

## HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK JOINT GROUP held in The Wren Room, Countryside Centre, Hinchingbrooke Countryside Park, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire on Friday, 10 October 2008.

PRESENT: District Councillors M G Baker, Mrs M Banerjee and C R Hyams

County Councillor Mrs L Kadic

APOLOGY An apology for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of Councillor Ms M J Thomas.

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs J Arnold, Mrs C Bulman, P Knight, Mrs S Martin and Mrs J Walker.

### 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

Subject to :-

- the replacement of "2009" with "2008" in Minute No 12 (c) – Events & Activities; and
- the removal of references to the Primary Care Trust in 12 (g) and its replacement with "the District Council's leisure development service",

The Minutes of the meeting of the Group held on 14<sup>th</sup> March 2008 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 Mrs M Banerjee be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Group for the ensuing Municipal Year.

## **5. MEMBERSHIP OF THE GROUP**

The Membership of the Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Joint Group for 2008/09 was noted as follows:-

(a) **Cambridgeshire County Council**

County Councillor Mrs L Kadic.

(b) **Huntingdonshire District Council**

District Councillors M G Baker, Mrs M Banerjee, C R Hyams and Mrs M J Thomas.

It was suggested that future consideration could be given to the appointment of a District Council Member representing Huntingdon West to the Group.

## **6. UPDATE ON TERMS OF REFERENCE**

Further to Minute No. 08/11, the Group received a report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) outlining recent developments with regard to their terms of reference and method of operation. Members were informed that at their meeting on 15th May 2008, the Cabinet had agreed to reconstitute Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Joint Group, with their original terms of reference.

In discussing the report, the Countryside Services Manager explained that it would still be possible to incorporate a reference to other countryside services/facilities with future reports if Members expressed a wish to do so. Members were also advised that Countryside Services was currently the responsibility of the Operations Division whose Executive Councillor was Councillor C R Hyams. Discussion also took place concerning the arrangements with the County Council for the management of the Centre and the financial responsibilities of both District and County Councils.

Having agreed there were a number of matters relating to their role and function which warranted further discussion, it was

RESOLVED

that an informal meeting of the Group be held on 5th November 2008, at Pathfinder House to discuss the role and remit of the Group with a view to presenting a future statement to the Cabinet.

## **7. 2007/8 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 2007/08 financial year.

In noting that net expenditure for the Country Park was below the budgeted figure, Members were advised that the majority of variations reflected the use of Section 106 monies in 2007/08. In commenting

more specifically on figures in the report, Members were advised of the reasons for an increase in revenue from refreshments and a decrease in revenue from room hire, together with the reasons for the discrepancy between the two. The increased expenses on premises were attributed to the use of Section 106 monies which had provided the Chestnut Avenue footpath improvements.

## **8. SENIOR RANGERS REPORT**

In receiving and noting the contents of the Senior Ranger's report comment was made as follows:-

### **(a) Volunteers and Staffing**

Members were informed of recent staffing changes and were pleased to note that the number of volunteers continued to grow and currently stood at 579.

### **(b) Countryside Centre**

Details of the number of users of the Countryside Centre for the period April to September 2008 inclusive were presented. Members were pleased to note that bookings continued to be received from both new and repeat customers.

### **(c) Café**

Members noted that plans to extend the Café had been approved. Building work was expected to start in November and be completed by April 2009, during which time alternative forms of refreshment would be available.

### **(d) Events and Activities**

The Senior Ranger presented the Group with details of the events and activities over the spring/summer period. Members were pleased to note that the popular activities such as angling and pond dipping continued to be over subscribed.

### **(e) Wider District**

Members noted a range of work being undertaken in other parts of the District. Particular attention was drawn to the footpath and access work at Holt Island.

### **(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 work on the new orchard, which had been funded by the Friends of Hinchingsbrooke Country Park.

### **(g) Friends of Hinchingsbrooke Country Park**

Members were pleased to note that the membership of the

Friends of Hinchingsbrooke Country Park continued to increase. There had also been a growth in the number of younger volunteers.

(h) **Miscellaneous**

Members were encouraged to note that the amount of damage, litter and drunken behaviour over the summer had been limited and this was attributed to the work of the Police, CCTV and PCSOs who had worked alongside the rangers to tackle the problem.

Members were informed that the damage to the leaves of the Chestnut trees within the Park was the result of a moth.

Members questioned to what extent facilities are provided to enable particular students to undertake scientific research. The Senior Ranger informed the Group scientific research tended to be concentrated on Paxton Pits, whilst Hinchingsbrooke Country Park was more suited to family groups and primary education.

The Countryside Services Manager informed the Group that following complaints of noise nuisance, it had been suggested that a barrier be installed to prevent cars using the car park late in the evening. Whilst there were a number of issues which would need to be considered, the complainant had been asked to monitor the number of occasions on which noise nuisance had occurred and it was suggested that the Police Community Support Officers could provide some assistance.

With respect to other sites within the District, the Group noted:-

- that outdoor gym equipment and a trim trail have been installed at Coneygear Park. It was hoped to install a zip wire in the Autumn months;
- that under the Environment Strategy three years funding had been secured to employ a member of staff for the nursery site. The number of volunteers continued to grow and consideration was currently being given to the provision of facilities for people with special needs.
- that the Paxton Pitts facility continued to grow in popularity, although the planned extension had been delayed.

Members were informed that the bridge by the Sailing Centre had fallen into a state of disrepair. Discussions would need to be held with the County Council to ascertain responsibility for the repair/replacement of this facility.

Having noted that the park celebrates 20 years of operation on 19<sup>th</sup> April 2009, Members were informed of a proposed

plan of activities to commemorate the occasion. These included a fun run, birthday celebration and series of walks and slideshows in the Park.

Members were also updated on proposals to provide play equipment on the Barford Road Estate in St Neots, which had been a condition of the planning agreement for this site. In doing so, Members were informed that local residents were not happy with the proposals.

## **9. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

The Group noted that their next meeting would be held on Friday 27<sup>th</sup> March 2009.

Chairman