

A meeting of the **HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK JOINT GROUP** will be held in the **THE WREN ROOM, COUNTRYSIDE CENTRE, HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRYSIDE PARK** on **THURSDAY, 9 APRIL 2009** at **2:30 PM** and you are requested to attend for the transaction of the following business:-

**Contact  
(01480)**

### **APOLOGIES**

**1. MINUTES** (Pages 1 - 6)

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Group held on 10<sup>th</sup> October 2008.

**Mrs J Walker  
387049**

**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 below.

**3. UPDATE ON PROPOSED TERMS OF REFERENCE** (Pages 7 - 10)

To receive a report by the Head of Democratic and Central Services updating the Group on the proposed terms of reference and method of operation for the proposed Countryside Group.

**Mrs J Walker  
387049**

**4. SENIOR RANGERS REPORT** (Pages 11 - 12)

To receive a report by the Senior Ranger on park activities for the period October 2008 to March 2009.

**Mrs J Arnold  
451568**

**5. PROPOSED CONTROL MEASURES** (Pages 13 - 14)

To discuss the control measures proposed in a report by the Countryside Services Manager.

**Mr P Knight  
388648**

**6. HUNTINGDON WEST ACTION PLAN** (Pages 15 - 16)

To consider a report by the Countryside Services Manager.

**Mr P Knight  
388648**

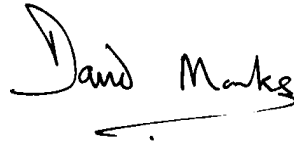
**7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

To note that the next meeting of the Group will be held on Friday 9<sup>th</sup> October 2009.

**8. VISIT TO THE CAFE**

A visit to the newly refurbished café to be led by the Senior Ranger.

Dated this 2 day of April 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, Trainee 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.*

# Agenda Item 1

## HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK JOINT GROUP held in The Wren Room, Countryside Centre, Hinchingsbrooke 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

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## **HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK JOINT GROUP**

**27<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2009**

### **UPDATE ON PROPOSED TERMS OF REFERENCE AND METHOD OF OPERATION – COUNTRYSIDE GROUP (Report by the Head of Democratic and Central Services)**

#### **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 At their meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> October 2008, the Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Joint Group considered a report which described the current position in relation to the terms of reference and method of operation for the Group. The report had been written in response to uncertainty expressed by Members as to the remit and status of the Group, since an earlier Cabinet decision to reconstitute the body from the Countryside Joint Group to the Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Joint Group in May 2008.
- 1.2 As this issue has caused considerable debate over a number of meetings, the Group agreed to meet informally with the Executive Councillor for Operational and Countryside Services to seek to prepare a report to the Cabinet. This meeting took place on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2008 and District Councillors M G Baker (Chairman of the Joint Group), Mrs M Banerjee and C R Hyams and County Councillor Mrs E Kadic were present.

#### **2. VIEWS OF THE GROUP**

- 2.1 At the informal meeting, Members were reminded of the constitutional position and the provision, within the membership of the Hinchingsbrooke Group, of representation by a local County Councillor. With these issues in mind and having again discussed their role and function at great length and the programme of activity which had been proposed, the meeting was of the view that Members should be able to continue to monitor the performance of other Countryside Services as well as that of the Hinchingsbrooke Country Park. Therefore it was concluded that the former Countryside Group should be reinstated in addition to the existing Hinchingsbrooke Group, with a remit to monitor the performance of the other Countryside Services across the District.

### **3. THE PROPOSAL**

- 3.1 Bearing in mind the concept of the original Countryside Joint Group and having regard now to its method of operation, the meeting proposed that the new Group should meet on the rising of the Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Joint Group in March and October each year and should comprise the same membership as the Hinchingsbrooke Group with the exception of a County Council representative (currently – Cllrs M G Baker, Mrs M Banerjee, C R Hyams and Ms M J Thomas).
- 3.2 The formal meetings would continue in a way similar to that of the former Countryside Joint Group, with biannual reports to be submitted to Members by the Countryside Services and Service Development Managers of the District Council. Meetings would take place immediately after the Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Joint Group on Fridays in March and October each year and would be administered by the Democratic Services team. Reports to meetings would provide an overview of countryside, parks and open space matters allowing Members to monitor performance across the Council's countryside portfolio. These meetings would continue to take place in meeting rooms at Hinchingsbrooke Country Park.
- 3.3 Informal meetings of the Countryside Group would be held twice a year in January and June. These would be delivered in the form of site visits across the District. The District Council's Countryside Services and Service Development Managers will be required to provide an itinerary for each visit. Arrangements for these events will be made centrally by the Democratic Services Team. It is proposed that visits would be offered in the first instance to Group Members, and thereafter to new and local Members for induction and training purposes. The first of these took place successfully on Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> January 2009 and included visits to Barford Road Pocket Park (Eynesbury), St Neots Riverside and Little Paxton Nature Reserve.

### **4. CABINET MEETING – 29<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2009**

- 4.1 A report encompassing these proposals was considered by the Cabinet at their meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> January, 2009. The Cabinet decided that the proposed new method of working be deferred pending consideration of the outcome of an ongoing review of management arrangements for Leisure Centre Management Committees.
- 4.2 The Executive Councillor for Operational and Countryside Services may wish to provide further comment at the meeting.

**5. CONCLUSION**

- 5.1 The Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Joint Group is asked to note the latest development.

**Contact Officer: Mrs J Walker, Democratic Services  
01480 387049**

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**STAFFING**

- No staff changes

**VOLUNTEERS**

Volunteers: October to February inclusive: 395

**COUNTRYSIDE CENTRE**

Number of Groups/people from beginning October 2008 to end of February 2009 was as follows:

	<b>Groups</b>	<b>Number of People</b>	<b>Income</b>
01/10/06-28/02/07	132	2544	£12,000
01/10/07-28/02/08	139	3218	£17,000
01/10/08 – 28/02/09	172	3845	£20,300

These included such groups as:, Cambs Advisory Service, Great Fen Project

**CAFÉ**

- The extension to the café began in November, with work occurring externally. On February 14<sup>th</sup> the visitors centre closed for the internal work to occur. The hand over date is expected to be 20<sup>th</sup> March with the opening at the end of the following week

**EVENTS & ACTIVITIES**

Big Draw was again very popular

Boxing Day walk, approximately 150 people

Green Santa not well publicised by the organisers, but a worthwhile event that environmental management would like to organise again in 2010

Huntingdon Field Day an extremely well attended event, with many families making a special visit. Generated much good will and publicity

**WIDER DISTRICT**

- Godmanchester Nursery -trees and some site maintenance
- Holt Island - footpath creation, boardwalk repairs and tree work
- Ouse Valley Way-contractor has been used to cut back hedgerows and additional kissing gates

**PARK MANAGEMENT**

- Tree surveys & associated work
- Willow regrowth has been cut around lake and chipped to use on footpaths. Much of this has been delivered to local schools as part of the new Outdoor Learning Manifesto
- Planting of the orchard, the trees were sponsored by the public, through the Friends

**FRIENDS OF HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK**

- Membership now –increased by 13 to 83 people
- Funds increasing due to the enthusiasm of the younger committee members. For example the Christmas Shopping evening and wine evening each raised £300
- The next big event is 19<sup>th</sup> April, Fun Run
- They have donated new tables, chairs and 2 high chairs for the cafe

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## **Rabbits**

We have recently received a number of complaints from neighbouring properties about damage by rabbits. It appears that the Country Park is under a legal duty to actively manage the rabbit population as the warrens are within the country park boundary.

Set out below are a number of options with comments, but any rabbits that are caught alive cannot be released elsewhere due to their territorial nature and therefore will need to be killed on site.

### **Rabbit Fencing**

**Cost £5,000**

The cost of fencing is nearly half the annual maintenance budget for the park. There are difficulties to fence around gateway and entrances and a fence will make life difficult for other species such as badgers, deer and foxes to move freely.

### **Shooting**

**Cost Possibly None/Contractors Time**

Shooting in a heavily used public area would need to be managed very carefully. It may not be possible in this location.

### **Gassing**

**Cost £250 per year**

Gassing rabbits in their warrens is undertaken in the autumn. Rabbit predators, such as stoats or occasional polecats can also be killed.

### **Long Netting**

**Cost Possibly None/Contractors Time**

There are not many people left who undertake long-netting. The nets are dropped when the rabbits are out feeding and then are chased back to the warren where they are caught in the net.

### **Ferretting**

**Cost Possibly None/Contractors Time**

This is undertaken in the winter months by putting a ferret (a close relative of the polecat) into the warren. Nets are put over the holes which catch the rabbits as they bolt.

**Do nothing**

There is a large risk that we could be prosecuted for not taking action. This could lead to substantial costs.

**Cost Possibly Nothing**

**Work with adjoining property owners      Cost Unknown**

We may be able to work with adjoining property owners to secure their properties from rabbits that live on the country park. The long-term, and short-term costs of this could be prohibitive.

Thank you for your help

**PAT KNIGHT**  
**Countryside Services Manager**



Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Joint Group

27 March 2009

**HUNTINGDON WEST AREA ACTION PLAN  
PREFERRED APPROACH - DRAFT  
(Report by Countryside Services Manager)**

**1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Following consultation on Issues and Options in June 2007 and Options in May 2008, a Preferred Approach for the Huntingdon West Area Action Plan is being prepared, and when approved by Cabinet will be made available for a 6 week public consultation.

**2 HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK PROPOSAL**

- 2.1 The intention is that the draft area action plan will propose that the Hinchingsbrooke Country Park should be enhanced and extended. A map (draft attached) will be included. The area action plan will indicate that the necessary funding might be sought through developer contributions. The area action plan's timeframe is to 2026 and the proposals are aspirational.

- 2.2 The possible improvements proposed to be included in an appendix are:

- 1) Lease or purchase of additional land for the Country Park
- 2) Lease or purchase of land for an overflow car park near Huntingdon Rd
- 3) Improvements to the existing car park
- 4) Countryside centre renewable energy, insulation and maintenance
- 5) CCTV and Lighting
- 6) Interpretation boards, waymarking signs and leaflets
- 7) Play and recreation facilities
- 8) Café improvements
- 9) New toilet block
- 10) Footpath improvements
- 11) Ranger staff time

**3 CONCLUSION**

- 3.1 Members of the Joint Group are invited to consider this proposal and comment prior to submission of the draft to O&S Panel and Cabinet.

Contact  
Officer:

Pat Knight, Countryside Services Manager  
Richard Probyn, Development Plans &  
Implementation Manager

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☎ 01480 388 430

### Draft Map of Hinchingsbrooke Country Park

