



**Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Conservators of Ashdown Forest
Monday 9 September 2013 at 14.00
Ashdown Forest Centre**

Present: Mr R Galley (Chairman), Mr A Reid (Vice Chairman), Cllr J Barnes, Cllr C Belsey, Mr M Cooper, Mr J Francis, Mr P Glyn, Cllr C Hardy, Mrs D Hurrell, Cllr R St. Pierre, Mr J Spicer, Cllr R Stogdon, Cllr S Tidy, Cllr M Weaver and Cllr F Whetstone.

In attendance: Mrs P Buesnel (Director) and Mrs R Marriott (Clerk). Minutes were taken by Mrs T Buxton.

There were no members of the public present.

	Item	Action
31/13	Apologies. Apologies were received from Cllr L Keeley.	
32/13	Declarations of any interest by Members of a Personal or Prejudicial Nature. There was none.	
33/13	To approve the minutes of the Board meeting of 10th June 2013, and matters arising – BD 24/13. The minutes of the last meeting had been circulated and assessed by the Board for accuracy. The minutes were duly received and approved in accordance with Standing Order 2.6. <i>33.1/13 Matters Arising</i> Mr Francis asked what progress had been made on the issue of creating new Commoners. The Chairman replied that a policy paper would be drafted in due course.	RM
34/13	To approve the minutes of the Extraordinary Board meeting of 22nd July 2013, and matters arising – BD 25/13. The minutes of the meeting had been circulated and assessed by the Board for accuracy. The minutes were duly received and approved in accordance with Standing Order 2.6. Cllr Stogdon queried the last line of the first paragraph. The Clerk said she had taken the line from the written notes provided by Cllr Stogdon but would review them and make the necessary alteration.	
35/13	To receive the minutes of the Roads, Planning & Amenities Committee meeting of 8th July 2013 - BD 26/13. The minutes of the meeting had been circulated and assessed by the Committee for accuracy. The minutes were duly received and approved in accordance with Standing Order 2.6. <i>35.1/13 Matters Arising</i> Mr Spicer reported that a paper on better recording methods for managing encroachments was being prepared for the next RPA meeting.	
36/13	To receive the minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee meetings of 12th August 2013 - BD 27/13. The minutes of the meeting had been circulated and assessed by the Committee for accuracy. The minutes were duly received and approved in accordance with Standing Order 2.6. <i>36.1/13 Matters Arising</i> Mrs Hurrell thanked Cllr Whetstone for his time as Chairman. <i>36.2/13</i> Mrs Hurrell drew the Board's attention to the raft of policies recommended by the Committee. She said the alterations made were minor. After a brief discussion the Board agreed to adopt the policies recommended. The Board agreed to adopt the following policies: Promotion of Dignity at Work; Grievance Policy; Vulnerable People Policy; Diversity and Equal Opportunities Policy; Child Protection Policy and Complaints Policy.	

	<p>36.3/13 After discussion it was agreed that the Recruitment and Selection Policy required further minor alterations regarding Panel selection and composition and these would be agreed at the next FGP Committee.</p> <p>36.4/13 FGP minute 26.3/13 was discussed at some length. It was reported that a good discussion had been held at the meeting and that clarity was required in the Standing Orders. The Board agreed the suggested changes in regards to calling extraordinary meetings and election of chair and vice chair. After discussion it was agreed that secret ballots would only be held when there was a tie.</p> <p>36.5/13 Mrs Hurrell, in conjunction with the Clerk, would produce amended wording for the Standing Orders to reflect the discussion on the issue of recording meetings, without prior permission or knowledge, and these would be agreed at the next FGP committee.</p>	DH/PB
37/13	To receive the minutes of the Forest Centre Development Committee of 15th July 2013 – BD 28/13	
	<p>The minutes of the meeting had been circulated and assessed by the Committee for accuracy. The minutes were duly received and approved in accordance with Standing Order 2.6.</p> <p>36.1/13 <i>Matters Arising</i></p> <p>Discussions continue with the Ashdown Forest Conservation Trust. Cllr Tidy proposed that the Board ask the AFCT to act as the fund-raising vehicle and explained that if they agreed this would change the nature of the relationship between the two bodies and have implications for both in terms of roles and responsibilities. Mr Francis seconded the proposal. The proposal was agreed by a show of hands.</p> <p>The Board agreed to ask that Ashdown Forest Conservation Trust consider acting as the fund-raising vehicle.</p>	
	<p>15.00 Mr Cooper left the meeting.</p> <p>15.05 Cllr Belsey left the meeting.</p>	
38/13	<p>To receive and if agreed, adopt, the Strategic Plan – BD 29/13.</p> <p>The Director drew the Board's attention to progress so far. She thanked Mrs Hurrell for her help and hard work. The consultation process was now over and, in the light of the comments received, amendments had been made to the Plan. It was noted that further additions to the text on Habitat Regulations were required. Mr Francis said it was important to make additions to the opening statement to cover SSSI, SAC and Natura 2000. Cllr Barnes said a statement about the importance of bio-diversity was also needed. Cllr St Pierre said that she had noticed further work was needed on the Conservation Committee section of the Plan. The Director said that the suggestions made would be incorporated into the Plan. The Chairman stated that he was happy to agree, in principle, the Strategic Plan and the Board concurred and agreed to delegate authority to the Chairman to agree the final wording so that there was no further delay. He also said that the focus for the Board and its Committees should now move to delivery.</p> <p>The Board agreed, in principle, to adopt the Strategic Plan.</p>	RSTP
39/13	To receive the Director's report – BD 30/13.	
	<p>The Director spoke to her report. She said that Mr Marrable, Conservation officer, had retired from the Forest after 30 years of dedicated service.</p> <p>The Board expressed its warm thanks and appreciation for the years of service given it by Mr Marrable. He would be hard to replace.</p>	
40/13	To receive the Clerk's report – BD 31/13.	
	<p>The Clerk spoke to her report. She said she and the Director had had a very useful meeting with Phillip Baker and Rebecca Herring of ESCC Legal Services and Melanie Griffin, the Assistant Director of Property at ESCC, who all recognised that ESCC have an interest in dealing with encroachments. The Clerk would be working closely with the team to draw up a procedure for effectively dealing with</p>	

encroachments and boundary issues. The procedure would be discussed at the next RPA. She went on to say that there was also a discussion regarding the Forest's VAT status and emphasis would now shift to this being part of a wider campaign. The Clerk also said she was working with the team on the increase of the Bye-law fines and this issue was making progress.

The Clerk said that the public and extraordinary meetings created a large amount of extra work for the office. The Chairman said that the Board needed to be more efficient in the terms of record keeping and working practices. Multiple e-mails on issues had led to things becoming rather 'slipshod' and evidence trails being lost. Cllr Stogdon said a thorough review of governance procedures was needed as recent events had shown how defective the structures were. He said it was wrong to expect staff to interpret legal advice. Cllr Barnes said it was right, in the light of the charges made by ESCC, to seek external legal advice. Cllr Whetstone agreed and said the right legal person had been approached and the fact that the Board did not see that advice in 2011 was a different matter. The Board then discussed the timeline relating to Millbrook Farm produced by the Clerk and the legal advice given which was apparently not shared with all the Board. The Chairman said that governance issues would be discussed at the next Executive Committee.

The Chairman said that the issues brought up at the public and extraordinary meetings had not caused any significant influx of correspondence therefore it did not appear to be a matter of great public concern. Mr Glyn said that the Board had not taken into account the deep feelings of the staff. The Chairman said he was happy to meet the staff and explain the position. He said he was going out and about with staff in a series of visits. He went on to say a line must now be drawn under the matter and the Board move on to do other things.

RG

13/13 Any Urgent Item of which the Clerk has notice in order to pass to the elected Chairman.

There was none.

The meeting closed at 16.10.

Chairman _____
November 2013

Clerk _____