



Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Conservators of Ashdown Forest

Monday 6 June 2011 at 14.30

Ashdown Forest Centre

Present: Mr R Thornely-Taylor (Chairman), Cllr J Barnes, Cllr C Dowling, Mr J Francis, Mr Roy Galley, Cllr C Hardy, Mrs D Hurrell, Cllr A Reid, Cllr R Stogden, Cllr R St.Pierre and Cllr F Whetstone.
 In attendance: Mr C Marrable (Acting Forest Superintendent from 7 June 2011)
 Minutes were taken by Mrs R Marriott (Clerk).

The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed the member of the public present.

	Item	Action
12/11	Apologies. Apologies were received from. Cllr N Bennett, Mr M Cooper, Mr P Glyn Dr H Prendergast (Director) Mr J Spicer and Cllr M Weaver. The Board agreed to send their best wishes to Mr Cooper after his recent operation.	
13/11	Declarations of any interest by Members of a Personal or Prejudicial Nature. Mr Reid and Mr Galley declared an interest in Minute 13.5/11 of the RPA Minutes.	
14/11	Welcome to new Board Members – WDC appointees Cllrs Hardy and Weaver and to the Chairman of ESCC, Cllr Dowling, the new Lord of the Manor. The Chairman welcomed all the new members and hoped they would enjoy their time on the Board.	
15/11	Election of Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Board (as per Standing Order 1.2) The Clerk invited nominations for the post of Chairman of the Board. Cllr Whetstone nominated Mr Thornely-Taylor and Mr Galley seconded the proposal. There being no other nominations, Mr Thornely Taylor was duly elected as Chairman for a further year. The Clerk then invited nominations for the post of Vice Chairman of the Board. Cllr John Barnes nominated Mr Galley and Cllr Reid seconded the proposal. There being no other nominations, Mr Galley was duly elected as Vice Chairman for a further year.	
16/11	Allocation of new Board members to Committees. As it was not possible to confirm the new appointments to the board which had been made by the County Council, Cllr St Pierre proposed that no decision be made until the next Board meeting which would give time for the new members to determine on which committees they wished to sit. In the meantime, new members could be allocated to committees under the co-option scheme.	RM
17/11	To approve the minutes of the Board meeting of 7 March 2011, and matters arising – BD 08/11. The minutes of the last meeting had been circulated and were assessed by the Board for accuracy. There were no changes. The minutes were duly approved. Matters Arising 06/11. The redrafted discussion paper,BD03/11, had not been ready for the last RPA meeting but would be presented at the next meeting on 11 July 2011. BD09/11 The Board noted the lack of a formal policy for holding land. The Clerk was asked to make further investigations with regard to land owned by the Conservators.	MC/RPA RM
18/11	To approve the minutes of the Conservation Committee meeting of 28 March 2011 – BD 10/11. The Chairman asked Cllr St Pierre to present the minutes of the meeting which had been assessed by the Committee for accuracy. There were no changes. The Minutes were duly received and approved	

	<p>Matters Arising. <i>11/11 re Tree disease policy and procedure.</i> Cllr St Pierre commented that work being done by the South Downs National Park on Dutch Elm disease may prove useful. She offered to share any information received. The Board noted the Forest Superintendent’s paper; he reported that training for the Rangers had been arranged.</p> <p><i>13/11 re Wych Cross Reservoir.</i> The Clerk reported that South East Water had confirmed that the leak at the reservoir had been mended. However, it is understood that chlorinated water is still leaking onto the Forest. Whilst the source is unknown, it was agreed that South East Water should be pressed to investigate the matter and mend the leak as a matter of urgency.</p> <p><i>18/11.1</i> Cllr Barnes asked what impact the severe winter had had on the Forest. The Forest Superintendent reported that the sheep had coped well with the harsh winter. The weather conditions had not delayed their turning-out onto the Forest. There had only been one fire, despite the dry spring; its location and the weather conditions at the time had prevented it becoming wide spread.</p> <p>18/11.2 The Board agreed that the Forest Superintendent should be the Board’s representative on the Deer Management Group.</p> <p><i>18/11.3</i> Mr Francis reported that he had attended the Friends’ tour of Pippingford Park, lead by Mr Morriss. He noted that the ponies had had a dramatic effect, trampling bracken which had allowed the heather to recover. Mr Morriss had stated that deer had been culled on the estate over the last four years, reducing the herd by about 25% each year.</p>	<p>RM</p>
<p>19/11</p>	<p>To approve the minutes of the Roads, Planning & Amenities Committee meeting of 18 April 2011–BD 11/11. The Chairman asked Mr Francis to present the minutes of the last meeting which had been assessed by the Committee for accuracy. There were no changes. The Minutes were duly received and approved in accordance with Standing Order 2.6.</p> <p>Matters Arising. <i>13.1/11 re Forest Centre Development.</i> Cllr Barnes confirmed that he and Mr Cooper would invite a member of staff to join the working party when it next met.</p> <p><i>13.7/11 re Car parking charges on the Forest.</i> The Director had been unable to prepare the paper on car parking charges. The Clerk agreed to look at the Director’s notes with a view to preparing a paper for the next RPA. The Chairman informed the Board that a new Forest app containing ten walks that take visitors to all corners of the Forest was now available. QR readers for compatible mobile phones were in some of the car parks</p> <p><i>14.1/11 re Land at Little Snuff</i> The boundary matter had been resolved. The Clerk was asked to write to the owner with regards to the other bye-law breaches.</p> <p><i>19/11.1 Ashdown Forest Life</i> The Board agreed the Clerk should pursue the possibility of including editorial from Ashdown Forest Life in the freely circulated Ashdown Forest Living. If successful, this would allow HLS funds to be used elsewhere. The editorial would be published on the Conservators’ web site.</p>	<p>JB/MC</p> <p>RM</p> <p>RM</p>

<p>20/11</p>	<p>To approve the minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting of 23 May 2011 - BD 12/11.</p> <p>The Chairman asked Cllr Whetstone to present the minutes of the last meeting which had been assessed by the Committee for accuracy. The Minutes were duly received and approved in accordance with Standing Order 2.6.</p> <p>Matters Arising.</p> <p><i>10/11 The Board's finances</i> Mr Galley expressed his concern over the deferment of the discussion about the Board's finances. The Chairman commented that the rôle of the Director's replacement had yet to be determined and the outcome would have an impact on the Board's resources. Cllr Whetstone pointed out that ESCC had budgeted to reduce its grant to the Forest by 25%; 10% had been cut this year and the rest would be cut over the next two years. Cllr Reid said it was important to identify the Board's strategies.</p> <p><i>11/11 Budget for the development of the Forest Centre</i> The Chairman said that following the meeting with the staff, the figures for the business plan for the Centre development would be closely examined by the working party. The Clerk was asked to arrange an extra F&GP Committee meeting to look at the potential impact of Government policies and the Board's income sources.</p> <p><i>14/11 New staff appointments</i> The Clerk informed the Board that two new appointments had been made; Gerry Lee had been appointed Countryside Worker and Jo Walsh had been appointed as Grazing Assistant.</p> <p><i>15/11.1 Residents meeting on 7 June 2011</i> Mrs Hurrell said that she had invited the Friends of Ashdown Forest to speak at the Residents meeting with a view to encouraging membership.</p>	<p>CDWP RM</p>
	<p><i>15/11.2 Post of Director</i> The Chairman stated that the Executive Committee had met to put in place working arrangements so that the management of the Forest could continue whilst the rôle of a new appointee could be identified. During the next few weeks, it would be possible to identify the skills required for progressing the Centre development and whether these could be combined with the management of the Forest. The Director's post had been part-time and the Board would need to decide who or what was to replace it. Mr Francis said there was a need to identify where skills were lacking in the existing workforce.</p> <p>The Chairman invited Mr Marrable, who had already stated that he would not be willing to take on any work that involved the Centre development and would be taking up his post the next day, to offer his view. Mr Marrable stated that he had worked on the Forest for twenty seven years. Dr Prendergast had taken the management of the Forest in a different direction. He had spent a great deal of time on the Centre Development and had therefore delegated many of the old Forest Superintendent's rôles to other members of staff. Mr Marrable expressed his concern at the top heavy management. He stated that there was a clear rôle for a Forest Superintendent who could oversee the work of the Rangers and, in the future, when both he and Mrs Marriott retired, the role of Forest Superintendent and Clerk could be combined once more.</p> <p>Cllr Barnes commented that the rôle of Clerk had already been split from the technical role. There was clearly a need for a project manager but the Board should not be bounced into a new structure. Mr Galley agreed that a measured approach was necessary. It need not take a long time but the long term implications should be looked at. Cllr St.Pierre acknowledged the wisdom of Mr Marrable's six month appointment but pointed out the time scale for a new appointee; much had to be done before an advertisement could be placed in the professional magazines in September. She expressed her concern that the existing HLS grant would come to an end in five year's time and felt that a good job description should be ready in two months. Cllr Stogdon thought the matter had been handled very well. He did not agree that there was any urgency, stating that a good</p>	

	<p>arrangement was worth at least six months delay. Mrs Hurrell agreed with Cllr St.Pierre that the Board should be looking for new income sources. She wondered if the new White Paper on countryside grants being put forward might be of some interest. The Chairman stated that he would seek the advice about the timescale from the County Council's Human Resources Department which had been very helpful in the past. In the meantime, he was very optimistic that matters would go well whilst a reality check and a business plan for the Centre development was prepared by the Centre Development Working Party.</p>	<p>RTT</p> <p>CDWP</p>
21/11	<p>To receive the Statement of Accounts for the year ending 31 March 2011, approve the Accounting Statement, the Internal Auditor's report and the Annual Governance Statement for the year ending 31 March 2011 contained in the Annual Return and to approve the Annual Return.</p> <p>21/11.The Statement of Accounts, the Annual Return and the Internal Auditor's report had all been previously circulated.</p> <p>21/11.2 Cllr St.Pierre queried the large reserve and expressed concern that money should be spent. It was explained that reserves are high at the year end as the HLS grant is paid in February and October and cashflow statements show that reserves are significantly reduced just before the grant is paid.</p> <p>21/11.3 Cllr Stogdon proposed acceptance of the Statement of Accounts. Cllr St.Pierre seconded the proposal. The Board agreed.</p> <p>21/11.2 Cllr Whetstone proposed acceptance of the Annual Return. Cllr Barnes seconded the proposal. The Board Agreed.</p> <p>21/11.3 The Annual Governance Statement forms part of the Annual Return. It was noted and accepted by the Board.</p> <p>21/11.3 The Board received, noted and accepted the report from the Internal Auditor.</p>	
22/11	<p>Amendments to the Financial Regulations with the Standing Orders for approval – BD14/11</p> <p>The amendments to the Financial Regulations were noted and approved.</p>	
23/11	<p>To receive the minutes of the Executive Committee meetings of 24 March 2011 and 5 April 2011 – BD 15/11</p> <p>The Chairman read out an email he had received from Mr Glyn expressing his concern over the Executive Committee's decision to appoint the acting Superintendent. The Chairman had contacted all Board members when Dr Prendergast had announced his resignation to ask if they wanted an extraordinary meeting but none had requested a meeting. The Chairman had since spoken to Mr Glyn who had expressed his dismay that Board members had not requested a meeting.</p> <p>The Chairman stated that the Executive Committee had met in March in order to take immediate action. After discussions with the Clerk and Mr Marrable, the post of Forest Superintendent had been revived and this had provided an interim way forward with the appointment of Mr Marrable as acting Superintendent for six months. The post of Forest Superintendent provided a Line Manager for the Rangers and an overarching watch over the management of the Forest; this was not the same as a Director.</p>	
24/11	<p>Any Urgent Item of which the Clerk has notice in order to pass to the elected Chairman.</p> <p>There were no urgent items but Mrs Hurrell requested that a log of actions be instigated which could be taken at the beginning of each meeting. The Board welcomed the idea and the Clerk was asked to prepare such a log.</p> <p>The meeting closed at 16.30</p>	<p>RM</p>

Chairman _____

5 September 2011

Clerk _____