

A meeting of the **HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK JOINT GROUP** will be held in the **COUNTRYSIDE CENTRE, HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRYSIDE PARK** on **FRIDAY, 8 OCTOBER 2010** at **10:00 AM** and you are requested to attend for the transaction of the following business:-

**Contact
(01480)**

APOLOGIES

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 held on 9th October 2009.

**Mrs J Walker
387049**

3. NOTES (Pages 5 - 6)

To receive the notes of the meeting of the Group held on 26th March 2010.

**Mrs J Walker
387049**

4. 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.

5. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

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

6. MEMBERSHIP OF THE GROUP

To note the Membership of the Group for 2010/11 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.

7. 2009/10 FINAL ACCOUNTS (Pages 7 - 10)

To consider a report by the Treasurer regarding the final accounts for Hinchingbrooke Country Park for 2009/10.

**Mrs S Martin
388107**

8. **SENIOR RANGER'S REPORT** (Pages 11 - 12)

To receive a report by the Senior Ranger on park activities for the period April to October 2010.

**Mrs J Arnold
451568**

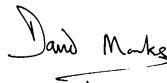
9. **CAR PARKING CHARGES**

To receive a verbal report from the Countryside Services Manager regarding the implementation of car parking charges at Hinchingbrooke Country Park.

10. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

To note that the next meeting of the Group will be held on Friday 25th March 2011.

Dated this 5 day of October 2010



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 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 (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 2

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK JOINT GROUP held in the Countryside Centre, Hinchingsbrooke Countryside Park on Friday, 9 October 2009.

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

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of District Councillor Mrs M Banerjee and County Councillor Mrs L Kadic.

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs J Arnold, P Knight, Mrs S Martin, A Roberts 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

The Minutes of the meeting held on 9th April 2009 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 J Thomas 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 2009/2010 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.

6. 2008/09 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 for the 2008/09 financial year.

In noting that net expenditure for the Country Park was below the budgeted figure, Members were advised that employee costs had increased as extra staff had been employed in the cafe, however these costs had been mostly offset by additional income from the cafe.

Having regard to income, Members noted that the variation of £51k above the budgeted figure was the result of higher than anticipated Section 106 receipts being utilised at the site. Furthermore, the cafe had generated more income than expected, though other income was slightly lower than the amount in the budget.

Councillor Hyams reported that he had been liaising with District Councillor T D Sanderson and the Service Development Manager on the possibility of investing Section 106 money further to improve play areas. He also expressed the view that possible changes to car parking and the café could have an effect on the Park's trading performance in the future.

7. SENIOR RANGER'S 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 noted that the number of volunteers currently stood at 491.

(b) Countryside Centre

Details of the number of users of the Countryside Centre for the period April to September 2009 inclusive were presented. Members noted that the number of school bookings was significantly lower than in the previous year, which was attributed to schools cutting back on school trips to ease the financial pressure on parents during the economic downturn.

(c) Cafe

Members were encouraged to note that the cafe was performing well and that local suppliers were being used wherever possible.

(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 local organisations appeared to be choosing to hold events at the Country Park. Particular attention was drawn to the Multiple-Sclerosis Society Walk in which 150 people had taken part.

(e) **Wider District**

Members noted that a range of work had been undertaken in other parts of the District. The Senior Ranger informed the Group that with contributions from Park Rangers, Coneygear Park had been awarded Bronze and Silver Awards in the National and Anglia in Bloom Competitions respectively, and that Huntingdon Park had received a Gold Award from Anglia in Bloom.

(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 new footpath to the Park from the parking area. As visitors seemed reluctant to change their previous habits, play equipment would be installed to encourage families to use the new route.

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

Members were pleased to note that membership of the Friends of Hinchingsbrooke Country Park currently stood at 80 members. The Senior Ranger reported that a Christmas event would be held on Sunday 15th November.

(h) **Miscellaneous**

Members were encouraged to note that the amount of damage, litter and drunken behaviour over the summer had been low. This was attributed to joint working between the Police, CCTV, PCSOs and the Rangers.

Members discussed the possibility of repositioning or adding a further bird hide to the site. The Group was informed that the hide was purposely sited in a wild area but was presently not well used. The Countryside Services Manager added that bird watchers tended to go to Paxton Pits. Furthermore, hides were costly to install and run as they attracted anti-social behaviour.

8. BOUNDARY MANAGEMENT

The Countryside Services Manager updated the Group on progress with the installation of fencing at various locations around the boundary of the Park. It was proposed that the boundary then would be inspected every three months.

Members were reminded of the consultation that had previously taken place with a number of owners of land abutting the Country Park. In addition, it was reported that all those who contacted the Park on this matter received a formal response from the Park's Management. It

was agreed that the situation would be reviewed at the next meeting of the Group.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Group noted that their next meeting would be held on Friday 26th March 2010.

Chairman

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

NOTES of the meeting of the HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK JOINT GROUP held in the Countryside Centre, Hinchingbrooke Countryside Park on Friday, 26 March 2010.

PRESENT: Councillor M G Baker – Chairman.

Councillor Mrs M Banerjee.

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

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs J Arnold, Mrs D Breedon, P Knight, Mrs H Taylor and Mrs J Walker.

10. QUORUM

Arising from the meeting being inquorate, Members noted the following matters:-

Senior Ranger's Report

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

(a) **Volunteers**

Members noted that the number of volunteers for the period October 2009 to February 2010 was 335, this was considered to be high given the inclement weather during the winter months.

(b) **Countryside Centre**

Details of the number of users of the Countryside Centre for the period October 2009 to February 2010 were presented. Members were encouraged to note the increase in income over the previous months, although this was mainly attributed to bookings of the Countryside Centre by the District Council for statutory meetings during the building of the new headquarters. It was hoped that the meeting facilities would continue to be well used following the migration of Council meetings back to Pathfinder House.

(c) **Café**

Members were pleased to note that the café continued to be busy and income had exceeded that predicted for the first year, however wages had also been much higher than estimated. Measures have been put in place in an effort to improve efficiency.

(d) **Events and Activities**

Members were presented with details of events over the winter period. Particular attention was drawn to the Junior Rangers Event held in February which had been fully subscribed.

(e) **Wider District**

Members noted that a range of work had been undertaken in other parts of the District under the countryside services remit.

It was reported that 500 hours of volunteer time had gone into works at Holt Island.

The launch of Anglia in Bloom was held at Coneygear Park, which had been entered into the Best Open Space Category in the Britain in Bloom Competition.

(f) **Park Management**

Damage to the rabbit fencing alongside the School was being monitored and repairs were being undertaken where necessary. Tree work had been undertaken free of charge by Shuttleworth College who had carried out the works as a training exercise.

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

It was reported that the Friends of Hinchingsbrooke Country Park were organising the purchase of a camera for monitoring bird feeders as well as a monitor screen for the café. Funds were also being raised for some new interpretation signs.

(h) **Car Parking Charges**

Councillor Baker expressed discontent that the Joint Group had not yet been consulted over proposed parking charges at Hinchingsbrooke Country Park.

Chairman

**HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK JOINT
LIAISON GROUP**

8th OCTOBER 2010

**2009/2010 FINAL ACCOUNTS
(Report of the Treasurer)**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The 2009/2010 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	455	418	-37
Income	173	183	+10
Net Expenditure	282	235	-47

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

- 2.2 Comments on the £47k saving in net expenditure are given below:-

- **Employee Costs** – were £26k above the budget because extra staff were needed in the café. These increased costs were partly offset by additional income however, staff costs are higher than originally anticipated when the café proposals were approved and steps are being taken to reduce future staff expenditure.
- **Premises Expenditure** - was £17k below the budget level. Utility bills were £3k lower than budgeted for and general site maintenance costs were £14k lower than the budget because most of the required maintenance has been carried out by staff and volunteers.
- **Supplies and Services Expenditure** – was £6k higher than the budget but some of this increase will have been offset by increased income.
- **Irrecoverable VAT** – in order to comply with the Accounting Code of Practice £4k of irrecoverable VAT was budgeted for last year but the actual charge was very low (£71).
- **Central Department recharges** – changes to the number and complexity of recharges have been implemented over the last twelve months and as a result, fewer recharges are now charged directly to Hinchingsbrooke Country Park (HCP). Recharges for the whole of Countryside Services are combined on one code resulting in a £26k under-spend on HCP. In addition to this change, the pensions adjustment (made to comply with Financial Reporting Standards) produced a £34k saving.

- **Capital Charges** – are linked to the site and asset valuations. A revaluation took place on 1st April 2009 and this along with the acquisition of new assets increased the charges by £10k.

2.3 Income was £9k higher than the budget. The café generated £16k more income than budgeted for whereas other income was £7k 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 over-spent and budgets outside their direct control (Irrecoverable VAT, Capital Charges and Central Department Recharges) were £59k below the budget target level. The café's staffing levels need to be reviewed to ensure that the overall budget target is achieved in future years.

3.2 Directly managed expenditure and income at other Countryside sites was £41k below the budgeted level and £25k of this saving was transferred to Capital to cover part of the cost of drainage work at Paxton Pits. Overall, Countryside Services made a saving of £4k compared to the original budget.

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. 2009/10 Closedown File – Accountancy Section**

Contact Officer:

Sue Martin - Principal Accountant

☎ (01480 388107)

**HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK
FINAL ACCOUNTS 2009/2010**

Actual 2008/09 £	Details	Budget 2009/10 £	Actual 2009/10 £	Variation £
EXPENDITURE				
263,947	Employees	272,870	299,237	+26,367
38,143	Premises	53,595	36,353	-17,242
73,064	Supplies & Services	56,519	62,779	+6,260
0	Irrecoverable VAT	3,600	71	-3,529
33,074	Central Department Charges	53,123	-7,109	-60,232
13,018	Capital Charges	15,860	26,472	+10,612
421,246	Total Expenditure	455,567	417,803	-37,764
INCOME				
731	Donations/Contributions	1,256	503	- 753
	Sales,			
672	Publications/Plants etc	1,006	867	- 139
570	Fishing	499	583	+ 84
62,450	Catering (Café)	95,433	111,184	+15,751
43,097	Commuted Sum	3,626	4,196	+ 570
15,812	Social Services	16,189	16,206	+ 17
51,964	Room Hire etc	55,460	49,244	-6,216
175,296	Total Income	173,469	182,783	+9,314
245,950	HDC NET EXPENDITURE	282,098	235,020	-47,078

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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SENIOR RANGER'S REPORT FOR April 2010 to September 2010 **Agenda Item 8**

STAFFING

- Future Jobs Fund café assistant Natalie and Ranger Justin are coming to the end of their 6 months. Both have been superb employees and have been an asset to the team
- 2 new staff started 20th September, one in the café and one as a Ranger

VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers: April to Sept inclusive: 473 including 4 school work experience students, 1 Shuttleworth student and 15 days in the café

COUNTRYSIDE CENTRE

Number of Groups/people from beginning April to end September 2010 was as follows:

	Groups	Number of People	Number of schools
01/04/07 - 30/09/07	181 £20311	4334	30 £4095
01/04/08 - 30/09/08	197 £20346	5679	39 £5377
01/04/09 - 30/09/09	188 £17859	4690	17 £2844
01/04/10- 30/09/10	187 £16260	5107	30 £4012

These included such groups as:, MS Society, NHS, HDC, HBKA

CAFÉ

- Continues to be busy and income is slightly up on that predicted for the first year, because we have had FJF staff, the wages bill will be less than last year. We can claim it back from CCC who are administering the scheme. The rotas are easier to manage now that systems are well embedded and efficiency has improved.
- 3 young people have recently volunteered to do their D of E service in the cafe

EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

- Sports Day – where 545 people had a go at 15 different sports and met people from the local sports clubs
- St Ives Cycle Club Mountain Bike Race
- Wood Green dog sponsored walk
- MG car owner's club visit and picnic, with over 40 cars
- Bat Walk and bbq
- Bio blitz national event with surveys taking place on 6 of the sites, dragonflies, moths and bats were studied at HCP with the help of expert volunteers from around the area

Alongside these larger events we hosted our usual round of children's summer holiday activities which included mountain biking, canoeing, den building, fishing and mini beast hunting. Some 1053 pupils attended school visits organised by Rangers. And 7 work experience students each attended for 2 weeks undertaking practical work and helping with events and schools.

WIDER DISTRICT

- Holt Island –the circular part of the boardwalk has been completed, well ahead of expectations. Over the winter the linear parts will be replaced again with immense support from volunteers and The Friends of Holt Island
- Coneygear Park and Oxmoor. Rangers have worked with volunteers and community groups to improve the estate particularly aiming towards community involvement. Moor in Bloom gained silver gilt for Best Urban Community in Anglia in Bloom. And we are again representing Anglia in Britain in Bloom
- Rangers have supported numerous community groups in their entries into Anglia in Bloom gaining a number of certificates including the nursery for community work, Coneygear for best Open space and Huntingdon Riverside for conservation
- Holt Island at St Ives won the award for Biodiversity

- Huntingdon has a nomination for Environmental Quality which recognises the cleanliness as well as the way we look after our environment and in particular recycling rates.
- Coneygear Park has a nomination for Best Public Open Space and recognition for the excellent community events in the Park.
- The Community Nursery at Godmanchester has a nomination for its work with the community.
- BTCV volunteers have worked on several sites with help from Hinchingsbrooke Rangers including scrub bashing at Riverside park, way marking along the Ouse Valley Way and willow and reed clearance from the pond at Spring Common.
- Rangers and volunteers spent 3 days promoting Huntingdonshire at Rutland Bird Fair. It was VERY noticeable this year how many visitors were looking to stay in Britain for their wildlife holiday, avoiding airport queues and costs of foreign travel.

PARK MANAGEMENT

- Tree surveys & associated work
- Path repairs around the lake and at the bottom of the wildlife wood

FRIENDS OF HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK

- This year's focus for fund raising has been to purchase microscopes and to update the interpretation boards. These are currently being designed.
- A new camera to focus on bird feeders and a monitor screen for the café has been purchased and is proving very popular
- All the events that the Friends have organised this year have been VERY successful. The Easter Trail raised £200. Grandparents' day in August raised £140 and attracted 70 children to the park many of whom had never been before.
- Waitrose green token charity raised £462
- The Christmas Shopping day is on November 21st
- Membership has risen to over 100

“BALANCING THE BUDGET”

Rangers are currently compiling a list of ways to achieve the above. The ideas will each be discussed and evaluated over the winter. Ideas so far have included;

- Licensing the countryside centre for weddings
- Car boot sales
- Franchises on sites e.g. Cycle hire/ outdoor clothing
- Wedding events and children's birthday parties
- Caravans and camping areas
- Personalized tours
- Catering at PPNR (overseen by HCP)