

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

Monday 7 November 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)

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

**Action**

**26/11 Apologies.**

Apologies had been received from Cllr J Barnes.

**27/11 Declarations of any interest by Members of a Personal or Prejudicial Nature.**

Mr Spicer declared that he was a member of the Royal Ashdown Golf Club.

**28/11 Matters Arising**

*28.1/11 Financial report of the Weald Forest Ridge Partnership Scheme – FGP 07/11*

The Clerk reported that the match funding expected had not been received to date. She confirmed that should the funds not be received, the amount would have to be drawn from the Board's reserves or other match funding be sought as the Board were contracted to spend the funds agreed for the WFRPS. The Chairman offered to write to the Rotherwick Foundation if funds had not been received by the end of November.

*28.2/11 Approach to Charles Hendry MP re VAT*

Mr Thornely-Taylor reported that he would be meeting with Mr Hendry later that week to seek his support for the Conservators being added to the short list of organisations in Section 33 of the VAT Act 1994.

*28.3/11 Verbal report from the working party set up by the extraordinary FGP Committee*

This matter was dealt with under Item 30/11.

*28.4/11 Verbal report from the Clerk on the responsibilities of the landowner*

The Clerk reported that she had contacted several similar organisations which have Boards of Conservators. She had had a response from the Malvern Hills and Epping, both of whom had expressed similar concerns to those of the Board. It was agreed that the paper produced by Cllr Stogdon for the FGP Working Party clearly stated the Board's position and the Committee expressed its gratitude to Cllr Stogdon for his in depth study.

*28.5/11 Residents Car Parking scale of charges (from RPA minute 33/11) – FGP08/11*

It was confirmed that the Board's policy of only issuing parking permits to owners of properties that could not park within their own curtilage would continue. Mr Thornely Taylor proposed that new residents' parking permits should be charged at a rate equal to the property's acknowledgement rent. Existing permits would remain at the same rate until the property changed ownership. Mr Glyn seconded the proposal. The question of parking permits for residents in the more built up areas of the Forest where parking is a problem would remain an issue for the RPA Committee.

**29/11 Financial Report (year to date) – FGP 06/11.**

29.1/11 The Financial Report was presented by Mrs Hurrell. The increase in the contribution from ESCC was noted and appreciated. Although no guarantee could be given, it was confirmed that it was the intention of the County Council to maintain future contributions over 2013/14 and 2014/15 at the 2012/13 level with a small increase to allow for inflation. It was hoped that this would help the budgeting process.

29.2/11 The Clerk asked for confirmation that the increase in the Forest Rate and charges for

activities should remain linked to RPI as opposed to CPI. It was agreed. The Clerk advised the Committee that a paper would be circulated for the next Board meeting.

RM

29.3/11 The Clerk agreed to circulate an amended cashflow with the Board papers which would give a breakdown of the key income streams and the bank accounts into which they would be banked.

RM

29.4/11 The Committee expressed its appreciation of the commentary provided by Mrs Hurrell who agreed to continue with the exercise.

DH

29.5/11 The Committee agreed the Financial Report.

### **30/11 Report from the FGP Working Party – FGP 10/11**

30.1/11 Cllr Reid gave a brief outline of the working party's remit in the light of potential reductions in grants and the future post HLS, namely to confirm the duty and powers of the Board and define these in terms of the specific activities (jobs) comprising Forest management. He had started to develop closer links between the Ashdown Forest Trust as landowner and the Conservators through facilitating a meeting between the Clerk, the acting Forest Superintendent and Mo Hemsley, Assistant Director in the Resources, Economy, Transport and Environment Department at County Hall. This had proved useful by giving an indication of the grant that could be anticipated over the next three years. Cllr Stogdon's briefing note (Appendix 1) clarifies the Board's statutory and other legal obligations and Mr Spicer had been looking at expenditure with a view to examining where possible savings could be made. The table produced by the acting Forest Superintendent and the budget for 2012/13, which had been amended following the Clerk's meeting with Mo Hemsley, when combined with Cllr Stogdon's briefing note, helped to establish a future framework on which to build.

30.1.2/11 The Chairman appreciated all the work done. He commented that although there was no immediate haste, the Board should be aware of potential hazards.

30.1.3/11 Mrs Hurrell commented that the Common Agricultural Policy would not be reviewed until 2014. Cllr Reid confirmed that the Countryside Stewardship Scheme figure for the heathland maintenance costs used in the past was given as a guide to help assess the amount that could be needed in the future to maintain the Forest post HLS.

30.1.4/11 The Chairman thanked the working party for its work and recommended the following steps:

- a regular review of the Action Plan
- establish closer partnerships with the County Council and other organisations such as the High Weald Unit and Natural England
- confirm policies with regards to land owned by the Conservators
- prepare a confidential three year draft budget for discussion

In addition, the Committee agreed with Cllr Stogdon's recommendation that the future management structure and the development of the Forest Centre would have an impact on future plans.

### **31/11 Any urgent item of which the Clerk has notice in order to pass to the elected Chairman.**

There being no other business the meeting moved to the confidential session.