

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, 21 MARCH 2014** 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 11th 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 October 2013 to March 2014.

4. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To note that the next meeting of the Group will be held on Friday 10th October 2014.

Dated this 12 day of March 2014



Head of Paid Service

Notes

1. 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.

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.

2. Filming, Photography and Recording at Council Meetings

The District Council supports the principles of openness and transparency in its decision making and permits filming, recording and the taking of photographs at its meetings that are open to the public. It also welcomes the use of social networking and micro-blogging websites (such as Twitter and Facebook) to communicate with people about what is happening at meetings. Arrangements for these activities should operate in accordance with guidelines agreed by the Council and available via the following link - [filming, photography and recording at council meetings.pdf](#) or on request from the Democratic Services Team. The Council understands that some members of the public attending its meetings may not wish to be filmed. The Chairman of the meeting will facilitate this preference by ensuring that any such request not to be recorded is respected.

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.

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.

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Agenda Item 1

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK JOINT GROUP held in the Countryside Centre, Hinchingbrooke Countryside Park on Friday, 11 October 2013.

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

APOLOGY: An apology for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of County Councillor Sir P Brown.

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs J Arnold, Messrs J Craig, N Green and P Hobbs and Mrs H 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 Joint Group held on 26th April 2013 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 District Councillor R J West be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Joint Group for the ensuing Municipal Year.

5. MEMBERSHIP OF THE GROUP

The membership of the Hinchingbrooke Country Park Joint Group for 2013/14 was noted as follows:-

(a) **Cambridgeshire County Council**

Councillor Sir P Brown.

(b) **Huntingdonshire District Council**

Councillors M G Baker, Mrs M Banerjee, R B Howe and R J West.

6. SENIOR RANGER'S REPORT

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

(a) Staffing

Members were advised that Nick Atkins, full time Café Assistant, had left at the end of September. The position had been advertised and interviews would be taking place soon.

(b) Volunteers

The Group noted that the number of volunteer days worked currently stood at 683, providing 4098 hours of work.

(c) Countryside Centre

Details of the number of users of the Countryside Centre for the period April to September 2013 compared to the previous years were presented. Income from the Centre was reported as being low when compared to the previous year's figures. The Senior Ranger reported that this was attributable to users reducing their expenditure by hiring out the facilities for half days and not ordering any lunches. However, Members were encouraged that the number of schools using the Centre had increased.

(d) Café

Members noted that although the Café had seen an increase in income over the summer, the target surplus of £19,000 was unlikely to be met. The Accountant explained that officers would be reviewing the Countryside budgets to ensure targets are challenging but also realistic.

The Green Spaces Manager reported that the management of the Café had been included in a review of the Council's catering services, alongside the café and hospitality services at the Leisure Centres and Pathfinder House. As a result of which, a suggestion to contract out the operation of the catering service was agreed. Members were advised that contractors would be invited through the tender process to bid for either all the services, a combination or alternatively just the service that they specialised in.

In the discussions that ensued, Members raised concerns that they had not been involved in the process and stressed that the café was working well. Furthermore, Members felt that any change in management could potential lower the current standard of service and result in an increase in prices. A suggestion was made that all the Council's catering services should work together to obtain the best price possible for supplies.

In response to Members' concerns, the Accountant reported that the tendering process would be required to follow the Council's Codes of Financial Management and Procurement.

Having suggested that the process was a market testing exercise, the Services Development Manager for the Operations Division agreed to circulate to the Group a briefing paper on the proposals.

(e) Events and Activities

The Senior Ranger informed the Group of the various events and activities that had been held since the last meeting. Members noted that the Summer Events Programme had promoted 27 events, attracting 1410 attendees.

(f) 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 after the winter and the installation of a 40ft container for the adapted bicycles project.

(g) Friends of Hinchingsbrooke Country Park

It was reported that since the last meeting, 5 new tables for the café and an adapted bicycle had been donated by the Friends of Hinchingsbrooke Country Park.

(h) Financial Position

Members noted the outturn figures for 2012/13 and the anticipated budget variations in the current year. The Countryside Accountant referred to the efforts of staff to reduce the Park's expenditure which was forecast to be £14,000 higher than the budgeted figures

7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Group noted that their next meeting would be held on Friday, 21st March 2014.

Chairman

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SENIOR RANGERS REPORT October 2013 to March 2014

STAFFING

New Café Assistant, Stephanie James started 26th November.

Over the winter continuation training has taken place for Rangers and selected volunteers in use of chainsaws, brush cutters/strimmers. Also a tree surveying course was run for staff from all sites and two Hinchingsbrooke Rangers attended. This ensures we comply with the districts' tree strategy policy.

VOLUNTEERS

October to February inclusive: 585 volunteers providing 3510 hours of work.

COUNTRYSIDE CENTRE

The number of bookings this past 6 months has been significantly lower than previously. Our regulars (NHS, mental health trust, Cambridgeshire County Council, Foster adoption etc) continue to come within the 56 business bookings, but we are told they are not coming as frequently in an effort to reduce their costs.

The other 20 groups are natural history / schools and green spaces team meetings etc)

	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
01/03/2013 - 28/03/2014	76	2118	£12,512

CAFÉ

Takings in the Café are always weather dependent. Despite the wettest winter in history making the Park the muddiest I can remember, the Café takings have remained consistently good. This is all credit to the staff who worked very hard to provide a welcoming

atmosphere regardless of the weather, and tirelessly mopped the floor to maintain cleanliness!

EVENTS and ACTIVITIES

- Huntingdonshire Athletics Club Frostbite League Race took place in December – 575 runners
- CAMSAR training exercise
- County Inter Schools Cross Country – 300+ runners
- BRJ Athletics Club Frostbite League Race took place in March – 542 runners

Three smaller groups have established themselves, with our help, over the last year to become regular weekend favourites:

- Parkrun – every Saturday morning between 60 and 120 runners take part in a 5km run
- Go Ride – An off shoot from St Ives Cycle Club offering mountain bike training to children. They are at Hinchingsbrooke fortnightly with up to 30 children.
- Gearo's Soccer School – football training for the under 5's. Here for an hour every Sunday morning with up to 20 little ones

WIDER DISTRICT

Hinchingsbrooke Rangers have been busy on the other Huntingdon sites that we manage.

- At Spring Common we coppiced 15 small trees from around the pond and removed all the cuttings from the site. This is part of our HLS commitment for Spring Common.
- We carried out some tree safety work at Hartford Wood and cut the hedges alongside the grassy paths at Stukeley Meadows LNR.

The Rangers and Volunteers have supported colleagues at Paxton Pits by

- helping with a drainage problem creating a sump through the filling lots of sand bags!
- we also helped to remove a fence line from one of the meadows.

At Stukely Meadows Railway Cutting,

we helped to remove a hectare of scrub prior to being grazed again this summer. This is part of the HLS plan for that site.

Hinchingbrooke Rangers also attended Hinchingbrooke and St Ivo School careers days.

PARK MANAGEMENT

- Completed the tree safety surveys and all the remedial work. (No ash dieback has been observed)
- Planted 820 whips (small trees) in various locations around the Park (all native species and all free packs!)
- Thinned out an area of the New Plantation and planted more hazel there.
- Cut back the larger hawthorns behind the Orchard to let in more light and planted a hedge in there.
- Planted a hedge around the log sheds compound.
- Removed larger scrub and ash regrowth from south of main Lake. Part of our HLS commitment to encourage nightingales and turtle doves to nest.
- Rebuilt 50 metres of path between the Ornamental Lake and Hinchingbrooke School
- Felled 7 medium sized Sycamores to the east of the Oak Plantation and replanted with more Oak to stop the spread of sycamore and to native species management plan . chainsaw course

FRIENDS of HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK

The main fundraising event was the Christmas Fair in November, and time has been spent completing an application form for funding to create a “pagoda.” They have yet to hear whether this has been successful.

Purchases on behalf of Hinchingbrooke have included

- * Light Meters
- * Combined hygrometer/thermometers
- * Compasses
- * Membership of learning outside the classroom

At a recent committee meeting members agreed in principle to fund the equipment to fence around the play equipment to create a dog free area.

FINANCIAL POSITION

		Budget	Forecast	Variation
		2013-14	2013-14	
		£000s	£000s	£000s
Hinchingbrooke Country Park and Management				
	Staff	135	134	(1)
	Running Costs	41	40	(1)
	Income	(31)	(28)	3
	Total Country Park and Management	145	146	1
Countryside Centre				
	Staff	75	62	(13)
	Running Costs	5	4	(1)
	Income	(48)	(34)	14
	Total Countryside Centre	32	32	0
Cafe				
	Staff	60	52	(8)
	Running Costs	36	36	0
	Income	(115)	(90)	25
	Total Cafe	(19)	(2)	17
Total Hinchingbrooke Country Park		158	176	18

Countryside centre

We are not able to sustain the level of income achieved in the past, but with one member of staff currently part time, this has been offset for this year. Many suggestions from the “Facing the Future” process have offered ideas for this building and several will be further investigated over the coming months.

Café

The income over the counter has remained consistent as previously mentioned. The income from buffets is slightly lower, but the significant difference is that increasing food costs are currently running at 38% compared to usual 33%. A price increase in January has been implemented, and the café supervisor constantly compares suppliers’ prices to achieve best value.