



Minutes of the Board Meeting of the Board of Conservators
Monday 19 June 2023 at 14.00
Cats Protection Visitor Centre, Lewes Road, Chelwood Gate, RH17 7TT

Present: Ms S McAll (Chair), Mrs R St Pierre (Vice Chair), Mrs S Tidy, Mr R Stogdon, Mr J Squire, Cllr P Pragnell, Mr A Reid, Ms F Thomas, Mrs L Maudslay, Mrs E Riminton-Drury, Cllr J Howell, Cllr R Millward, Mr G Owen-Williams, Mr N Mawdsley, Isabel Manweiler

In attendance: Mr A Walmsley (Countryside Manager) and Mrs C Janjetich (Company Secretary - interim)

Minutes were taken by the interim Company Secretary

Members of the public present: Mr Robin St Clair Jones, Mrs Beth Morgan (The Ashdown Forest Foundation) and Martyn Everitt (WDL)

	Item	Action
	The Chair welcomed new members; Cllr Rachel Millward, Cllr Gareth Owen-Williams, and Isabel Manweiler to the meeting.	
12/23	Apologies Mr N Goldie-Scot	
13/23	Declarations of any interest by Members of a Personal or Prejudicial Nature Isabel Manweiler – interest in the landscape recovery plan as they are farmers and potential partners	
	Tributes to James Adler from the Board The Chair gave tribute to James Adler (CEO) describing him as a visionary and a very hard worker. He understood that the Forest needed to be part of the larger landscape and saw the way to bring this about. He was a relationship builder and from day one set out to make links with neighbours and build a network of partnerships. This included reaching out to many organisations with interests in Winnie the Pooh, including Disney, forming them into a group to prepare for the Pooh Centenary. James was an extraordinary person, was perfect for the job of running Ashdown Forest and loved the job. He burned brightly but burnt out all too quickly. Other members of the board contributed their thoughts. It had been a privilege to work alongside James over the last 2 ½ years. They were magical, special years and the Board were committed to implementing his vision for the Forest.	
14/23	Notice by the Chair of any urgent business items The Chair explained that without a CEO/Clerk, under paragraph 15, Extraordinary Circumstance, the Chair needed to delegate CEO/Clerk responsibilities for the purposes of this meeting. Countryside Manager, Mr Ash Walmsley was nominated, and it was agreed by the Board.	
15/23	To review the Board Action Log The Company Secretary advised that the Action Log was updated, and that the Deer Project Drone report had been circulated.	

	There is no further action	
16/23	<p>To approve the minutes of the Board meeting of 13 March 2023 and matters arising</p> <p>The minutes had been circulated and assessed by the Board for accuracy.</p> <p>The minutes were duly received and were approved in accordance with Standing Order 2.7</p>	
17/23	<p>To receive the minutes of the Executive Committee of 04 April, 02 May 2023 and matters arising</p> <p>The minutes had been circulated and assessed by the Board for accuracy</p> <p>The minutes were duly received and were approved in accordance with Standing Order 2.7</p> <p><u>17.01.23 Discussion about Firearms on the Forest</u></p> <p>The Countryside Manager raised a question concerning the use of firearms by Commoners to protect their livestock on the Forest. Different viewpoints were discussed relevant to Commoner Rights, the legal right of livestock owners to protect livestock under the Dogs (Protection of Livestock) Act 1953, the safety of animals and the public, and how to mitigate risks through additional signage. The Board accepted that Commoners should be permitted to use firearms on Ashdown Forest to protect their livestock and that this needed to be reflected in the Forest's health and safety documentation.</p> <p>Action: Look at Firearms Policy to ensure wording is appropriate</p>	AW
18/23	<p>To receive the minutes of the Programme Committee meeting of 22 May 2023</p> <p>The minutes had been circulated and assessed by the Board for accuracy.</p> <p>The Chair of Programme Committee reported that the meeting had an interesting discussion on Deer Management. The Chair explained that delivery of the management plan had been pushed back to September or October due to unforeseen circumstances.</p> <p>The minutes were duly received and were approved in accordance with Standing Order 2.7</p>	
19/23	<p>The Finance and Regulatory Committee meeting of 05 June 2023 and matters arising</p> <p>The Chair of the Finance and Regulatory Committee gave a detailed summary of the current financial position, highlighting the deficit and the derecognition of the Rents and Rates accrual. The Chair stressed the importance of a new Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system in improving efficiency within the organisation.</p> <p><u>19.1/23 To approve the Statement of Accounts 2022/23</u></p> <p>The Board agreed the Statement of Accounts</p> <p><u>19.2/23 Internal Audit Letter of Comfort and comments</u></p> <p>The Audit Letter had 4 minor items, debtors now going to be looked at monthly.</p> <p>Approved and the Board unanimously agreed.</p> <p><u>19.3/22 Annual Return (Section 1): To consider and approve the Annual Governance Statement 2022/23</u></p>	

	<p>The Clerk read out the Governance Statements and sought approval from the Board for each individual statement.</p> <p>The Board considered and approved all Annual Governance Statements</p> <p><u>19.4/23 Annual Return (Section 2): To consider the Accounting Statements 2022/23</u></p> <p>The Clerk asked the Board to consider the Accounting Statements.</p> <p>The Board considered and agreed the Accounting Statements</p> <p><u>19.5/23 Annual Return (Section 2): To approve and sign the Accounting Statements 2022/23</u></p> <p>The Board approved the Accounting Statements, which were signed by the Chair on behalf of the Board.</p> <p><u>19.6/23 To approve the Financial Regulation May 2023</u></p> <p>The Board agreed and approved</p> <p><u>19.7/23 To approve the Standing orders May 2023</u></p> <p>The Board agreed and approved</p> <p><u>19.8/23 Acting Up Policy Draft</u></p> <p>The Chair explained to the Board why this Policy was to be considered and requested members to pass on any comments they had on it.</p>	
<p>20/23</p>	<p>Interim Update</p> <p>The Countryside Manager thanked the members of the Board and the Forest’s supporting charities for all the support given to the team over the last few weeks. The loss of James was huge, but the team was working hard to realise James’s vision.</p> <p>Car Parking was performing to expectation. Very few parking charge notices had been issued indicating a high compliance rate. Vandalism to parking signs had reduced. At the end of a calendar year of operation of the scheme which launched in November 2022, a review will be undertaken to see if improvements can be made to the system.</p> <p>Car Park repairs are ongoing and contractors have been booked.</p> <p>The Landscape Recovery project is progressing. Mark Infield is taking the lead. The process to prepare a bid for grant funding for the development phase was launched with a meeting of partners. The deadline for submitting the bid is 21/09/23. Mark will meet with all potential partners, with CLM, other companies, and with the Weald to Waves partnership to develop a strong bid.</p> <p>Preparations for the Winnie the Pooh centenary in 2026 continue. Ashdown Forest and TAFF were invited to a meeting at the Walt Disney Company offices in London to discuss potential collaborations.</p> <p>Ashdown Forest has or will attend a number of local festivals and village fairs and fetes. Participation in the two day Forest Row Festival was a success and allowed a lot of positive engagement with members of the public.</p>	

21/23	<p>The Ashdown Forest Foundation (TAFF) – Verbal update (Standing Item)</p> <p>The Vice Chair advised that the process to amalgamate the three charities established to support Ashdown Forest was on going but that no agreement had yet been reached. A due diligence process will be done around a £100k legacy donation. Expenditure made by TAFF has been for small items so far. TAFF has been attending village fates together with Ashdown Forest staff. The Vice Chair sought agreement from the Board to vote for Robin St Clair Jones, Jonathan Mills and Kathryn Aalto, independent trustees on TAFF, whose TAFF board positions were up for renewal.</p> <p>The Board agreed</p>	
22/23	<p>Election of Chair and Vice Chair of the Board</p> <p>Prior to the meeting nominations were invited for the position of Chair to the Board of Conservators. Sylvia Tidy nominated Susan McAll and this was seconded by Rosalyn St Pierre.</p> <p>There being no other nominations, Ms McAll was duly elected as Chair for a period of twelve months.</p> <p>Prior to the meeting nominations were invited for the position of Vice Chair to the Board of Conservators. Susan McAll nominated Rosalyn St Pierre and this was seconded by Elizabeth Riminton-Drury.</p> <p>There being no other nominations, Ms St Pierre was duly elected as Vice Chair for a period of twelve months.</p>	
23/23	<p>Allocation of Board Members to Committees</p> <p>Board members chose the Board committee they wanted to be members of, and these were agreed by the Chair.</p> <p>Board members were reminded that they do need to attend committee meetings.</p>	
24/23	<p>Any urgent Item of which the Clerk has noticed in order to pass to the elected Chair</p> <p>The Vice Chair gave an update on the CEO recruitment, proposing a similar process to the previous one be followed. They advised against using a recruitment agency. Three members of the Board volunteered to sit on a working group to discuss the CEO role which would start work in July.</p> <p>It was discussed and agreed that the new CEO would be joining Ashdown Forest to fulfil the existing vision and to build upon it.</p> <p>The Vice Chair updated on recruitment of the Company Secretary role, noting that the position would become a full time position. The Board discussed where the title of Clerk to the Conservators was best placed within the organisations existing positions. It was decided that the title of Clerk would remain with the position of CEO as the most senior officer, who would delegate the duties to the Company Secretary. The Board agreed to keep the title of the position to be recruited as Company Secretary.</p> <p>Clarification was given that the Company Secretary will be part of the senior management team.</p>	
	<p>There being no further business, the meeting closed at 15:47pm.</p>	

Chair _____

Clerk _____

UNADOPTED