

A meeting of the **HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK JOINT GROUP** will be held in the **COUNTRYSIDE CENTRE, HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRYSIDE PARK** on **FRIDAY, 9 OCTOBER 2009** at **9:00 AM** and you are requested to attend for the transaction of the following business:-

**Please note the amended start time of the meeting**

**Contact  
(01480)**

**1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

To elect a Chairman of the Group for the ensuing Municipal Year.

**2. MINUTES** (Pages 1 - 4)

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Group held on April 9<sup>th</sup> 2009.

**Mrs J Walker  
387049**

**3. 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 below.

**4. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN**

To appoint a Vice-Chairman of the Group for the ensuing Municipal Year.

**5. MEMBERSHIP OF THE GROUP**

To note the Membership of the Group for 2009/10 as follows:-

(a) **Cambridgeshire County Council**

Councillor Mrs E Kadic

(b) **Huntingdonshire District Council**

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

**6. 2008/09 FINAL ACCOUNTS** (Pages 5 - 8)

To consider a report by the Treasurer regarding the final accounts for Hinchingsbrooke Country Park for 2008/09.

**Mrs S Martin  
388107**

7. **SENIOR RANGER'S REPORT** (Pages 9 - 10)

To receive a report by the Senior Ranger on park activities for the period April to October 2009.

**Mrs J Arnold  
451568**

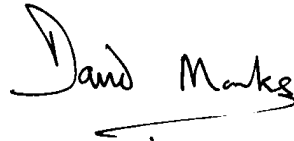
8. **BOUNDARY MANAGEMENT**

To receive an update from the Countryside Services Manager on boundary management issues.

9. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

To note that the next meeting of the Group will be held on Friday 26<sup>th</sup> March 2010.

Dated this 1 day of October 2009



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 Mrs Jessica Walker, Democratic Services Officer, Tel No 01480 387049/e-mail: [jessica.walker@huntsdc.gov.uk](mailto:jessica.walker@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 Committee/Panel.**

**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](http://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.*

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# Agenda Item 2

## HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK JOINT GROUP held in the Wren Room, Countryside Centre, Hinchingbrooke Countryside Park on Thursday, 9 April 2009.

PRESENT: Councillor M G Baker – Chairman.  
Councillors C R Hyams and County Councillor Mrs L Kadic.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors Mrs M Banerjee and Ms M J Thomas.

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs J Arnold, Miss S Engelbert, P Knight, Mrs S Martin, A Roberts, Councillor T D Sanderson and Mrs J Walker.

### 10. MINUTES

Subject to the deletion of the final paragraph of Minute No. 08/05, the Minutes of the meeting held on 10th October 2008 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### 11. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations of interest were received.

### 12. UPDATE ON PROPOSED TERMS OF REFERENCE

Further to Minute No. 08/06, 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 methods of operation. Members were informed that at their meeting held on 29th January 2009, the Cabinet had deferred making a decision on the proposed new method of working pending consideration of the outcome of the review of management arrangements for Leisure Centre Management Committees. In discussing the Cabinet's decision the Group were informed of the termination of the Leisure Centre Management Joint Committees and their replacement with active leisure forums. The Group were acquainted with relevant sections of the terms of reference of the active leisure forums.

Having discussed the Cabinet's suggestion, the Group decided that it would be preferable for its existing structure to be retained. In reaching this decision Members took into account the terms of the lease of the park, which required the District Council to set up and maintain a Joint Liaison Group. The Liaison Group was obliged to meet annually. As a result Members requested that their proposal to reinstate the Countryside Group to monitor the performance of the District's other countryside sites be resubmitted to the Cabinet.

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet be informed of the outcome of the Group's deliberations and requested to reconsider the report containing the proposal to reinstate the Countryside Group.

**13. 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) **Voluntary and Staff**

Members noted that the number of volunteers currently stood at 395.

(b) **The Countryside Centre**

Details of the number of users of the Countryside Centre for the period October 2008 – February 2009 inclusive were presented.

(c) **Café**

Members noted that the improvements to the café had been completed and that the official opening had taken place on 27th March 2009, which had resulted in new visitors being attracted to the Park. The Senior Ranger reported that on Sunday, 5th April 2009 the café had experienced its busiest day to date. Members were advised that it was intended to move towards using only locally sourced produce.

(d) **Events and Activities**

The Senior Ranger presented the Group with details of events and activities held over the Autumn/Winter period. Particular mention was made of the success of the Huntingdon Field Day which was extremely well attended and subsequently arrangements had been made to hold this event again on 8th November 2009.

(e) **Wider District**

Members noted the range of work being undertaken in other parts of the District. Particular attention was drawn to the improvements at Holt Island which included footpath creation, boardwalk repairs, tree work, new benches and interpretation signs. The Executive Councillor for Operational and Countryside Services requested that local residents' gratitude be expressed to Peter Hobbs and Paul Smith for their work in Godmanchester.

(f) **Park Management**

In response to a question by the Chairman, the Countryside Services Manager reported that a number of trees within the

Park had reached maturity and some were at the end of their natural life. Tree management was an ongoing issue.

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

Members noted that membership of the Friends of Hinchingsbrooke Country Park had increased. The Group were informed that the next event being organised by the Friends was a fun run on 19th April 2009, for which seventy people had registered an interest.

**14. PROPOSED CONTROL MEASURES**

The Group discussed a report by the Countryside Services Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which outlined a number of ways in which the Country Park's rabbit population might be controlled. The report had been submitted following complaints from neighbouring landowners about damage caused by rabbits. Members discussed at length each of the options contained in the report.

Legal advice had been sought in relation to the Park's responsibility in this respect but conflicting responses had been received and, significantly, no test cases had taken place. In that context, comment was made that as rabbits also existed on neighbouring land, any problems they caused could not be attributed solely to the Country Park. It was agreed neighbouring landowners should be contacted with a view to discussing whether a joint approach might be adopted towards addressing complainants' concerns. While the number of rabbits was not causing a problem for the Park, the Group agreed that if control measures were to be taken they should be humane and take into account their impact on other wildlife.

The Executive Councillor for Operational and Countryside Services suggested that further information should be obtained on rabbit control measures that were being used elsewhere. Having referred to the steps he had taken to date to solicit public views on this matter, the Executive Councillor also sought and received approval for further consultation with affected parties, including holding a meeting with residents to which local councillors would be invited. In addition, the Group requested that the County Council's views on this matter should be sought as owner of the land on which the Park was situated.

Finally, it was agreed that prior to the Group's informal visit to be held in June 2009, a meeting would be convened to report back on the results of the consultations and discuss the way forward.

**RESOLVED**

- a) that neighbouring landowners' views be sought on adopting a joint approach towards controlling the level of the rabbit population;
- b) that further consultation be held with affected parties, including holding a meeting with residents to which local councillors are invited;
- c) that research be carried out into the effectiveness

- of control measures used elsewhere; and
- d) that the County Council's views on this matter be sought.

**15. HUNTINGDON WEST ACTION PLAN**

With the aid of a report by the Countryside Services Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Group considered the terms of the draft Huntingdon West Area Action Plan Preferred Approach that related to the Country Park. The Plan, subject to Cabinet approval, would be made available for public consultation. It contained a range of potential improvements, which might be funded through Section 106 agreements relating to future housing development.

Members were informed that the proposals were aspirational and that the Plan covered the period to 2026. A suggestion to increase greatly the Park's boundaries was the most significant of the proposals. The Group were advised that the list of eleven possible other improvements had not been prioritised in order to retain flexibility according to the sums of money available. Having discussed details of the potential improvements and the process leading to the adoption of the Plan, the Group expressed support for the improvements proposed for inclusion in the Plan.

**16. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The Group noted that the next meeting would be held prior to the informal visit to St Ives on a date, which was yet to be confirmed.

Chairman



**2008/2009 FINAL ACCOUNTS  
(Report of the Treasurer)**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The 2008/2009 accounts have been finalised, and have been audited. This report contains details of actual expenditure and income levels at Hinchingsbrooke Country Park.

**2. HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK**

- 2.1 The financial position at Hinchingsbrooke Country Park for last year can be summarised as follows:-

Details	Budget £'000	Actual £'000	Variation £'000
Expenditure	391	421	+30
Income	124	175	+51
<b>Net Expenditure</b>	<b>267</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>-21</b>

Attached at Annex A is a more detailed breakdown of the variations from the budget.

- 2.2 Comments on the £21k saving in expenditure are given below:-

- **Employee Costs** – increased by £17k because extra staff were required in the café during busy periods and additional staff training was undertaken. These increased costs were mostly offset by additional income from the café.
- **Premises Expenditure** - reduced by £14k, electricity charges were £5k lower than budgeted for and general site maintenance costs were £10k lower than budgeted for.
- **Supplies and Services Expenditure** – increased by £37k however, this was funded by additional Section 106 receipts. Neither the expenditure nor the income was included in the original budget figures.
- **Irrecoverable VAT** – in order to comply with the Accounting Code of Practice £3k of irrecoverable VAT was budgeted for last year but the Inland Revenue made all local authorities exempt from this calculation and so no expenditure was incurred.
- **Central Department recharges** – reduced by £5k due to changes in staff time allocations or changes in the method of allocating the costs of support services.

- 2.3** Income was £51k higher than the budget, most of this, (£40k as mentioned above) was due to Section 106 receipts utilised at this site being higher than anticipated in the budget. The café generated £14k more income than expected whereas other income was £3k below the budget target.

### **3. CONCLUSION**

- 3.1** Overall, expenditure and income continues to be managed very well by staff in Countryside Services. Budgets for Hinchingsbrooke Country Park under the direct control of Countryside Services staff were £12k under-spent and budgets outside their direct control (Irrecoverable VAT, Capital Charges and Central Department Recharges) were £9k below the budget target level.

### **4. RECOMMENDATION**

- 4.1** It is recommended that members note the contents of this report.

#### **ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT 1985**

##### **Source Documents:**

- 1. FMS Summary**
- 2. 2008/09 Closedown File – Accountancy Section**

##### **Contact Officer:**

***Sue Martin - Principal Accountant***

**☎ (01480 388107)**

**HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK  
FINAL ACCOUNTS 2008/2009**

Actual 2007/08 £	Details	Budget 2008/09 £	Actual 2008/09 £	Variation £
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>				
227,837	Employees	247,088	263,947	+16,859
76,596	Premises	52,030	38,143	-13,887
41,420	Supplies & Services	36,364	73,064	+36,700
0	Irrecoverable VAT	3,380	0	-3,380
36,888	Central Department Charges	38,094	33,074	-5,020
13,712	Capital Charges	14,000	13,018	-982
<b>396,453</b>	<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>390,956</b>	<b>421,246</b>	<b>+30,290</b>
<b>INCOME</b>				
-1,493	Donations/Contributions	-1,219	-731	+ 488
	Sales,			
-735	Publications/Plants etc	-977	-672	+305
0	Fishing	-484	-570	-86
-57,853	Catering (Café)	-47,993	-62,450	-14,457
-33,295	Commuted Sum	-3,520	-43,097	-39,577
-15,352	Social Services	-15,717	-15,812	-95
-43,772	Room Hire etc	-53,845	-51,964	+1,881
<b>-152,500</b>	<b>Total Income</b>	<b>-123,755</b>	<b>-175,296</b>	<b>-51,541</b>
<b>243,953</b>	<b>HDC NET EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>267,201</b>	<b>245,950</b>	<b>-20,993</b>

**Note:-**

Staff based at Hinchingsbrooke Country Park also oversee the following sites as part of their day to day duties:-

Holt Island  
St Ives Sites – The Thicket and Wilhorn Meadow  
Spring Common  
Stukeley Meadows  
Ouse Valley Way  
Coneygear Park

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## REPORT FOR April 09 to October 09

### STAFFING

Jim Milligan replaced Laura Russell on a 6 month short term contract

### VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers: April to October : 491 plus 6 work experience students for two weeks each, plus 2 regular volunteers in the cafe

### WHEELCHAIR USE

463 times

### COUNTRYSIDE CENTRE

Number of Groups/people from beginning April 09 to end of September 2009 was as follows:

	Groups	Number of People	Number of schools
01/04/07 - 30/09/07	181	4334	30
01/04/08 - 30/09/08	197	5679	39
01/04/09- - 30/09/09	188	4690	17

Groups were slightly down on the same period last year, these included such groups as:, Wildlife trust, Great Fen Project

The bookings continue to come in from both new and repeat customers

As last year at this time, the next two months are very busy with advance bookings

### CAFÉ

- The first 6 months has been a success. Rotas and food ordering have taken some time to manage successfully, but appear to be correct now. Very little waste, but good variety of food.
- Local suppliers are increasingly being used.
- £4000 has been taken by providing 31 buffets in the summer. Already have 16 buffets booked for October and 19 for November

### EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

- Activities such as angling, pond dipping continue to be over subscribed during the summer holidays.
- 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary weekend
- MS society walk attended by the mayor, MP and Lewis Smith (Olympic gymnast) and Parkinson society walks
- South eastern league mountain bike race
- Bat walks

### WIDER DISTRICT including

- Holt Island- access work, trial of alternative surfaces
- Ouse Valley Way- cutting footpaths
- Fenstanton pond cleared
- Oxmoor- much help given with Anglia in Bloom and planting schemes around the area
- River clean ups and St Ives litter pick
- Spring Common, Views Common and Stukeley Meadows 21 litter picks

### PARK MANAGEMENT including

- Mowing, cutting and strimming
- Seat maintenance
- Entrance improvements
- New signs

- Orchard planting was completed and first open afternoon held

### **Future**

- \* Simple play equipment to attract families to walk down the better footpath from the car park
- \* Town Council under 5s play equipment
- \* Scrub clearance around the lake, so that next summer it can be cut and baled and overall grassland habitat improved

### **FRIENDS OF HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK**

- Friends donated £2000 towards the orchard and the interpretation boards. Currently considering up to date interpretation boards, wildlife cameras in the café and picnic benches near the car park
- Membership now – 80 people
- Recycled boats
- Wine evening and Christmas sale still to come

### **MISC**

With great help from the police, cctv and PCSOs the amount of damage, litter and drunken behaviour over the summer has been very low

**Contact  
Officer:**

**Mrs Judith Arnold, Senior Ranger,  
Hinchingbrooke Country Park, Countryside Services.  
 01480 451568**