

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, 27 MARCH 2015** 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 Joint 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 21st March 2014.

3. NOTES (Pages 5 - 6)

To receive the Notes of the meeting of the Joint Group held on 10th October 2014.

4. 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.

5. APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRMAN

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

6. MEMBERSHIP OF THE GROUP

To note the Membership of the Joint 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.

7. SENIOR RANGER'S REPORT (Pages 7 - 10)

To receive a report by the Senior Ranger on park activities for the period October 2014 to March 2015.

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To note that the next meeting of the Joint Group will be held on Friday 16th October 2015.

Dated this 18 day of March 2015



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 Democratic Services Team, Tel No. 01480 388008/e-mail Adam.Green@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 (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 Elections & 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 the Countryside Centre, Hinchingbrooke Countryside Park on Friday, 21 March 2014.

- PRESENT: Councillor M G Baker – Chairman.
Councillors M G Baker, 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 11th 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 10th October 2014.

Chairman

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HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

NOTES of the meeting of the HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK JOINT GROUP held in the Countryside Centre, Hinchingsbrooke Countryside Park on Friday, 10 October 2014.

PRESENT: Councillors T Hayward and R J West

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors B Hyland and T D Sanderson.

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

1. QUORUM

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

(a) Staffing

Members were advised that since the Group's previous meeting both Maggie O'Hare, Café Supervisor and Jackie Elliott, Countryside Centre Assistant had retired.

(b) Volunteers

Members noted that the number of volunteers for the period April to August 2014 was 614, providing 3684 hours of work.

(c) Wider District

Members noted that a range of work had been undertaken in other parts of the District under the Countryside services remit including replacing a section of barbed wire fencing at Wilhorn Meadow and hay cutting at Paxton Pits.

(d) Park Management

It was noted that that the play equipment in the park had been fenced in, a small bridge had been replaced on the southern shore of the lake and the balancing pond at Christie Drive had been planted with over 300 wild flower plugs.

(e) Anglia in Bloom

Members were pleased to note that the Park had won a gold award plus for the best biodiversity project. Not only was this a significant accolade for the District Council but reflected the hard work by staff and volunteers alike.

(f) Countryside Centre

Details of the number of users of the Countryside Centre for the period March to September were presented.

(g) Events and Activities

Members were presented with details of the events over the summer period.

(h) Friends of Hinchingsbrooke Country Park

It was reported that the Friends of Hinchingsbrooke Country Park had been involved in the Parks 25th Anniversary Garden Party in April and had also contributed to the fence around the play area.

Chairman

SENIOR RANGERS REPORT October 2014 to March 2015

STAFFING

Café

Steph James, the Café Supervisor, left suddenly mid January for personal reasons. Since then Jamie Gillies the Cafe Assistant has filled the gaps with the help of the Countryside Coordinator. He has subsequently been appointed for as cafe supervisor 18 months, whilst further review of catering within HDC is undertaken.

A new café assistant has been pointed and will hopefully start in April role of Supervisor.

Rangers

Senior Ranger Peter Hobbs, retired at the end of February and at the moment we are not allowed to advertise for a replacement. Also at the end of March Sam James, the temporary Assistant Rangers contract ends.

This means the Ranger team at Hinchingsbrooke is down too two which is unrealistic to carry on running Hinchingsbrooke and the 7 other smaller sites without a change of working practices or more staff.

Countryside Centre

We are still using agency staff to fill the Countryside Centre Assistant's role as there will be surplus admin personnel once the new Operations team has been formalised within EFH.

With less staff, our ability to support as many events without changes to the structure and organisation of Countryside, is compromised. It is recognised that significant changes will need to occur in the next three to four years.

All of the above is unsettling for the whole team. Following immense work on the ZBB review, internal studies and now currently investigation by an external consultant, it is hoped some decisions will be made soon to allow work to continue to the benefit of our users and to once again settle staff and raise morale.

VOLUNTEERS

Volunteer numbers remain high with 486 volunteer days of work completed in the last 5 months.

COUNTRYSIDE CENTRE

The Countryside Centre has had a steady flow of business since October 2014. The billable income for the period between the start of October 2014 and the end of February 2015 is up 18.5% from the corresponding period the previous year. (From £16,464 to £19,518).

We are receiving positive feedback and testimonials and continue to get repeat business. A large proportion of our business comes from the Cambridgeshire County Council and the NHS. The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Trust are now our single biggest user. The billable income for March 2015 looks set to double that of last year, but it is important to note that we are currently reliant on a handful of key clients.

CAFÉ

The Café has continued to receive positive comments over the winter months and to have an increased footfall and therefore rise in income over the counter, which is partly weather dependant but also due to the improved customer service provided by the staff. Our home made cakes continue to receive very favourable comments.

This quarter, the amount taken over the counter is £7500 up on take last year in the same period. Over all the income over the counter is £12,000 up for the year to date. Food costs have risen too, but we have recently found a new supplier who has undercut our existing ones, so we are looking to reduce the costs but maintain the quality.

EVENTS and ACTIVITIES

- Huntingdon AC held there leg of the Frostbite League series of races at HCP in December. 601 runners took part.
- February half term – Alison did a Bear Hunt which was fully booked with a waiting list. The Bear was found.

WIDER DISTRICT

Since October Hinchingbrooke Rangers have helped with:

- The production of a management for Needingworth Parish Council for their woodland. Also helped them with some tree safety work and habitat enhancement.
- 2 Spring Common work parties.
- Stukeley Meadows work party
- Removal of the barbed fence at Wilhorn Meadow.
- OVW work party

PARK MANAGEMENT

- At the end of October last year HLS grass cutting was completed in the main field and around the lake. 70 bat boxes made as part of our HLS commitment.

- The orchard was pruned.
- 2 new log sheds built and filled with split logs.
- Path from Café to Countryside centre resurfaced.
- Tree safety surveys carried out and 50% of remedial work completed so far.
- 5 large Chestnuts from Chestnut Avenue taken down to 6 metre monolith. All were diseased and potentially dangerous.
- Hazel and willow coppicing and the repair of woven willow fences.
- Tree planting in Oak Plantation and Pine Avenue

FRIENDS of HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK

- FHCP held a successful Christmas shopping fair in November.

The Friends have donated a total of £9350 towards the decking and outdoor shelters together with a £21,140 grant from Wren. This is in response to requests from schools as well as general public. The Friends are also buying the outdoor furniture that is needed.

FINANCIAL POSITION

HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK BUDGET AND FORECAST 2014/15

	Budget 2014-15 £000s	Forecast 2014-15 £000s	Variation £000s
Hinchingbrooke Country Park and Management			
Staff	179	166	(13)
Running Costs	43	43	0
Income	(67)	(67)	0
Total Country Park and Management	155	142	(13)
Countryside Centre			
Staff	68	59	(9)
Running Costs	6	6	0
Income	(40)	(40)	0
Total Countryside Centre	34	25	(9)
Cafe			
Staff	67	59	(8)
Running Costs	37	37	0
Income	(118)	(104)	14
Total Cafe	(14)	(8)	6
Total Hinchingbrooke Country Park	175	159	(16)

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 £9,000 more than the outturn for 2013/14 when the weather was very wet.