

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

Monday 1 November 2010
1430 Ashdown Forest Centre

Committee members present: Cllr F Whetstone (Chairman), Cllr J Barnes, Cllr N Bennett, Mr R Galley (*ex officio*), Cllr M Hoy (Vice Chairman) Cllr A Reid, Cllr R Stogdon, Dr H Prendergast (Director), Mr J Spicer, Mr R Thornely-Taylor (*ex officio*). Minutes taken by Mrs T Buxton.

Also present: Mrs R Marriott (Office Manager).

The Chairman opened the meeting. There were no members of the public present.

12/10 Apologies.

Apologies were received from Mr P Glyn.

13/10 Declarations of any interest by Members of a Personal or Prejudicial Nature.

Mr Thornely-Taylor declared an interest in agenda item 19/10.

14/10 Recommendations to be added to the Financial Regulations in Standing Orders – FGP04.

After a brief discussion it was agreed that Mrs Marriott be authorised to sign cheques up to £1000 and that the Standing Orders be amended (5.3) to read “The Office Manager be authorised to make payments of invoices authorised by the RFO from the current account by internet. The Office Manager can transfer sums from the Money Manager account to the current account.”

It was agreed the arrangement for transferring money from the Premium Business Account to the Money Manager account remains unchanged.

It was agreed that the Standing Orders be amended (5.4) to read “The Office Manager can make multiple BACs payments for authorised invoices up to a limit of £30,000 in any one day.”

It was agreed after discussion that in regards to the Financial Regulations the base line above which orders need to be authorised remains at £50.00.

The changes to the wording of Standing Orders, as detailed above, were agreed and the Board would be advised of these changes at the next meeting.

15/10 Financial Report (year to date) to include revised estimates for 2010/11 and estimates for 2011/12 – FGP05.

The Chairman introduced the Financial Report which was scrutinised page by page. It was considered to be satisfactory by the Committee. It was noted that the Executive Committee would be meeting to discuss the future budgetary position. Mr Thornely-Taylor congratulated Mrs Marriott, Cllr Whetstone and the Director for reaching a very satisfactory state of affairs.

16/10 Review effectiveness of the internal audit for the year ended 31.03.2010 – FGP06.

The Committee was satisfied that DMC performs the internal audit in a logical and satisfactory manner and with a reasonable degree of thoroughness and appropriateness.

17/10 Agree Forest Rate – FGP07.

There was a short discussion and it was agreed the method of calculating the annual increase would not be changed. Any future changes would be put before the Commoners first. The increase in the Forest Rate was agreed.

Action

The increase in the Forest Rate was agreed and the Board would be advised of these charges at the next meeting.

18/10 Agree charges for activities – FGP08.

It was agreed that AFRA be advised of the new riding fees. The charges for activities were agreed.

The charges for activities were agreed and the Board would be advised of these charges at the next meeting.

19/10 Update on staffing matters – verbal report.

Mr Thornely-Taylor had declared an interest as Mrs Temple was a family member.

The Director reported that a bookkeeper had been hired on a contractual basis. This was on a trial basis. Once the bookkeeper was settled in her role Mrs Marriott would take on some of the duties of Clerk. The Director would then be in a position to reduce his hours. It was also reported that Ranger Beal would be retiring in early 2011. The Committee thought it sensible not to recruit into the role until the financial situation at ESCC was clearer which was likely to be late January / early February 2011. The Director said interim arrangements were in place. It was reported by Mrs Marriott that Mrs Temple would be returning, on the same basis as before, to undertake the end-of-year reports and Committee/Board financial papers. Both Cllr Whetstone and Cllr Barnes stated they had considerable confidence in Mrs Temple's abilities and her grasp of the Board's financial affairs. Cllr Bennett proposed that both the bookkeeper and Mrs Temple be appointed under arrangements described. Cllr Barnes seconded the proposal.

It was agreed that the bookkeeper and Mrs Temple be appointed under arrangements described above and the Board would be advised at the next meeting.

20/10 Any urgent item for which the Director has notice in order to pass to the elected Chairman.

Cllr Reid said it would be sensible of the Board to discuss, at the end of the first quarter of the new financial year, how central government policy was affecting the Board's finances. He said that the picture would be clearer and it was wise to discuss how the Board would move forward through the next three years. It was agreed that this would be wise.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 15.50.