

Report to:	Cabinet
Date:	24 September 2025
Report By:	Chief Operating Officer
Title of Report:	Ashdown Forest Trust Fund
Purpose of Report:	To inform Cabinet of the movements on the Trust Fund during 2024/25 and request a draw from the General Reserve.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet is recommended to:

- 1) note the report and the Ashdown Forest's Trust Income and Expenditure Account for 2024/25 and Balance Sheet as at 31 March 2025; and**
 - 2) approve the draw of £99,200 from the General Reserve to fund a programme of tree surveys and works across the forest.**
-

1. Background

1.1. The Ashdown Forest Trust, a registered charity, was set out by declaration of Trust in 1988. East Sussex County Council is the trustee and agrees grants made to the Ashdown Forest Conservators, from the Ashdown Forest Trust Fund.

2. Supporting Information

2023/24 Accounts

2.1. Subsequent to the 2023/24 accounts being approved, the independent Examination process has now been completed in accordance with Section 145 of the Charities Act 2011.

2.2. The Examiner's report is attached as Appendix 1. It does not identify any issues that require any further action by the Council as the trustees.

2024/25 Accounts

2.3. The Trust's Income and Expenditure Account and Balance Sheet are set out in the attached Appendix 2. The Income and Expenditure Account shows a surplus in 2024/25 of £9,062, as a result of no legal cost being incurred during the year.

2.4. The main source of income to the Trust relates to the rent from the Royal Ashdown Golf Club at £70,000 per annum. The only other income this year was from bank interest.

2.5. The expenditure mostly relates to the £65,100 grant paid to the Ashdown Forest Conservators. The remaining expenditure was for audit fees.

2.6. The accumulative General Reserve totalled £188,346 at 31 March 2025.

2.7. A formal annual report and statement of accounts will be compiled in accordance with the Charity Commission's Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) by the end of January 2026, once the Independent Examiner report has been received.

General Reserve

2.8. The General Reserve current balance is £188,346.

2.9. With the Ashdown Forest Trust Deeds it states in:

- Clause 3(2), the Trust are "promoting the conservation of Ashdown Forest as a quiet and natural area of outstanding beauty and as an amenity and place of last resort for members of the public".
- Clause 7(1)(c), gives the Council power as trustee to permit the Conservators "to apply any profits rents or other income of Ashdown (whether collected by the Conservators or paid to the trustee by the Conservators) in furtherance of the object set out in clause 3 above and so that the trustee may authorise the Conservators to determine the manner in which such profits rents or other income are to be applied in furtherance of the said object..."

2.10. The Conservators have provided the information at Appendix 3, which highlights a £113,700 programme of tree surveys and works required across the forest.

2.11. The Conservators have already carried out the work defined as very urgent and urgent, leaving £107,200 outstanding, of which a further £8,000 will be covered by the Conservator's budget.

2.12. The Conservators have requested to draw the remaining £99,200 from the General Reserve.

3. Conclusion and Recommendation

3.1. The Trust made an operating surplus of £9,062 during 2024/25. The General Reserve as at 31 March 2025 amounts to £188,346. This fund is available to finance expenditure which meets the Trust's objectives.

3.2. Cabinet is recommended to note the final accounts for the Ashdown Forest Trust and approve the allocation of £99,200 from the General Reserve.

ROS PARKER
Chief Operating Officer

Contact Officer: Andy Fowler
Tel No. 07825 552640
Email: andy.fowler@eastsussex.gov.uk

LOCAL MEMBERS

Councillors Roy Galley, Johanna Howell, Phillip Lunn, and Georgia Taylor