

**Minutes of the
FINANCIAL & REGULATORY COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE
BOARD OF CONSERVATORS OF ASHDOWN FOREST**

Monday 13 September 2021

14.00 via MS Teams

Committee members present: Mr C de Mestre (Chair), Mr AG Reid, Mr Stogdon and Ms F Thomas

Ex-Officio: Mrs R St. Pierre

Also present: Mr J Adler (CEO), Mrs K Dirs (Business Services Manager), Ms A Mattison (Finance Officer) and Mrs S Tidy

Members of the public: Mr Chris Siddons and Ms Lisa Bills (Nutley Fete Committee) joined for item 30.03/21

Minutes taken by the Business Services Manager

		Action
26/21	<p>Apologies Apologies were received from Ms McAll, Cllr. Roundell and Cllr Howell</p>	
27/21	<p>Declarations of interest by Members of a Personal or Prejudicial Nature Mr de Mestre declared he is a commoner grazier and receives the BPS payment</p>	
28/21	<p>Matters Arising The CEO confirmed Ash Walmsley had been appointed to the role of Countryside Manager and would commence employment on 11 October. A suitable candidate had been identified for the role of Finance Officer and would commence employment early November, subject to referencing.</p> <p>The Business Services Manager reminded the Committee that the matter of a licence for White House Barn was still open and advised she would follow up with Mr Stogdon after the meeting. ACTION: KD</p>	KD
29/21	<p>Finance <i>29.01/21 To review the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP)</i> The Chair gave an overview of the three-year plan due to be presented to ESCC Cabinet on 20 October. The plan estimated annual income in the region of £1M year on year. The Chair explained the plan demonstrated a balanced financial position with current resources, but there was no room to expand and he advised that indexation of expenses and the increase in National Insurance contributions was not reflected in the current plan. The Chair highlighted that pension contributions were lower than anticipated in the budget.</p> <p><i>29.02/21 To review the 2021/2022 Q1 finance summary</i> The Chair presented the Core budget and advised that income for Q1 was lower than forecast with an overall variance of -£95k (budget £208k versus actual £113k). This was partly due to timing and the CS multiplier, along with lack of income from The Ashdown Forest Foundation. There had been no income from Barn Sales (the Barn was closed during the pandemic) and whilst riding permit sales had generated £31k of income against a budget of £10k, the income had not been deferred through the year and total receipts had been included in Q1.</p>	

	<p>Invoices for Commoners Rates and Track Rents were issued late in the quarter although almost half of the income was received in this period.</p> <p><i>29.03/21 To review the revised CS finance summary to 31 August 2021</i> The Chair spoke to the summary acknowledging that liquidity had materially improved. He explained the CS forecast included the headline recovery figure of £120k which is due to be released by the RPA. This money had been part of a long running eligibility disagreement in relation to disputed land parcels. The RPA will remove ineligible features such as cricket pitches and surfaced tracks from the agreement and will allocate funds once this exercise had been completed. The CEO concluded that a robust management plan will be created to explain how the organisation will deliver the CS programme going forward. ACTION: JA</p> <p>Mrs Tidy queried the income from the Sussex Pony and Grazing Conservation Trust and asked whether the project was generating income. The CEO responded that the grazing offer would be part of a wider grazing review and advised the remaining funds due from the charity will be transferred now the charity has liquidated.</p>	<p>JA</p>
<p>30/21</p>	<p>Forest Amenity <i>30.01/21 Renewal of Refreshment Licence 2022</i> The Business Services Manager spoke to her report, highlighting the popularity of the introduction of coffee huts and explained whilst litter management had been an initial concern for Forest users, the vendors had established rigorous measures to control litter. She proposed the refreshment offer be extended for another year with the ability for applicants to offer monthly uncapped ‘rental’ for a car park (subject to open-book accounts). The Committee unanimously supported the proposal to extend the refreshment provision for a further year, after which a longer tenure can be considered. ACTION: KD</p> <p><i>30.02/21 To consider the implementation of car parking charges</i> The CEO explained that an in-house feasibility study for car park charging was underway and extensive advice had been sought from Officers at Epping Forest and at other rural locations. The aim of the project is to examine the potential and feasibility of delivering core cost contributions to the management of Ashdown Forest, by charging for the use of Forest car parks. The study will assess a model through which charges may be introduced and managed and, if approved by the Board, it will create an implementation plan for car park charging from early April 2022. The CEO confirmed a feasibility study would be presented at an Extraordinary Board on 27 September. ACTION: JA</p> <p><i>30.03/21 To consider temporary storage for Nutley Village fete</i> The Committee considered a comprehensive report submitted by Mr Siddons of the Nutley Fete Committee. Mr Siddons explained that Nutley Village Fete had been held annually on Fords Green for the past 40 years and was an important part of community life. The existing storage facility for the fete equipment was no longer available and without a sufficient storage facility, the future of the fete was in jeopardy. Mr Siddons explained he was seeking permission from the Conservators to store a container in woodland adjacent to Fords Green to house the fete equipment. Mr Siddons advised that Fords Green Management Committee had given unanimous support to the proposal and he had engaged with a number of stakeholders including Wealden District Council, Nutley Parish Council, and had sought legal advice from solicitor Matthew Boyer. Mr Reid thanked Mr Siddons for his extremely informative report and for consulting with various stakeholders before approaching the Conservators.</p>	<p>KD</p> <p>JA</p>

	The Committee considered the proposal and agreed it would enhance the amenity value of the Forest for the inhabitants of Nutley. The CEO confirmed the proposed location was not part of the SSSI. The Committee unanimously supported the proposal to permit the siting of a storage container on Fords Green, subject to planning permission and a licence formalising the agreement with a three year review period. The CEO to liaise with Nutley Fete Committee to confirm the process: ACTION JA	JA
31/21	Breach of Bye-law issue and encroachments	
	The Business Services Manager advised of a potential Bye-law breach at a property in Chelwood Gate, whereby the overdevelopment of a driveway had caused direct damage to the Forest. The Business Services Manager to establish/confirm land ownership and the Ranger to liaise with the landowner with a view to rectifying the breach. ACTION: KD	KD
32/21	Licences, Permits, Rates and Wayleaves	
	The Business Services Manager reported the advancement of the rollout of fibre to rural communities, which had generated a number of new wayleave requests.	
33/21	Employment & Staffing Arrangements	
	Reported at start of meeting.	
34/21	Policy and Procedure and Statutory Documents	
	The Business Services Manager advised of two new policies in the pipeline; a CCTV policy and a Company Mobile Phone policy. Draft policies will be circulated to the relevant parties in due course.	
35/21	Health and Safety and Insurance claims (standing item) verbal update	
	Nothing to report.	
36/21	Data breaches (standing item) verbal update	
	There were none.	
37/21	Election of Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee for the following year	
	Chair: Mr de Mestre was nominated by Mr Reid and seconded by Mr Stogdon. Mr de Mestre was duly elected to the position of Chair for the term of one year. Vice-Chair: Cllr Roundell was nominated by Mr de Mestre and was seconded by Mr Stogdon. Cllr Roundell was duly elected to the position of Vice-Chair for the term of one year.	
38/21	Any Urgent Item of which the Clerk has notice in order to pass to the elected Chairman	
	There were none.	

The meeting closed at 15:00