

## **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, 10 OCTOBER 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. 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 of the Joint Group held on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2014.

**3. 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.

**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 2014/15 as follows:

**(a) Cambridgeshire County Council**

Councillor Sir P Brown.

**(b) Huntingdonshire District Council**

Councillors T Hayward, B Hyland, T D Sanderson and R J West.

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

To receive a report by the Senior Ranger on park activities for the period April to September 2014.

## 7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To note that the next meeting of the Group will be held on Friday 27th March 2014.

Dated this 1 day of October 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.*

#### Non-Statutory Disclosable Interests

- (4) *If a Member has a non-statutory disclosable interest then you are required to declare that interest, but may remain to discuss and vote providing you do not breach the overall Nolan principles.*
- (5) *A Member has a non-statutory disclosable 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 a disclosable pecuniary interest, 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, or*
- (c) it relates to or is likely to affect any body –*
- (i) exercising functions of a public nature; or*
  - (ii) directed to charitable purposes; or*
  - (iii) one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union) of which you are a Member or in a position of control or management.*

*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](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 2

## HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK JOINT GROUP held in the Countryside Centre, Hinchingbrooke Countryside Park on Friday, 21 March 2014.

PRESENT: Councillor M G Baker – Chairman.

Councillors Mrs M Banerjee and R J West.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors Brown and R B Howe.

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs J Arnold, Messrs J Craig and P Hobbs and Mrs H Taylor.

### 8. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> October 2013 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### 9. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations of interest were received.

### 10. 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 Stephanie James had started as Café Assistant at the end of November.

Training had continued over the winter months for Rangers and selected volunteers on the use of chainsaws, brush cutters/trimmers.

#### (b) Volunteers

The Group noted that the number of volunteer days worked currently stood at 585, providing 3510 hours of work.

#### (c) Countryside Centre

Details of the number of users of the Countryside Centre for the period October 2013 to March 2014 compared to the previous years were presented. It was reported that income for the Centre continued to fall which was attributable to users reducing their expenditure by reducing the number of days they hire out the facilities. Members were advised that officers

were investigating various ways that the building can be used to generate income.

**(d) Café**

Visitor numbers to the café had fallen as a result of the very wet weather conditions over the winter, however a recent upturn in the weather may help to lift the income figures.

Members noted that following the concerns expressed at the previous meeting in relation to a suggestion that the operation of the café be contracted out alongside the Council's other catering services, the tendering exercise had been put on hold.

**(e) Events and Activities**

The Senior Ranger informed the Group of the various events and activities that had been held since the last meeting.

**(f) Wider District**

Members noted a range of work that had been undertaken in other parts of the District. It was reported that Hinchingsbrooke rangers and volunteers had assisted at Spring Common coppicing 15 small trees around the pond and removing all the cuttings from the site. As well as tree safety work at Hartford Wood, cutting of hedges at Stukeley Meadows Local Nature Reserve and the removal of a hectare of scrub at Stukeley Meadows Railway cutting.

Members referred to the use of volunteers when operating the sites at Paxton Pits, Holt Island etc. Particular mention was made of the need to retain a professional element when steering the volunteers.

**(g) Park Management**

Tree safety surveys had been undertaken at the park and an area of the new plantation thinned out with new trees being planted in various locations.

In response to a suggestion that the Rangers could assist local Parish and Town Councils with tree safety issues, the Green Spaces Manager confirmed that it was unlikely the Rangers would have capacity to undertake this work and that it might be better placed with the dedicated tree surgeon in the Operations division.

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

It was reported that since the last meeting, thermometers, light meters, compasses and membership of a learning outside the classroom organisation had been funded by the Friends of the Country Park. An application also had been submitted to WREN for funding for a pagoda which, if successful, would

benefit outside teaching.

**(i) Financial Position**

Members' attention was drawn to the park's controllable budget and forecast for 2013/14. Members were advised that the current figures for income for the café were likely to change due to a recent increase in sales as a result of the warmer weather.

**11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The Group noted that their next meeting would be held on Friday 10<sup>th</sup> October 2014.

Chairman

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# Agenda Item 6

## SENIOR RANGERS REPORT March to September 2014

### STAFFING

In April our Café supervisor, Maggie O'Hare, retired. Her assistant Steph James stepped up and took her place. In May we carried out interviews to fill the full time assistants roll and also to find a part time assistant and were unsuccessful in finding the right people. We carried out more interviews in June eventually employing James Gillies as the full time assistant though both of these are on temporary contracts until it is decided whether the café will be franchised. We also appointed some more casual staff to cover the busy times. All staff have proved to be excellent choices and are working well as a team.

At the end of June Jackie Elliott, the Countryside Centre Assistant retired. We have not replaced her fully yet and are using agency staff to fill this role. Also as a result of the job evaluation, Mary Evans from the nursery retired. Brian Gardner who worked here and at Coneygear (- which is now managed by the town council) has slid effortlessly into this role and is already bring about significant changes.

Due to staff leaving at Paxton Pits Nature Reserve, Godmanchester Nursery and here it was evident that that remaining staff were being stretched to the limit. It was decided to employ a part time Ranger, 3 days a week, to cover where ever needed. We interviewed in July and appointed Samuel James. He is based at Hinchingsbrooke and loaned out to other sites as required.

### VOLUNTEERS

April to August inclusive: 614 volunteers providing 3684 hours of work, helping with the general up keep of the Park, larger practical tasks, school visits and events.

### WIDER DISTRICT

Apart from our usual summer work at Spring Common, Stukeley Meadows and Views Common of grass cutting and hedge cutting, we have helped with tree safety surveys at The Thicket, replaced a section of barbed wire fencing at Wilhorn Meadow and helped with hay cutting at Paxton Pits.

We also attended the Wildlife Trust organised day at Grafham Water with two Rangers manning a display.

### PARK MANAGEMENT

- Erection of 320 metres of fencing and 7 gates to make the play equipment a dog free area.
- Replaced small bridge that straddles a ditch on the southern shore of the Lake.
- Built a new otter holt on the banks of Alconbury Brook.
- Planted up Christie Drive balancing pond area with over 300 wild flower plugs. Again this was another example of community involvement with the money for plugs raised by local residents who also helped staff and volunteers plant them.
- Entered the Park in Anglia in Bloom and won a gold award plus awarded the gold award for best biodiversity project. Significantly we gained the honour of being the best park over 10

acres in the whole of the Anglia region. This is a significant accolade for HDC and a direct result of the hard work by staff and volunteers alike.

## CAFÉ

Our new Café supervisor and her new staff have all bedded in very well and are now firmly part of the Hinchingsbrooke team. After a busy summer brought about by the good weather they are all now all fully battle hardened. The busy summer has not taken the edge off their enthusiasm and they are full of ideas that will hopefully carry the Café forwards.

## COUNTRYSIDE CENTRE

June and July saw 24 schools visit to the Countryside Centre and Park totalling 1334 children and 74 staff.

	Number of people	room hire	equipment	tea and coffee	Room cancellation charge	Buffet cancellation charge	Additional charges	U&M hire charge	
2010 – 2011	9515	33,962	1,314	8,726	1,475	166	1,705	152	<b>47,500</b>
2011 – 2012	9793	29,464	964	8,313	2,297	169	1,433	125	<b>42,765</b>
2012-2013	7718	23,590	812	7,102	863	208	939	90	<b>33,604</b>
2013-2014	7263	21,333	476	6,444	686		5,085	130	<b>34,154</b>
March 2014 to Sept 2014	4434	9,574	162	3,329	320	50	1,700	30	<b>15,165</b>
future bookings 2014/ 2015	1480	5,129	60	4,140					<b>9,329</b>
	<b>40203</b>	<b>123,052</b>	<b>3,788</b>	<b>38,054</b>	<b>5,641</b>	<b>593</b>	<b>10,862</b>	<b>527</b>	<b>182,517</b>

## EVENTS and ACTIVITIES

### April

- FHCP held an Easter egg hunt.
- 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Garden Party
- Hosted Baby James Starlight Trust sponsored walk and fun day.

### May

- Dawn chorus walk
- Wildlife Wander
- Bat Walk

## June

- Wildlife Wander
- Hosted Cycling Event, organised by District Council and Hunts Post as part of the lead up to the Tour de France passing through Cambridgeshire.

## July

- Wildlife Wander
- Hosted Huntingdonshire Sports Festival, organised by the District Council's Sports and Active Lifestyles team.
- Hosted Cruse Bereavement sponsored walk
- Mini-beast Day

## August

- Bell boating session x 3 days
- Den building
- Pirate Day
- Wildlife Wander
- Weekend 25<sup>th</sup> Birthday Bash – fun fair, craft fair, live jazz, hog roast, dog show.
- Hosted National Citizenship course which organised “Piknik in the Park” – afternoon of live music from local bands and singers
- Wild Art
- Mini-beast Day
- Walks Day – bird walk, wildlife wander, butterfly walk, dragon fly walk, bat walk
- Hosted HBKA Honey Show and fun day
- Wildlife Trust plant sale
- **FRIENDS of HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK**

Significant and different contribution recently has been the payment towards the Parks 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Garden Party in April for a jazz band. They also arranged various activities over the August celebration weekend.

With funds from the Easter event and money already in the bank, they contributed to the fence around the play area. Planned for this autumn is a quiz on November 1<sup>st</sup> and their usual Christmas shopping fair on November 16<sup>th</sup>.

# FINANCIAL POSITION

## HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK BUDGET AND FORECAST 2014/15

	Budget	Forecast	Variation
	2014-15	2014-15	
	£000s	£000s	£000s
<b>Hinchingsbrooke Country Park and Management</b>			
Staff	179	166	(13)
Running Costs	43	43	0
Income	(67)	(67)	0
<b>Total Country Park and Management</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>(13)</b>
<b>Countryside Centre</b>			
Staff	68	59	(9)
Running Costs	6	6	0
Income	(40)	(40)	0
<b>Total Countryside Centre</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>(9)</b>
<b>Cafe</b>			
Staff	67	59	(8)
Running Costs	37	36	(1)
Income	(118)	(102)	16
<b>Total Cafe</b>	<b>(14)</b>	<b>(7)</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Total Hinchingsbrooke Country Park</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>(15)</b>

The reduction in country park management staff costs is due to a ranger seconded three days per week to the nursery.

The reduction in countryside centre staff costs is due to staff vacancies less agency cover.

The reduction in staff costs at the café is due to reduced use of casual staff and a staff vacancy.

The café income is forecasted less than the challenging budget. You may also wish to note that the forecast is £7,000 more than the outturn for 2013/14 when the weather was very wet.