



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

Monday 22 November 2010 at 14.30

Ashdown Forest Centre

Present: Mr R Thornely-Taylor (Chairman), Cllr N Bennett, Mr M Cooper, Mr P Glyn, Mrs D Hurrell, Mrs R Marriott (Clerk), Cllr S Martin, Dr H Prendergast (Director), Cllr R Simmons, Mr J Spicer and Cllr F Whetstone.
Minutes taken by Mrs T Buxton.

The Chairman opened the meeting. There were two members of the public present.

	Item	Action
33/10	<p>Apologies Apologies were received from Mr R Galley (Vice Chairman), Cllr M Hoy, Cllr R St Pierre and Cllr R Stogdon.</p> <p>The Chairman welcomed Mrs Diana Hurrell, new Commoner Conservator recently elected to the Board.</p>	
34/10	<p>Declarations of any interest by Members of a Personal or Prejudicial Nature. The Chairman declared an interest in FGP minute 19.10.</p>	
35/10	<p>To approve the minutes of the Board meeting of 6 September 2010, and matters arising – BD 21/10. The minutes of the last meeting had been circulated and were assessed by the Board for accuracy. The Minutes were duly approved.</p> <p>Matters Arising - Minute 30.2/10 The Chairman reported that Mr Poole had resigned due to ill health. The Director reported that a bookkeeper, Ms Wheeler, had been successfully hired and was proving excellent. The Chairman reported that the split of duties between the Director and the Clerk was not yet finalised and that details were still under discussion. He said the successful hiring of the Ms Wheeler would allow the Mrs Marriott to take on the role of the Clerk and that the proposed expertise from County Council would be called in further down the line. Mrs Marriott said she had great confidence in the abilities of Mrs Temple and Ms Wheeler and they were working well together. The Chairman went on to say he had not been in a position to write to staff but would do so very soon. He would also ensure that the organisational change would be advertised to the wider public.</p>	RTT
36/10	<p>To approve the minutes of the Conservation Committee meeting of 20 September 2010 – BD 22/10. The Chairman asked Cllr Bennett 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 in accordance with Standing Order 2.6.</p> <p>Matters Arising – Minute 27/10 Cllr Bennett said temporary fencing was being utilised on the Forest; that the Grazing Officer was seeking volunteers to act as ‘lookers’; that extra in-bye land was being sought and that sheep breeding was being suspended. He went on to say that an ‘Away-Day’ for the Board was in the process of being organised for the spring.</p> <p>Minute 26/10 Cllr Martin said that although there had been resolution she was aware that water was still flowing. The Director replied that the tanks were currently being drained to look for leaks. The next step was to assess if the water was from the reservoir or ground water. If it was treated water it would mean there was a leak. The Director said he would be following up this issue.</p>	

	<p>Minute 29/10 The Director said there had been unable to attend the Deer Management Group Meeting. The final report would be available in early December. There was increasing co-ordination amongst landowners within the Pale and there were further meetings scheduled. Cllr Simmons asked how local deer management would be integrated and co-ordinated. The Director replied that deer problems were not confined to Ashdown Forest and said that Wealden District Council collected 133 carcasses from local roads, however, only a small proportion of those were from the Ashdown Forest area. He went on to say there were still issues to be resolved with landowners and stalkers, for example, the difference between conservation/ management shooting and stalker shooting. Stalkers were often looking for trophy bucks and not interested in taking does. Cllr Simmons said he was happy to see that policy was being pulled together and was interested in hearing that it was incorporating areas larger than Ashdown Forest.</p> <p>There was a short discussion regarding shooting on the Forest and all agreed that safety was the main concern. The Director said that even with co-ordinated shooting it could take 10 years to make a difference in the deer population. Mr Spicer, echoed by Mr Glyn, said it would be important to keep public be kept informed and all agreed that was sensible.</p>	
37/10	<p>To approve the minutes of the Roads, Planning & Amenities Committee meeting of 11 October 2010 – BD 23/10. The Chairman asked Mr Cooper 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 – Minute 28.1/10 The Director said he had contacted the property owner and there had been no response. Mr Cooper said he was happy to contact the property owner and close the matter.</p> <p>Minute 28.2/10 The Director said the property owner had been given two months to remove the signs. This period ends on 6 December. At present there was no change in the situation and the matter may go back to court.</p> <p>Minute 29.2/10 The Director said there had been a conversation with the property owner. He said the owners had agreed to pay the initial costs for the management of the roadside trees and agreed a commuted sum. However, the ‘sticking point’ was the land to be transferred to the Forest and, as the maps recently provided were unclear, further clarification was required. Cllr Whetstone suggested that the Board ask for the land northwards from the river to the garden fence as anything less than that would be complicated to manage. After a short discussion, Mr Spicer proposed that the Board ask the property owners for all of the unenclosed common land up to the access road to the property. Cllr Simmons seconded the proposal which, after a show of hands, was carried unanimously.</p> <p>The Board agreed to give delegated powers to the RPA Committee in order to deal with this matter and to ask the property owner for all of the unenclosed common land up to the access road to the property.</p> <p>Minute 30/10 The Director reported that the Working Party had, very recently, held a very constructive and encouraging meeting looking at, and commenting on, the latest plans. There would be a full updates in Minute 41/10.</p> <p>Minute 31/10 Mr Cooper reported he had met with Mr Spicer and a paper on a different way of dealing with by-law enforcement and encroachment had been drafted. This would be e-mailed to the Director as a basis for further discussion.</p>	<p>MC</p> <p>RPA</p>

	<p>Minute 32/10 The Director said he was making a visit to Malvern Hills and part of that would be looking at their experiences in regards to car park charges. There was a short discussion about the process involved finding a suitable contractor to manage and enforce car park charging. Cllr Martin asked that the Director find out how Malvern collect their monies and how they were insured against assault. The Chairman asked that the Director look at voluntary schemes and their effectiveness and that it was important to investigate in detail before getting further details on schemes.</p>	
38/10	<p>To approve the minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting of 1 November 2010 - BD 23/10. <i>The agreement of the Forest Rate and the review of the effectiveness of the internal audit for the year ended 31.03.2010 must both be formally minuted to satisfy the requirements of the external auditor.</i></p> <p>The Chairman asked Cllr Whetstone to present the minutes of the last meeting which had been assessed by the Committee for accuracy. There was a small change to be made in the attendance list. The Minutes were duly received and approved in accordance with Standing Order 2.6.</p> <p>Matters Arising - Minute 14/10 There was a very short discussion it was agreed the new wording be adopted.</p> <p>Minute 16/10 The Board noted that the F&GP Committee were satisfied that DMC had performed the internal audit in a logical and satisfactory manner and with a reasonable degree of thoroughness and appropriateness.</p> <p>Minute 17/10 There was a brief discussion regarding how the increase was calculated and Mr Cooper proposed that the rate be adopted. Mr Glyn seconded the proposal which, after a show of hands, was carried unanimously. The Board noted that the F&GP Committee had agreed the Forest Rate.</p> <p>Minute 18/10 There was a short discussion regarding riding fees. Cllr Whetstone said that the Ashdown Forest Riding Association would be advised of the increase. Mrs Marriott confirmed that this had been done. The Board noted that the F&GP Committee had agreed the scale of charges for activities.</p> <p>Minute 19/10 Cllr Whetstone asked if Mrs Temple's terms had been sorted out. The Director replied that an <i>ad-hoc</i> hourly rate had been agreed.</p>	
39/10	<p>To receive the Financial Update - BD 24/10.</p> <p>Cllr Whetstone said he was extraordinarily grateful to Mrs Marriott for taking the time to explain the accounts to him. He then talked to the document page by page. He asked Mrs Marriott about the surplus shown on page 4. She explained that there were various projects that would 'mop up' the amount shown such as the increase in pension contributions, flat rate payments to staff earning under £21,000, website, telephone, radio upgrades. Cllr Bennett proposed that the financial update and estimates should be adopted. Mr Cooper seconded the proposal which, after a show of hands, was carried unanimously. The Board approved the estimates and the Financial Update.</p>	
40/10	<p>To approve the meeting dates for 2011 / 2012 – BD25/10.</p> <p>The Chairman asked Board members to alert the Office as soon as possible if there were any problems with the meeting dates The Board approved the meeting dates.</p>	

41/10	<p>Forest Centre Development – verbal report.</p> <p>The Director said, as reported above, there had been a very productive meeting of the Working Party. The latest drawing had been presented to staff this morning and some useful comments had been made. A further meeting was planned with Ian Hurst and the drawings would be returned to the architects HMY to take into account the ideas and comments raised by staff. There was enough detail in the documents to go to the planners with a full planning application. However, the bat survey still needed to be done.</p> <p>There was a short discussion regarding fund raising in the current financial climate and it was hoped that the economic situation might improve.</p>	
42/10	<p>Any Urgent Item of which the Clerk has notice in order to pass to the elected Chairman.</p>	
	<p>There were no urgent matters. The Chairman asked if there was any other business.</p> <p>42.1/10 Cllr Martin raised a planning issue regarding a Forest property that had been converted to multiple residential units without planning permission. The Director said he was aware of the issue and that he had been in touch with the planning office regarding a statement made by the property owner on the status of the access to the site.</p> <p>42.2/10 Cllr Martin said she had been in touch with Danehill School who thought their recent educational visit to the Forest had been wonderful.</p> <p>42.3/10 Cllr Martin said that she had received an e-mail regarding the bund that had been constructed to prevent illegal parking at Dodds Bank. The Director said he was aware of the matter.</p> <p>42.4/10 Cllr Martin said there was an indication in the media that Birchgrove was up for sale.</p> <p>42.5/10 Cllr Simmons asked if the Ashdown Forest Deed would be contradicted car parking charges were introduced. The Director said car parking charges were not in any of the documents, however, the Ashdown Forest Act 1974 allowed the Conservators to raise funds how they wished.</p>	

There being no other business the meeting closed at 16.15.

Chairman _____

March 2011

Clerk _____