

## HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK JOINT GROUP

A meeting of the **HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK JOINT GROUP** will be held in **COUNTRYSIDE CENTRE, HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRYSIDE PARK** on **FRIDAY, 26 APRIL 2013** 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. MINUTES** (Pages 1 - 4)

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2013.

**2. MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

To receive from Members declarations as to disclosable pecuniary, non-disclosable pecuniary or non pecuniary interests in relation to any Agenda item. See Notes below.

**3. SENIOR RANGER'S REPORT** (Pages 5 - 8)

To receive a report by the Senior Ranger on park activities for the period September 2012 to March 2013.

**4. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

To note that the next meeting of the Group will be held on Friday 11<sup>th</sup> October 2013.

Dated this 18 day of April 2013



Head of Paid Service

#### **Notes**

**A. Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

- (1) *Members are required to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests and unless you have obtained dispensation, cannot discuss or vote on the matter at the meeting and must also leave the room whilst the matter is being debated or voted on.*

(2) *A Member has a disclosable pecuniary interest if it*

*(a) relates to you, or*

*(b) is an interest of -*

*(i) your spouse or civil partner; or*

*(ii) a person with whom you are living as husband and wife; or*

*(iii) a person with whom you are living as if you were civil partners*

*and you are aware that the other person has the interest.*

(3) *Disclosable pecuniary interests includes -*

*(a) any employment or profession carried out for profit or gain;*

*(b) any financial benefit received by the Member in respect of expenses incurred carrying out his or her duties as a Member (except from the Council);*

*(c) any current contracts with the Council;*

*(d) any beneficial interest in land/property within the Council's area;*

*(e) any licence for a month or longer to occupy land in the Council's area;*

*(f) any tenancy where the Council is landlord and the Member (or person in (2)(b) above) has a beneficial interest; or*

*(g) a beneficial interest (above the specified level) in the shares of any body which has a place of business or land in the Council's area.*

#### **B. Other Interests**

(4) *If a Member has a non-disclosable pecuniary interest or a non-pecuniary interest then you are required to declare that interest, but may remain to discuss and vote.*

(5) *A Member has a non-disclosable pecuniary interest or a non-pecuniary interest where -*

*(a) a decision in relation to the business being considered might reasonably be regarded as affecting the well-being or financial standing of you or a member of your family or a person with whom you have a close association to a greater extent than it would affect the majority of the council tax payers, rate payers or inhabitants of the ward or electoral area for which you have been elected or otherwise of the authority's administrative area, or*

*(b) it relates to or is likely to affect any of the descriptions referred to above, but in respect of a member of your family (other than specified in (2)(b) above) or a person with whom you have a close association*

*and that interest is not a disclosable pecuniary interest.*

**Please contact 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.**

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 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 on Friday, 12 October 2012.

PRESENT: Councillors M G Baker, Mrs M Banerjee, Ms L Kadic and R J West.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillor N J Guyatt and Mr P Clark, Mr J Craig and Mr M Davey.

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs J Arnold, Mr N Brown, Mr P Hobbs and Mrs H J Taylor..

### 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 of the Group held on 30<sup>th</sup> March 2012 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### 3. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

### 4. APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED

that County Councillor Ms L Kadic 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 2012/2013 was noted as follows:-

(a) **Cambridgeshire County Council**

County Councillor Ms L Kadic.

(b) **Huntingdonshire District Council**

District Councillors M G Baker, Mrs M Banerjee, N J Guyatt

and R J West.

## 6. SENIOR RANGER'S REPORT

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

### (a) Staffing

Members were advised that the new staffing structure of Green Spaces had not been finalised. Matt Johnson, full time Ranger at Paxton Pits would be leaving soon to start a new post with the Wildlife Trust in Derbyshire. Given his responsibility for the day to day care of the cattle, Members noted that it is imperative that his duties are covered.

### (b) Volunteers

The Group noted that the number of volunteer days worked currently stood at 900.

### (c) Countryside Centre

Details of the number of users of the Countryside Centre for the period April to September 2012 compared to previous years were presented. Members noted that due to the current economic climate fewer companies were booking the centre for training courses. As a result the number of people using the centre had dropped from 5,273 to 4,747 when compared with the same period in the previous year.

### (d) Café

Members were reminded that trade in the café was heavily weather-dependant. With appalling weather between April and June, income in the café had decreased by £10,000 compared to the same period last year. Members were encouraged to note that with a brighter and drier July to September café income levels had started to improve.

### (e) Financial Position

The Countryside Accountant drew Members' attention to anticipated budget variations in the current year along with an outturn assessment for 2011/2012. In so doing, Members were reminded that the Countryside budget had been reduced by £48,000 at the start of 2012 and that a further reduction of £50,000 was programmed for 2013. The Countryside Accountant explained that Officers were reviewing the Countryside budgets assess whether for existing service provision a further reduction could be sustained. In that respect, the Senior Ranger reported on the impact the cuts were having on the day to day running of the countryside service and the difficulties being faced by staff.

In response to a question by a Member in relation to car park income, the Countryside Accountant agreed to circulate a

breakdown of the Country Park car park income and expenditure to all Members.

(f) **Events and Activities**

The Senior Ranger informed the Group of the various events and activities that had been held since the last meeting. Members were encouraged to note that over 600 people took part in the sports taster activity day.

(g) **Park Management**

Members noted that a new energy efficient boiler was being installed at the Countryside Centre.

(h) **Ornamental Pond**

In response to a question by the Chairman, the Senior Ranger confirmed that the sluice gates on the ornamental pond worked in a limited manner and could be used to let water out if necessary.

(i) **Godmanchester Community Nursery**

Having noted the achievements of the Godmanchester Community Nursery, Members agreed to hold a site visit there before the next meeting.

**7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was noted that the next meeting of the Group would be held on Friday 22nd March 2013.

Chairman

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### STAFFING

- The restructuring of Countryside Services has been completed and staff positions have been formalised.  
John Craig is the Green Spaces Manager, Judith Arnold is the Countryside Services Co-ordinator, Peter Hobbs is the Senior Ranger.  
Jim Milligan is now a Ranger (as opposed to being assistant ranger.)  
Brian Gardner, Coneygear Park Ranger is now based at Hinchingsbrooke and works at Coneygear as required.

### VOLUNTEERS

- Volunteers: September to February inclusive: 844 volunteers providing 5064 man hours of work

### COUNTRYSIDE CENTRE

Number of Groups/people from beginning of September 2012 to end February 2013 was as follows including 12 Natural history groups, 3 schools and 22 countryside events or Green-spaces meetings

	Groups	Number of People	Income
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
01/10/09 - 28/02/10	173	3786	£25,000
01/10/10- 28/02/11	136	3307	£20,278
01/10/11 - 28/02/12	121	3665	£17,623
01/10/12 - 28/02/13	113	3427	£18,510

These figures include income from all headings to the countryside centre, room hire, Teas & coffees, equipment hire etc. ex VAT

With additional training facilities being created by the County Council, it is a concern that some of our Early Years or CAS bookings will be encouraged to use their own provision. In light of this, we are investing in training more volunteers and in having a qualified member of staff to deliver educational opportunities to older students. Publicity to invite schools and colleges to visit from further afield is currently being worked on. This will hopefully fill gaps if the conference bookings do fall.

### CAFÉ

- The adverse weather conditions have reduced the numbers of visitors coming to the park by approx 20,000 in the 4 months between October and February. This has a direct impact on Café takings which are proportionately down. For example, taking for the two week Christmas/New Year period were down by £1250 compared to the previous year.
- Café Supervisor has introduced a medium priced lunch option to try to boost lunch time takings in the cafe
- The number of buffets provided to the countryside centre for the same period this year (25) and last year (24). Prices have been put up to £6.95 per head to reflect rising food costs but careful purchasing keeps costs as low as possible.
- With respect to rising food costs, the café supervisor is continuously monitoring and reviewing all our supplier's prices and adjusting the ordering accordingly in an effort to keep the Café prices competitive and good value for our customers.

### EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

- Hosted HBKA Honey Show
- Wildlife Trust Plant Sale
- Huntingdon AC held their round of the Frostbite League here attracting 500 runners
- CAMSAR held a search and rescue exercise here
- Santa's Grotto, despite a very wet day, was visited by 192 children
- Hosted an HDC lead Inter-faiths day.
- Hosted several cross country races – Hinchingsbrooke School, Alconbury High School, Air Cadets.
- Organised and hosted several children's activities - Big Draw, Bear Hunt

## **WIDER DISTRICT**

- Hinchingsbrooke Rangers and Volunteers have helped with the installation of the new hut at Holt Island
- Taken over all practical work at Stukeley Meadows Local Nature Reserve now that we no longer employ a contractor to do this.
- Updated the management plans for Spring Common and Stukeley Meadows.

## **PARK MANAGEMENT**

- New wood burner fired heating system installed in the Countryside Centre
- New Night Storage heaters installed in the Visitor Centre and staffroom
- Started work to improve woodland rides in Bobs Wood and the New Plantation
- Tree safety surveys completed and remedial work well under way (due to much of lakeside being under water for several weeks at a time we haven't been able to do anything in that area!)
- New log storage shed built. Lockable doors made and put on other sheds
- 415 whips (small trees) planted along edge of old llama fields by Wildlife Trust Watch Group.

## **FRIENDS OF HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK**

- Held a Halloween Disco in the Countryside Centre. 50 children attended.
- Organised a Christmas Shopping Fair - all stalls were taken.
- Given the Rangers £400 for a bird watching scope and tripod to help with the wetland bird survey they carry out on the Hinchingsbrooke Pits for the BTO

## FINANCIAL PARAGRAPHS – HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK MARCH 2013

### Financial Information

#### FINANCIAL POSITION

The controllable budget and forecast for 2012/13 and the budget for 2013/14 are:

	<b>BUDGET</b>	<b>FORECAST</b>	<b>BUDGET</b>
	<b>2012/13</b>	<b>2012/13</b>	<b>2013/14</b>
	<b>£000s</b>	<b>£000s</b>	<b>£000s</b>
<b>Hinchingbrooke Country Park</b>			
Staff	129	136	138
Running Costs	43	40	44
Renewals Fund Contribution	10	10	11
Income	(30)	(29)	(31)
<b>Total Country Park and Management</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>162</b>
<b>Countryside Centre</b>			
Staff	74	70	75
Running Costs	4	5	5
Income	(49)	(39)	(48)
<b>Total Countryside Centre</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Cafe</b>			
Staff	58	53	55
Running Costs	36	34	37
Income	(112)	(88)	(110)
<b>Total Cafe</b>	<b>(18)</b>	<b>(1)</b>	<b>(18)</b>
<b>Total Hinchingbrooke Country Park</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>176</b>

HDC budgets are prepared and monitored on a controllable cost basis. They do not include support costs (for example HR, Payroll, ICT, Finance etc) or capital charges. Last year these amounted to £0.05m.

#### PARK MANAGEMENT

The £9,000 increase in the staff budget for park management comprises pay award £2,500, staff changes set out at the start of this report £3,200, and training £3,300.

#### COUNTRYSIDE CENTRE

The original objectives of the Countryside Centre were educational research and visits. However, over half of the Centre expenditure is funded through income generation. The income budget has proved to be overoptimistic and an £8,000 shortfall has been forecast. Alternative custom is being sought to reduce the shortfall in future years. A trial reduction in core staff hours with additional hours in the summer is expected to generate some compensating savings and this is reflected in the budget for 2013/14.

## CAFE

The cafe's trading history since the new premises were opened is shown below.

	<b>Staff</b>	<b>Running</b>	<b>Income</b>	<b>(Surplus)</b>
		<b>Costs</b>		<b>or Deficit</b>
	<b>£000s</b>	<b>£000s</b>	<b>£000s</b>	<b>£000s</b>
<b>Budget 2013/14</b>	55	37	(110)	(18)
<b>Forecast 2012/13</b>	53	34	(88)	(1)
<b>Actual 2011/12</b>	53	36	(103)	(14)
<b>Actual 2010/11</b>	77	37	(120)	(6)
<b>Actual 2009/10</b>	78	36	(110)	4

Despite the difficult trading conditions due to very poor weather the latest forecast is for the cafe to break even. The improved cost control introduced in 2011/12 has been sustained through 2012/13 with reduced forecast surplus entirely due to the drop in income. Taking these factors into account it reasonable to forecast an operating surplus for future years.