

COUNTRYSIDE JOINT GROUP

A meeting of the **COUNTRYSIDE JOINT GROUP** will be held in the **COUNTRYSIDE CENTRE, HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK, HUNTINGDON, CAMBRIDGESHIRE** on **THURSDAY, 19 APRIL 2007** at **2:30 PM** and you are requested to attend for the transaction of the following business:-

A G E N D A

APOLOGIES

1. MINUTES (Pages 1 - 4)

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Group held on 13th October 2006.

2. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

To receive from Members declarations as to personal and/or prejudicial interests and the nature of those interests in relation to any Agenda Item. Please see Notes 1 and 2 overleaf.

3. SENIOR RANGER'S REPORT (Pages 5 - 6)

To receive a report by the Senior Ranger (Hinchingsbrooke) on Park Activities for the period October 2006 to March 2007.

4. PAXTON PITS NATURE RESERVE

To receive a report "**TO FOLLOW**" by the Senior Ranger (Paxton Pits) on the Activities of the Paxton Pits Nature Reserve.

5. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

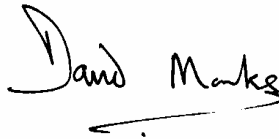
To note the next meeting of the Group will be held on Friday, 12th October 2007.

6. SHORT WALK AROUND THE PARK

To be led by the Senior Ranger to visit the llamas in the Park.

NB – Please bring along appropriate footwear to the meeting.

Dated this 10 day of April 2007



Chief Executive

Notes

1. *A personal interest exists where a decision on a matter would affect to a greater extent than other people in the District –*
 - (a) *the well-being, financial position, employment or business of the Councillor, a partner, relatives or close friends;*
 - (b) *a body employing those persons, any firm in which they are a partner and any company of which they are directors;*
 - (c) *any corporate body in which those persons have a beneficial interest in a class of securities exceeding the nominal value of £5,000; or*
 - (d) *the Councillor's registerable financial and other interests.*
2. *A personal interest becomes a prejudicial interest where a member of the public (who has knowledge of the circumstances) would reasonably regard the Member's personal interest as being so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Councillor's judgement of the public interest.*

Please contact Miss H Ali, Democratic Services, Tel: (01480) 387049 / email: Habbiba.Ali@huntsdc.gov.uk if you have a general query on any Agenda Item, wish to tender your apologies for absence from the meeting, or would like information on any decision taken by the Group.

Agenda and enclosures can be viewed on the District Council's website – www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk (under *Councils and Democracy*).

If you would like a translation of Agenda/Minutes/Reports or would like a large text version or an audio version please contact the Democratic Services Manager and we will try to accommodate your needs.

Agenda Item 1

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the COUNTRYSIDE JOINT GROUP held at Hinchingsbrooke Country Park, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire on Friday, 13 October 2006.

PRESENT: District Councillors M G Baker, Mrs M Banerjee, Mrs J Chandler and J D Fell and County Councillor Mrs E Kadic.

IN ATTENDANCE: Miss H Ali, Mrs J Arnold, P Knight and Mrs E Smith.

1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED

that District Councillor M G Baker be elected Chairman of the Group for the ensuing Municipal Year.

Councillor M G Baker in the Chair.

2. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Group held on 31st March 2006 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED

that District Councillor J D Fell be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Group for the ensuing Municipal Year.

4. MEMBERSHIP OF THE GROUP

The membership of the Countryside Joint Group for 2006/07 was noted as follows:-

(a) Cambridgeshire County Council

County Councillor Mrs E Kadic.

(b) Huntingdonshire District Council

District Councillors M G Baker, Mrs M Banerjee, Mrs J Chandler and J D Fell.

5. 2005/06 FINAL ACCOUNTS

The Group received and noted a report by the Treasurer (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) reflecting the final accounts for 2005/06, which indicated that net expenditure had been £232,000 representing an increase of approximately £20,000 compared with the

original budget.

Members were advised that this variation had occurred primarily as a result of increased National Non Domestic Rates, irrecoverable VAT and Central Department recharges, all of which had been beyond the direct control of the Senior Ranger.

At the same time, Members were pleased to note that £38,000 additional income had been generated by the Café since its opening in October 2005.

6. SENIOR RANGER'S REPORT

In receiving and noting the contents of the Senior Ranger's report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) comment was made as follows:-

(a) Volunteers and Staffing

Members were pleased to note the contribution that continued to be made by volunteers, particularly those with registered disabilities, and young people from the Youth Offending Scheme.

In response to questions from a Member regarding the health and safety of all volunteers in the Park, Members were assured that strict processes were set in place to prevent accidents from occurring, particularly for those volunteers with disabilities.

(b) Countryside Centre

Details of the number of users of the Countryside Centre for the period March 2006 – September 2006 inclusive were presented. Members were pleased to note that the number of users were at a similar level to those of the previous year. In response to questions, it was noted that charges for room hire had been based on those imposed for hire of village halls.

(c) Café

The Group were pleased to note the continued success of the café.

(d) Events and Activities

The Senior Ranger presented the Group with details of the events and activities at the Centre over the spring/summer period. Members were pleased to note the success of the literacy week and noted that another event would be arranged in the future.

(e) Wider District

Members noted the range of work being undertaken in other parts of the District. In particular, mention was made

of the footpath clearance and woodland work in the Thicket, St Ives and the installation of new dog bins around the Park, which had been provided by Wood Green Animal Shelter, as part of their “responsible dog ownership” project.

(f) Park Management

The Senior Ranger informed the Group of the various work being undertaken at the Country Park. Particular mention was made of the improvements to the toilets in the visitors’ centre and to the exterior of the Countryside Centre.

(g) Miscellaneous

Having discussed the problem of young people and litter within the Park and in particular the occurrence of broken glass, the Group noted that with the involvement of Park staff, the Police and CCTV, steps were being taken to prevent the problem from reoccurring. It was further reported that the existing byelaws for the Park would be reviewed in light of this matter.

Members were encouraged to note that membership of the “Friends of Hinchingsbrooke Country Park” had increased and welcomed the range of fundraising activities being organised by the Group.

In response to questions from a Member regarding the possible extension of the café, it was reported that due to a busy summer period, no further consideration had been given to the matter. A short discussion ensued on the possibility of using S106 monies from the Northbridge development to help fund any extension and it was reported that agreement had already been reached, in principle, to provide the Park with additional funding for staff. The Senior Ranger undertook to progress the plans for an extension to the café further and to report back thereon at the next meeting.

7. CHANGE OF NAME - COUNTRYSIDE JOINT GROUP

Members noted that the Cabinet had agreed to reconstitute the former Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Joint Liaison Group as the Countryside Joint Group at their meeting held on 18th May 2006 with a view to their terms of reference being extended to include all matters relating to countryside and riverside parks and other parks and open spaces.

In view of some uncertainty as to their new remit and the current status of the Group given that the Country Park was a joint initiative between the District Council and the County Council, and the difficulties this might pose when discussing other open space areas which were District Council owned, it was

RESOLVED

- (a) that Councillor Mrs J Chandler, Executive Councillor for Leisure at the District Council, be requested to seek further guidance on the future role of the Group from the Leader of the Council and Chairman of the Cabinet; and
- (b) that to reflect their new responsibilities a report on Paxton Pits Nature Reserve be submitted to the Group at their next meeting.

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Group noted that their next meeting would be held on 30th March 2007.

9. SHORT WALK AROUND THE PARK

At the conclusion of the meeting, the Senior Ranger informed Members that 6 llamas would be arriving in the Park as part of a grazing project under the government's single farm payment scheme. Members welcomed the project as it would provide an additional feature in the Park at no cost which would also potentially generate extra income.

Chairman

SENIOR RANGER'S REPORT FOR 19/4/07

STAFFING

- Hanna off still. Judith & David have been covering her duties including Watch Club.
- Jim Walker has been providing practical cover.

VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers: October to March inclusive: 493

COUNTRYSIDE CENTRE

Number of Groups/people from beginning October 2006 to end of March 2007 was as follows:

	Groups	Number of People
October 2006 – March 2007	413	3639

These included such groups as: Cambs. constabulary, Youth Offending service, Hinchingsbrooke Hospital, HDC tourism groups and various natural history groups.

CAFÉ

- On same period last year, up £1,500 in café income, doing more small buffets for CC with very good comments.
- Plans for extension – cannot use site safe extensions for technical joining reasons, so now looking at complete new extension again.

EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

- X-country run American Schools 2 x 100 runners
- Duke of Edinburgh from Milton Keynes – 24 people x 2 w/e
- American Scouts camping RAF Alconbury
- Boxing Day – 120 people
- Cambs Search & Rescue Training course – 2 days – 20 each day
- Hinchingsbrooke School – cycling proficiency each week about 15 children at a time
- RAF Wyton & county race – 60 participants
- Regular fortnightly Nordic Walking Group at least 8 people each time

WIDER DISTRICT

- Godmanchester Nursery – weeding/lifting trees, Godmanchester Pond.
- Coneygear – tree saucers & bonfire event
- Spring Common – grass cutting/hedge cutting & tree planting with 75 children from local schools.
- OVW hedge cutting/tree cutting
- Holt Island
- Hartford Wood
- Crosshall Litter/recycling Project – 4 days

PARK MANAGEMENT

- Llama fencing – volunteers
- Path building continues around the lake, though very weather dependant
- Tree surveys & associated work – lost large poplar in October and with the high winds December lost several more throughout the woodland
- Replanting Corsican pines area
- Ash regrowth has been cut around lake

- Scrub bashing on spit head
- Brick bridge, crack repaired – wall taken down and rebuilt

FRIENDS OF HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK

- Membership now – 55 people
- Funds increasing due to the enthusiasm of the younger committee members.
Christmas Shopping evening had £350 profit.
Sponsored Fun Run on 29th April likely to raise £1000. volunteers to marshall are still needed!
Donations to the Friends from the pot on Café Counter - £10 per week.

MISC.

- Roundhouse burnt November 3rd 2006 and the other huts have been taken down.