

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the COUNTRYSIDE JOINT GROUP held in the Wren Room, Countryside Centre, Hinchingsbrooke Country Park, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire on Friday, 14 March 2008.

PRESENT: Councillor M G Baker – Chairman.
Councillors Mrs M Banerjee and J D Fell.
County Councillor Mrs L Kadic.

APOLOGY: An apology for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of Councillor C R Hyams.

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs J Arnold, Miss N Giles, P Knight, Mrs S Martin and Mrs H Taylor.

10. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Group held on 12th October 2007 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

11. UPDATE ON TERMS OF REFERENCE

Further to Minute 07/06 the Senior Democratic Services Officer updated Members on the developments with regard to the proposed new terms of reference and method of operation for the Group. In that respect, Members were disappointed to note that the item had been withdrawn from the Cabinet Agenda for 21st February 2008 to enable further discussions to take place between the Executive Councillor for Operations, Parks and Countryside and District Council Officers.

Having stressed the need to resolve this ongoing matter as soon as possible, and bearing in mind that the Group would not be meeting again until October 2008, it was;

RESOLVED

that an informal meeting of the Group be held on 18th April 2008 at 10am, in the Wren Room, Hinchingsbrooke Country Park.

12. 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**

The Group were pleased to welcome the new Countryside Centre Assistant to the Countryside Team.

Members were also encouraged to note that two of the young people who attended the Centre would be joining as young leaders and will take on a number of responsibilities as part of their role.

(b) **Countryside Centre and Café**

Details of the number of users of the Countryside Centre for the period October 2007 to February 2008 inclusive were presented and Members were pleased to note that the Centre already had 102 bookings for the next six months which it was hoped would generate an income of £8,000.

The Group were informed of the continued success of the café and noted that on Sunday 16th February, staff took over £700 a figure reached only occasionally last Summer.

The Senior Ranger reported that on Sunday, 16th March 2008, café resources would be spread across the Centre to cater for over 500 runners and supporters taking part in Sport Relief Activities.

(c) **Events and Activities**

The Senior Ranger presented the Group with details of events and activities over the autumn/winter period. Particular mention was made of the success of the Big Draw; a national yearly event. In June 2009, the Park will be hosting the Cromwell Veterinary Nurses Dog Show; an event to emphasise and promote good dog ownership.

(d) **Wider District**

Members noted a range of work being undertaken in other parts of the District. Particular attention was drawn to the footpath and treework at Holt Island. In response to a question raised by a Member, the Group were advised that funding to replace the boardwalks in and around Holt Island was not currently included within the District's Medium Term Plan and that it had been agreed to use Eco-grids to gradually build-up grass paths and eventually remove the existing boardwalks.

(e) **Park Management**

The Senior Ranger informed the Group of the various work being undertaken at the Country Park. Particular mention was made of the tree surveys and associated work to be undertaken in Chestnut Avenue, depending on the works to be undertaken it may be necessary to employ outside contractors.

(f) **Friends of Hinchingsbrooke Country Park**

Members were encouraged to note that membership of the "Friends of Hinchingsbrooke Country Park" had increased

with a growing number of funding activities which had been organised by the Group, in particular the younger Committee Members. The Senior Ranger reported that funds raised from their events were now supporting the entrance improvements.

(g) **Miscellaneous**

Having been acquainted with details of a spate of thefts from cars and the Centre's café, Members were pleased to note that with the involvement of the Police and co-operation of Centre Staff, the two people involved had been caught and both sentenced to six months in prison.

The Countryside Services Manager informed the Group of recent activities being undertaken at the Country Park with particular mention to the plan of an outdoor gym area funded by Section 106 money which would link to the work of the Primary Care Trust on leisure development activities.

The Chairman drew Member's attention to the work being undertaken at the Godmanchester Nursery, in particular the purposeful work of Social Services and the continued efforts of staff in encouraging individuals back to work. The Senior Ranger informed the Group that not only was the programme a great success, there was currently a waiting list for volunteers.

13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Group noted that their next meeting would be held on Friday 10th October 2008.

(The Group noted an informal meeting to be held on Friday 18th April 2008).

14. SHORT WALK AROUND THE PARK

At the conclusion of the meeting, the Senior Ranger led Members on a short walk of recent developments at the Park.

Chairman