

A meeting of the **COUNTRYSIDE JOINT GROUP** will be held in the **COUNTRYSIDE CENTRE, HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK, HUNTINGDON, CAMBRIDGESHIRE** on **FRIDAY, 14 MARCH 2008** at **10:00 AM** and you are requested to attend for the transaction of the following business:-

**Contact
(01480)**

1. MINUTES (Pages 1 - 4)

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Group held on 12th October 2007.

**Miss H Ali
388006**

2. UPDATE ON TERMS OF REFERENCE

Further to Minute No 07/06, Members may wish to note that the Cabinet withdrew the Proposed Terms of Reference report for the Countryside Joint Group at their meeting on 21st February 2008. An update will be provided in due course.

**Miss H Ali
388006**

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

To receive a report by the Senior Ranger (Hinchingsbrooke) on Park Activities for the period October 2007 to March 2008.

**Mrs J Arnold
451568**

4. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

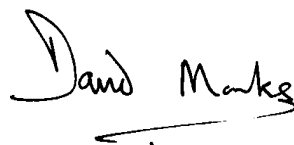
To consider a date for the next meeting of the Group. Would Members please bring their diaries.

5. SHORT WALK AROUND THE PARK

To be led by the Senior Ranger.

NB – Please bring along appropriate footwear to the meeting.

Dated this 28 day of February 2008



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, their family or any person with whom they had a close association;*
 - (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 £25,000; 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 Natalie Giles, Trainee Democratic Services Officer, Tel No 01480 387049/e-mail: Natalie.Giles@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.

Specific enquiries with regard to items on the Agenda should be directed towards the Contact Officer.

Members of the public are welcome to attend this meeting as observers except during consideration of confidential or exempt items of business.

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.

Emergency Procedure

In the event of the fire alarm being sounded and on the instruction of the Meeting Administrator, all attendees are requested to vacate the building via the closest emergency exit and to make their way to the car park adjacent to the Methodist Church on the High Street (opposite Prima's Italian Restaurant).

Agenda Item 1

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, 12 October 2007.

PRESENT: District Councillors M G Baker, Mrs M Banerjee, J D Fell and C R Hyams.

IN ATTENDANCE: Miss H Ali, Mrs J Arnold, P Knight and Mrs S Martin.

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 19th April 2007 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations of interest were received.

4. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED

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

5. MEMBERSHIP OF THE GROUP

The Membership of the Countryside Joint Group for 2007/08 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, J D Fell and C R Hyams.

6. PROPOSED TERMS OF REFERENCE AND METHOD OF OPERATION: COUNTRYSIDE JOINT GROUP

Pursuant to Minute No. 06/10, the Group considered a report by the Head of Administration (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) proposing a new terms of reference and method of operation for the Group.

Having been acquainted with details of the proposals, Members discussed at great length the future role and function of the Group. As the Liaison Group is formally appointed by the District Council's Cabinet and bearing in mind the recent extension of their remit to cover all countryside matters, Members sought clarification and the views of the Cabinet as to the purpose and status of the Group. Having been advised that the former Liaison was originally a joint initiative between the District and County Councils, Members were advised that the proposals outlined were designed to extend the formal structure which had operated for many years to enable the Group to embrace a wider remit without conflicting the County Council's ongoing freehold interests in the Country Park. After much discussion on the matter, the Group

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet be requested to confirm the status and purpose of the Countryside Joint Group and to comment on the proposed terms of reference as set out in Annex B to the report now submitted.

7. 2006/07 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 the Country Park and other countryside sites across the District for the 2006/07 financial year.

In noting that net expenditure for the Country Park at £240,000 represented an increase of approximately £9,000 when compared to the original budget, Members were advised that the variation in expenditure had occurred primarily as a result of irrecoverable VAT and central department recharges, both of which had been beyond the direct control of the Senior Ranger. Members were pleased to note that the café had generated an additional £12,000 in income against the budgeted target. The Group congratulated the Café Manager and her staff for their efforts in generating the high levels of income achieved.

Members were encouraged to note that net expenditure of £240,000 for all other countryside sites across the District had only exceeded the budgeted target by £4,000.

8. 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 encouraged to note the contribution that continued to be made by volunteers to the activities in the Park, particularly from those within the Youth Offending Scheme and on Year 10 work experience.

Members noted that a new Countryside Centre Assistant would be joining the team in October 2007.

(b) Countryside Centre

Details of the number of users of the Countryside Centre for the period April-September 2007 inclusive were presented. Members welcomed the report that the range of users of the Centre had remained the same when compared to the previous year.

(c) 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 courses for both adults and children, which included sessions on mini beasts and pond dipping.

(d) Wider District

Members noted the range of work being undertaken in other parts of the District. In particular, mention was made of the International Bird Fair and the work undertaken in Colne Churchyard. In response to questions raised by a Member, the Group were advised that the churchyard had been closed for burials and it was now the responsibility of the District Council to maintain.

(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 fencing constructed in the wildlife area and the continuation of footpaths around the lake.

(f) Miscellaneous

Having been acquainted with details of vandalism that had occurred previously within the Park, Members were encouraged to note the involvement of the Police and PCSO's in reducing the level of anti-social behaviour.

Members welcomed the fundraising activities being organised by the "Friends of Hinchingsbrooke Country Park", which included details of a fun run and a wine evening.

Further to Minute No. 06/12(h), the Countryside Services Manager reported that the meeting held on 22nd April 2007

had provided little evidence regarding the assertion that the Park was being turned into a “waste land”. Therefore, it was noted that no further action required to be taken.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Following a request made by the Senior Ranger, Members agreed to re-schedule the next meeting of the Group to 14th March 2008.

Chairman

STAFFING

- Hanna resigned in November. From February Jim Walker has had a 4 day contract to cover these 2 days and the 2 general ones he does for countryside services
Judith & David have been covering the Watch Club.
- Jackie Elliott has successfully replaced Angela in the countryside centre

VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers: October to March inclusive: 437

COUNTRYSIDE CENTRE

Number of Groups/people from beginning October 2007 to end of February 2008 was as follows:

	Groups	Number of People	
01/10/06-28/02/07	132	2544	£12,000
01/10/07-28/02/08	139	3218	£17,000

These included such groups as:, Youth Offending Service, Hinchbrooke Hospital, Cambs Advisory Service and Dialdruglink,
Looking at the bookings for the next 6 months, already have 102 bookings with around £8000 income
CAFÉ

- The café continues to be popular. On Sunday 16th Feb staff took over £700 in one day. That figure was reached only occasionally last summer! It is well and truly on the map!
- Plans for extension – Mtp bid was lodged and a more detailed business plan is now required.

EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

Big Draw was very popular
Boxing Day walk, 131 adults plus children
Friends of HCP Christmas sale
Cromwell Veterinary Nurses dog show
Guided walk for Wandlebury Staff
Guided walks for Healthy walks leaders

WIDER DISTRICT

- Godmanchester Nursery -trees and some site maintenance
- Holt Island- footpath and tree work
- Hartford Wood- litter picking and general conservation management
- Colne Graveyard- low level conservation management
- Ouse Valley Way- cutting back hedgerows and additional kissing gates

PARK MANAGEMENT

- Path around the lake was completed, it is possible to walk with relatively mud free boots
- Tree surveys & associated work – apart from Chestnut Avenue, there is very little that is necessary
- Ash regrowth has been cut around lake
- Scrub bashing on spit head
- Wood chips on woodland paths (particularly on the bridleway)to improve the walking surface
- Management plan- has been reviewed and up dated
- Safety improvements to the entrance- new footpaths and fencing have been installed

FRIENDS OF HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK

- Membership now – 70 people
- Funds increasing due to the enthusiasm of the younger committee members. For example the Christmas Shopping evening had £400 profit and the Wine evening raised £400. They are supporting the entrance improvements

Misc.

- Spate of thefts from cars in the car park in November meant we had to flood the area with signs. The two people involved also took a bag from the café, however they were caught and both sentenced to 6 months in prison.
- Pollution scare into ornamental Lake in Nov, was eventually traced to be the school line marking paint