

**Minutes of the  
ROADS PLANNING AND AMENITIES COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE  
BOARD OF CONSERVATORS OF ASHDOWN FOREST**

Monday 11 July 2011  
14.30 Ashdown Forest Centre

Committee members present: Mr MJ Cooper (Chairman), Mr JA Francis, Mr R Galley (*ex officio*), Cllr C Hardy, Mr C Marrable (*acting Superintendent*) and Mr J Spicer (Vice Chairman). Minutes taken by Mrs T Buxton.

In attendance: Cllr R St Pierre.

The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed the member of the public present. There were no questions.

**Action**

**18/11 Apologies.**

Apologies had been received from Mr R Thornely-Taylor (*ex officio*) and Mr I Hurst (advisor).

**19/11 Co-option of Committee Members**

Mr Marrable explained that the Committee was required by Standing Orders to co-opt its members. The Committee re-affirmed Mr Hurst and co-opted Cllr C Hardy.

**It was agreed that Cllr C Hardy be co-opted on to the Committee. It was agreed that Mr Hurst's co-option be re-affirmed.**

**20/11 Election of Chairman and Vice-Chairman**

Mr Marrable explained that the two positions required election as per the Standing Orders and asked for nominations for the Chairmanship.

Cllr St Pierre proposed Mr Cooper. This was seconded by Mr Francis and put to a vote, which was carried unanimously.

Mr Marrable then asked for nominations for the Vice-Chairmanship. Mr Galley proposed Mr Spicer. This was seconded by Mr Francis and put to a vote, which was carried unanimously. Mr Cooper thanked the Committee and took the Chair. He said he had been Chairman for five years now and was happy to continue as he hoped, given the recent staff changes, that it would be advantageous to have an element of continuity.

**21/11 Declarations of any interest by Members of a Personal or Prejudicial Nature.**

Mr Spicer declared an interest in minute 25/11 and Mr Galley in minute 22.4/11.

**22/11 Matters Arising – verbal reports.**

*22.1/11 Lamberts.*

This was currently with the solicitors and moving forward, albeit slowly.

*22.2/11 Browns Brook.*

This matter was now completed and the land registered. All that remained was for the boundary maps to be amended accordingly.

*22.3/11 Jessops.*

This matter was with the ESCC solicitors, there were no technical issues and the process was moving forward.

*22.4/11 Millbrook Farm.*

Mr Cooper briefly recapped the background for the benefit of Cllr Hardy. There had been comprehensive legal advice taken in regards of what might be possible. Two parcels of land had been offered as a potential *quid pro quo* against the Committee either assigning land to the property owner or providing a perpetual licence for the land concerned. Mr Marrable said the two

parcels of land being together would equal half of the land that was to be taken. One area was steep and inaccessible and the other isolated an interesting part of the existing medieval boundary. After discussion it was agreed that the Committee should not accept anything that was detrimental. All agreed it was important to find land that was adjacent, accessible and a reasonable area to represent a good *quid pro quo*. Mr Marrable said that, in his opinion, the encroachment should be registered and, when the property was sold, the land taken back. He went on to say that he was unsure if land could be exchanged under the 1974 Act and that Common land could not be enclosed. The Chairman replied that the encroachment could be an impediment to a future sale of the property. Mr Spicer said it was important to check if Mr Marrable was correct. The Committee was in unanimous agreement in wishing to seek an agreed settlement which gave some benefit to the Forest.

**It was agreed that Mr Marrable would go back the property owners and state in a formal letter why their proposal had been rejected and what was required to move the process forward.**

CM

**It was agreed that the issue would be discussed again at the October Committee meeting.**

*22.5/11 Snuff Cottage.*

Mr Marrable said that, to all intents and purposes, the land at Snuff Cottage was probably now lost to the Forest. He said it was a wake-up call for the Committee and that the Rangers must return to a robust annual programme of boundary walking, recording and reporting. There was agreement and the Chairman asked that an annual report be made to the Committee at the March meeting. This should be a standing item. Mr Spicer said that, when any issues or encroachments were noted the property owner should be written to. Failure to do so suggests that the Committee condones the encroachment.

Noting that the Committee's concerns following its site visit on 18 April were not confined to the matter of land registration above, Mr Cooper proposed that a firm letter should go to Mr Evatt. Mr Galley said that it was important to get a written assurance of compliance. Mr Francis said a series of follow up visits should be made for at least a 12 month period to check compliance and a log kept by the Ranger of his observations. Mr Spicer said the azaleas on the Forest should be removed.

**It was agreed a second letter, asking for a written assurance of compliance, be sent to the property owner.**

RM

**It was agreed that a formal programme of boundary walking, starting in winter 2011, be undertaken and a report made to the Committee in March each year.**

CM

**It was agreed that the Ranger should make follow-up visits to the property for at least a 12 month period and a sequential log should be kept detailing observations.**

CM/  
Ranger

*22.6/11 Car Parking Charges.*

The Chairman said this item took two strands – residents' parking (which rests with the F&GP Committee to set a scale) and public parking. So far the FGP Committee had not discussed setting a scale and the Chairman asked that it be added to their next agenda. Mr Marrable said that no further progress had been made on public car park charging, despite a long paper from Dr Prendergast and site visits to Malvern Hills. There was a long discussion on the pros and cons of public car-parking charges. There were concerns regarding 'creeping urbanisation', the Forest becoming 'like a country park', practicalities, costs, manpower and illegal parking on roadside verges etc. All agreed that they wished to avoid parking meters and traffic wardens; that any payment system could only be voluntary and, to encourage compliance, funds raised should be ring-fenced (litter picking, dealing with dog mess). There was a brief discussion regarding asking the Parishes to help with funding and it was agreed that the Parish Liaison Committee on 21<sup>st</sup> September would be a good forum for discussion. The suggestion that a pilot be tried at one car park close to the Forest Centre was discussed.

<p><b>It was agreed that public car parking charges be raised at the Parish Liaison Meeting on 21 September.</b></p>	<p><b>CM</b></p>
<p><b>The Committee asked that a scale of fees for resident's car parking be added to the next FGP agenda.</b></p>	<p><b>RM</b></p>
<p><b>23/11 Planning and property issues.</b></p>	
<p><i>23.1/11 Direction Board Specification within Perpetual Licence – RPA 08/11</i>  After some discussion it was agreed that the proposed dimensions be “60cm x 45cm and no more than one metre high and erected in a position approved by the Forest Ranger”. This should be added to the perpetual licence.</p>	
<p><b>The dimensions for sign boards should be added to the perpetual licence as detailed above.</b></p>	<p><b>RM</b></p>
<p><i>23.2/11 Proposed change of access to Barnsden House – RPA 09/11</i>  There was a discussion on the complex issues raised and it was agreed a site visit was required. The next opportunity for this would be the October Committee meeting. The property owner should be advised of the date of the next meeting to ensure they are aware and available on the day.</p>	
<p><b>The property owner should be written to and advised of the Committees decision to hold a site visit, advised of the date and asked to be available.</b></p>	<p><b>RM</b></p>
<p><i>23.3/11 Access to Fairwarp Sports Field – RPA 10/11</i>  After discussion it was agreed that, due to the terrain and usage, tarmac could be used on the access. It was also agreed that a perpetual licence could be granted and the Clerk was to use her discretion as to the annual fee.</p>	
<p><b>It was agreed that tarmac could be used on the access and that a perpetual licence could be granted. The Clerk was to use her discretion as to the annual fee.</b></p>	<p><b>RM</b></p>
<p><i>23.3i/11 Access to Priory Road Fields – RPA 10a/11</i>  Mr Marrable raised the issue of access to fields at Priory Road and tabled a map. He reported that the track was long, clay soil, muddy in wet weather and through woodland. He was concerned that the track would spread. After discussion it was agreed that the track could be made up with road stone under very close supervision and control by the Ranger. The access would remain agricultural.</p>	
<p><b>It was agreed that road stone could be used on the access and under the close control and supervision of the Ranger.</b></p>	<p><b>Ranger</b></p>
<p><i>23.4/11 Chelwood Gate Cricket Ground – RPA 11/11</i>  Mr Marrable explained the situation and reported that the covers had been on the land in question for over a week. All agreed the encroachment was outrageous and unacceptable. Mr Marrable said a letter had been written to the Cricket Club and, to date, there had not been a reply. The Chairman said a further letter should be written stating that a response was expected within ten days, and, if there was no response the matter would be passed immediately to the County Solicitors for action.</p>	
<p><b>It was agreed that a second letter be sent to the Cricket Club requesting a response within 10 days of receipt, and, if there was no response the matter would be passed immediately to the County Solicitors for action.</b></p>	<p><b>RM/CM</b></p>
<p><b>24/11 Forest Centre Development – notes from last working party meeting - tabled</b></p>	
<p>The Chairman said the working party had agreed to keep the Committee informed. The working party were revisiting the business plan and looking at a funding strategy. There was a short discussion regarding a fundraiser. Staff were now included on the working party and their suggestions were noted.</p>	
<p><b>25/11 Use of Forest for parking at sporting events – RPA 12/11</b></p>	

Mr Spicer had tabled this item and there was a discussion regarding sports grounds on the Forest; that some were allowed by the Act, that there was a 'peppercorn rent' for some and licences for others. Mr Spicer pointed out that up to 66 cars could be parked at the Colemans Hatch cricket ground and they contributed nothing to the Forest. He felt that they should make a contribution.

Mr Marrable said that four grounds were set aside in the Act, however, he was unsure how the others had come into existence and by what right. After a short discussion it was agreed this matter required further thought.

**A briefing paper detailing the history, rental, licence of each sports field with recommendations, including a financial element, should be compiled for the next meeting.**

CM

**26/11 Friends offer to assist with financing dog waste bins – RPA 13/11**

There was a discussion regarding the constructive and very generous approach from the Friends. There was concern that the Forest would take on an 'urbanised' and 'country park' look and that the Board would not have the long term finances to continue providing bins after the one year period.

**The Friends would be sent a 'no thank you for your generous offer' letter detailing the Committee's rationale and this would be followed up with a phone call to Mr Streeter.**

CM

**27/11 Any urgent item for which the Director has notice in order to pass to the elected Chairman**

Cllr Hardy stated that WDC did not do enough to enforce tree protection orders. He recognised that this was not a Forest problem. Mr Galley said that, sadly, it was down to lack of resources and was a budgetary issue.

For the record the Chairman recalled that there had been a great deal of discussion and several meetings with Crowborough mountain bikers. The Board had made considerable concessions and detailed an area of land that could be made available. They had been asked, well over a year ago, to come up with their proposals and they had failed to respond.

There was no other business. The next meeting is Monday 17<sup>th</sup> October, preceded by a site visit to Barnsden House. The meeting closed at 16.30 hours.