable scale of charges. Although very few parking permits had been issued to date, the RPA Committee had wanted to take a pragmatic approach to the problem of parking on Forest land. It felt that whilst helping residents, it had the potential of being a source of income to the Forest.

24.2/11 After some consideration, the Committee felt further information was required before a decision could be made and asked that the matter go back to the RPA Committee to seek clarification on stakeholder consultation and what the permit would allow. Mr Cooper invited the Chairman to attend the next meeting of the RPA.

RPA

25/11 Any urgent item of which the Clerk has notice in order to pass to the elected Chairman.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 15.58.