

## **HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK JOINT GROUP**

A meeting of the **HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK JOINT GROUP** will be held in **THE WREN ROOM, COUNTRYSIDE CENTRE, HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRYSIDE PARK** on **FRIDAY, 14 OCTOBER 2011** at **10:00 AM** and you are requested to attend for the transaction of the following business:-

### **A G E N D A**

#### **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 25<sup>th</sup> March 2011.

**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 2011/12 as follows:-

**(a) Cambridgeshire County Council**

Councillor Mrs E Kadic

**(b) Huntingdonshire District Council**

Councillors M G Baker, Mrs M Banerjee, N J Guyatt and R J West.

**6. 2010/11 FINAL ACCOUNTS (Pages 5 - 6)**

To consider a report by the Treasurer regarding the final accounts for Hinchingsbrooke Country Park for 2010/11.

**7. SENIOR RANGER'S REPORT (Pages 7 - 8)**

To receive a report by the Senior Ranger on park activities for the period April to October 2011.

## 8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To note that the next meeting of the Group will be held on Friday 30<sup>th</sup> March 2012.

Dated this 6 day of October 2011



Head of Paid Service

### 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 Helen Taylor, Senior Democratic Services Officer, 01480 388008 or email [Helen.Taylor@huntingdonshire.gov.uk](mailto:Helen.Taylor@huntingdonshire.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 Countryside Centre, Hinchingsbrooke Countryside Park on Friday, 25 March 2011.

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

APOLOGY An apology for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of Councillor Mrs M Banerjee.

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs D Breedon and Mrs H Taylor .

### 2. 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**

### 3. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> October 2009 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### 4. NOTES

Members received the notes of the meetings held on 26<sup>th</sup> March and 8 October 2010.

### 5. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations of interest were received.

### 6. APPOINTMENT OF VICE- CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED

that County Councillor Mrs L Kadic be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Group for the ensuing Municipal Year.

### 7. SENIOR RANGER'S REPORT

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

#### (a) **Staffing**

Members' attention was drawn to recent staff changes including the conclusion of the future jobs fund employees

scheme which had seen trainees undertaking six month appointments working as a ranger or in the café. Mention also was made of the implications for the Country Park of the District Council's voluntary release scheme. The Group was informed that Pat Knight, Countryside Services Manager and Roland Fletcher, Ranger at Paxton Pits, had chosen to be released under the scheme and arrangements were in place to redistribute their workload.

(b) **Volunteers**

The Group noted that the number of volunteers currently stood at over 500. The annual volunteers "thank you" day had been a great success with group games being played at the park.

(c) **Countryside Centre**

Details of the number of users of the Countryside Centre for the period September 2010 to February 2011 inclusive were presented. Members noted that the length of the average room booking had reduced and fewer lunches were being booked which was attributed to organisations/businesses cutting back during the economic downturn.

(d) **Café**

Members were pleased to note that the café continued to be busy and that a small range of goods had gone on sale as a way of increasing the café's income.

(e) **Events and Activities**

The Senior Ranger informed the group of the various events/activities that had been held since the last meeting. A highlight of that period had been the santa's grotto which had proved to be extremely popular with a profit of £600 being made. The Senior Ranger thanked the Executive Councillor for Operational and Countryside Services who had helped on the day by serving refreshments.

(f) **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 the rangers hut at Coneygear Park had been the subject of a number of acts of vandalism for which the culprits had been arrested and taken to court.

(g) **Park Management**

The Senior Ranger informed the Group of the various work being undertaken at the Country Park, including repairs to the path around the lake and the planting of a hedge at the wildlife wood.

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

It was reported that the Friends of Hinchingsbrooke Country Park were planning to organise a number of events on Good Friday to raise funds for the park. Since the last meeting new interpretation boards had been funded by the Friends.

(i) **Future Budget Position**

Members' attention was drawn to the proposed cuts identified for the countryside service over the next three years. Although it was hopeful that additional income would be generated in year 2, concerns were raised that some staff savings would be required in year 3.

(j) **Pat knight**

The Chairman paid tribute to the contribution made by Pat Knight, Countryside Services Manager, who was due to leave the Council's service on 30<sup>th</sup> April 2011.

Accordingly, Members placed on record their sincere gratitude to Mr Knight for his contribution to the work of the Park and his vision and commitment to the countryside service.

In reply, Mr Knight thanked Members and Officers for their good wishes and support over the years.

**8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The Group noted that their next meeting would be held on 14<sup>th</sup> October 2011.

Chairman

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**HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK  
JOINT GROUP**

**14<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2011**

**2010/11 FINAL ACCOUNTS  
(Report of the Treasurer)**

**1. Financial Information**

- 1.1 The table below compares the actual income and expenditure for 2010/11 with the updated budget.

2010/11	Budget £'000	Forecast £'000	Actual £'000	Variation to Budget £'000
Employees	285	319	315	+30
Premises	53	-4	-10	-63
Transport	4	8	13	+9
Supplies & Services	70	61	65	-5
Irrecoverable VAT	3	3	2	-1
<b>Total Controllable Expenditure</b>	<b>415</b>	<b>387</b>	<b>385</b>	<b>-30</b>
Income	221	213	211	-10
<b>Net Controllable Expenditure</b>	<b>194</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>-20</b>

Employees expenditure exceeded the budget because staffing levels in the café were higher than anticipated. This increase was offset by savings on premises which included a refund of £46k on NNDR (business rates). This is a one-off refund and so action is being taken this year to try to reduce staffing costs in the café.

Forecasting of outturn expenditure was reasonably accurate and Countryside services, as a whole, continues to manage its budgets to ensure that expenditure and income do not exceed the budget targets.

- 1.2 The 2011/12 Medium Term Plan (MTP) set Countryside Services a target of £199k savings to be achieved by 2013/14. Savings of £101k are expected in the current year and some of these will impact on Hinchingsbrooke Country Park.

One of the biggest changes is that the Senior Ranger now manages the whole of Countryside Services (due to the deletion of the Countryside Services Manager post). However these changes should have no impact to the service to the public.

Every effort is being made to identify areas where more income could be generated or where staff could be used more efficiently to achieve the remainder of the savings target.

- 1.3 The table below summarises the position for the current year and includes information up to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

<b>2011/12</b>	<b>Budget £'000</b>	<b>Forecast £'000</b>	<b>Actual £'000</b>	<b>% of Budget Spent</b>
Employees	258	258	125	48
Premises	40	40	5	13
Transport	6	6	1	17
Supplies & Services	56	60	28	50
Irrecoverable VAT	3	3	0	0
<b>Total Controllable Expenditure</b>	<b>363</b>	<b>367</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>44</b>
Income	209	213	92	44
<b>Net Controllable Expenditure</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>44</b>

Employees and Supplies and Services expenditure are on target. Premises expenditure will be £8k below the budget by the end of the year because the site is now exempt from NNDR charges. Premises expenditure is also artificially low at this point in the year because the £10k contribution to the repairs and renewals fund is usually made at the end of the year.

Income is slightly behind the budget target at the moment but this is mainly due to the fact that the income due from to the County Council (£15k) is usually received in the last quarter of the year.

Currently no major variations are expected to arise on these budgets this year.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

**It is recommended that Members note the contents of this report.**

**Contact Officer: Sue Martin  
Principal Accountant  
(01480) 388107**

## SENIOR RANGER'S REPORT FOR April 2011 to September 2011

### STAFFING

- Pat Knight and Roland Fletcher have taken redundancy
- Paul Claydon now covers time at Ouse Valley Way, Holt Island, Paxton Pits and HCP
- Judith Arnold covers the majority of Pat's role with Kirsty Drew covering Great Fen and planning, both reporting direct to Eric Kendall

### VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers: April to Sept inclusive: 909 at HCP alone including 4 school work experience students, also have one D of E volunteer regularly in the café as well as one person recovering from mental health issues.

### 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
01/04/11 – 30/09/2011	159 £20,258	5273	23 4985

These included such groups as:, Early Years, Cambridge Advisory Service and the Forensic Lab

### CAFÉ

Significant staff changes have been made. From 1<sup>st</sup> April the three staff each dropped to 4 days a week. Nicky then left and the remaining two have occasionally worked an additional day with a newly created bank of casual staff being asked to work hours when needed. This is the bare minimum Judi frequently covers holiday (or sickness just recently)

In the first 6 months of this year, the new small range of sales goods has currently brought in £2,000, and lessons learnt regarding the type of products people wish to purchase.

### EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

- Sports Day –570 people had a go at 15 different sports and met people from the local sports clubs
- St Ives Cycle Club Mountain Bike Race
- MS fundraising and awareness day

Noticeably there was not a calendar of summer events arranged in order to save some money. Numerous complaints/comments were received and Rangers are currently working on the provision of cost effective events for next year.

Some 930 pupils attended school visits at HCP organised by Rangers..

### WIDER DISTRICT

- 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 for Best Urban Community in Anglia in Bloom. In Britain in Bloom again won silver and significantly Brian's work at Spring Common school each Monday brought in the best school garden for special needs in Britain in Bloom.

- Huntingdonshire Community Nursery Rangers was awarded best special needs garden in Anglia in Bloom
- Colne graveyard has regular work parties.
- Stukeley Meadows has had more input this year as we are no longer employing Wayside Wildlife

## **PARK MANAGEMENT**

- Tree surveys & associated work
- Fences have been constructed around the Wash
- A new bird hide has been constructed on the Spit

## **FRIENDS OF HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK**

- Interpretation boards have been purchased and located
- The orchard was officially opened by Cllr Dutton in September
- The Christmas Shopping day is on November 20<sup>th</sup>

## **“BALANCING THE BUDGET”**

Rangers continue to be creative to raise income and cut costs, staff workshops have been held and trials identified.

More social events have been hosted in the countryside including birthdays, Christening and a Hen night.

The opportunity to hold wedding receptions still exists

Volunteers have recently started trialling hazel hurdles and wooden products using free resources and labour in order to raise income

## **RECOMMENDATION**

**It is recommended that Members note the contents of this report.**

**Contact Officer – Judith Arnold  
01480 387073**