

## **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, 16TH OCTOBER 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 5 - 8)

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Joint Group held on 27th March 2015.

**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.

**4. APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRMAN**

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

**5. MEMBERSHIP OF THE GROUP**

To note the Membership of the Joint Group for 2015/16 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. OPERATIONS REVIEW UPDATE**

To receive a presentation on the Operations Review from the Interim Head of Operations.

**7. SENIOR RANGER'S REPORT** (Pages 9 - 12)

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

## **8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

To note that the next meeting of the Joint Group will be held on Friday 11th March 2016.

Dated this 8th day of October 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](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 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.*

## HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK JOINT GROUP held in the Countryside Centre, Hinchingsbrooke Countryside Park on Friday, 27 March 2015.

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

APOLOGY: An apology for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Mrs S Martin.

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs J Arnold, Messrs J Craig and A Green.

### 2. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED

that District Councillor R J West be elected Chairman of the Group for the Municipal Year 2014/15.

**COUNCILLOR R J WEST IN THE CHAIR.**

### 3. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 21st March 2014 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### 4. NOTES

The Notes of the meeting held on 10th October 2014 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### 5. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

### 6. APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED

that District Councillor T D Sanderson be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Group for the Municipal Year 2014/15.

### 7. MEMBERSHIP OF THE GROUP

The membership of the Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Joint Group for 2014/15 was noted 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.

District Councillors expressed concern with the low attendance record of the County Councillor representative. The Chairman is to write to the Leader of the County Council in regards to the County Council representation.

*(At 10:05am, during the discussion of the item, Councillor B Hyland entered the meeting.)*

## **8. 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 informed that the Senior Ranger has now retired. The post has not been advertised as there is a freeze on recruitment due to a departmental review. This has left the service short of staff which is not sustainable in the long term. Councillor T D Sanderson is to speak with the Executive Leader and relevant Executive Portfolio Holder regarding the situation.

Jamie Gillies has been appointed as the Café Supervisor and a café assistant has also been appointed both for 18 months. The Country Park has been asked if the café service is able to work more closely with the leisure team in order to find efficiency savings.

The post of Countryside Centre Assistant is currently occupied by a temporary member of staff.

### **(b) Volunteers**

The Joint Group noted that the number of volunteer days worked in the last five months was 486 days.

### **(c) Countryside Centre**

Details of the number of users of the Countryside Centre for the period October 2014 to March 2015 compared to the previous years were presented. It was reported that income for the Centre was up 18.5% for the period. Members were advised that the Country Park is looking at ways to better advertise the Centre's conference facilities in order to increase income.

### **(d) Café**

The Joint Group were informed that the income for the café is £14,000 up for the year to date. Members were told that economy savings such as changing suppliers have helped to

reduce costs.

**(e) Events and Activities**

Members were informed that the Bear Hunt is a popular event and currently there are 15 children on the waiting list. The August hunt is fully booked however the Country Park staff have provided an additional afternoon hunt. Members thought this was very bearable.

**(f) Wider District**

Members noted a wide range of work that had been undertaken on other parts of the District.

**(g) Park Management**

The Joint Group were informed that the Country Park will soon be taking delivery of two new outdoor shelters. Members expressed concern that the shelters could lead to an increase in litter however the Country Park staff hope that any increase will be concentrated around the shelters.

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

Members were told that several members of the friends committee are standing down. The committee are hoping to recruit at 'Meet The Friends' events on 29th March and 21st April. The Friends Annual General Meeting is taking place on 21st May.

**(i) Financial Position**

Members' attention was drawn to the Country Park's controllable budget and forecast for 2014/15. Members were advised that the financial position of the Country Park is good.

It was noted that Mr C Moss is the Country Park's accountant now that Mr N Green has left the Council.

**9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The Group noted that their next meeting would be held on Friday 16th October 2015.

Members queried whether the Joint Group should meet on a more frequent basis however it was agreed that more informal meetings would be more appropriate.

Chairman

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## **SENIOR RANGER'S REPORT March to September 2015**

### **STAFFING**

Following Pete Hobbs retirement in February, Hinchingsbrooke has been one member of Ranger staff down until September. It has therefore been a tough summer featuring juggling acts with staff rotas, events and activities!

Jim Milligan was appointed Senior Ranger at the end of July and Sam James as Ranger at the beginning of September.

Jim has no staff management experience but plenty of experience with volunteers and knows all the sites, staff and machinery very well.

Sam has been a volunteer and had short term contracts with Countryside over the past 6 years, so together with David, 3 full time staff now undertake all the practical work at HCP, the Commons and various small pocket parks. This is all part of a slimmed down Countryside Service.

The Countryside Centre administration tasks have been covered by temporary agency staff. Lesley the Countryside Centre cleaner has taken the caretaker position at PFH, leaving a vacancy.

*The new operational restructure and proposals will be explained separately*

### **VOLUNTEERS**

April to August inclusive: 530 volunteers helped with the general up keep, larger practical tasks, school visits and events. Their help has been significant whilst we have been short of Rangers, but several long term volunteers have recently moved from the area.

### **WIDER DISTRICT**

We had to undertake some "LEAN" thinking this year and have undertaken all the essential grass and hedge cutting at Spring Common, Stukeley Meadows and Views Common with the help from other Rangers, but only attended one external event-careers at Wood Green in March.

### **PARK MANAGEMENT**

- Maintained the newly erected 320 metres long fence and 7 gates around the play area. We have suffered some vandalism with people using the timber within for camp fires. However, on the whole, we have received many compliments about the dog free area, and most dog owners are respecting it.
- The new shelters and decking now have the benches fixed, and have been very popular throughout the summer.

- Whilst the water levels remain low, repairs have been made to the pond dipping platform on the main lake, and the jetty was destroyed by a storm so that is the next project.
- We did not enter the Country Park category within in Anglia in Bloom this year. However, the Huntingdon committee did bring the judges for a visit and the park was nominated in, and won the “Best Biodiversity” category. This is two years running and reflects the dedication of staff and volunteers.

## **CAFÉ**

The young café team have worked tirelessly during the summer and the feedback from customers has been positive, as they have tried new food items. Income **over the counter** is up £9,000 on this period last year.

Adverts for casual staff are currently open as some of the youngsters left for university or are now seeking full time employment.

As part of the restructure, the supervisor’s role may well be combined with a hospitality role in the Countryside Centre which we believe will improve service efficiency. A new job description and evaluation date will be required.

## **COUNTRYSIDE CENTRE**

Staff and volunteers led 23 school groups. A further 23 used the park without Ranger support on the day, but we provided maps, information & instructions or equipment for about 50% of these. In the fine weather, special needs groups visited nearly every day but on the whole we are not involved.

28 Beavers/Brownies/Scouts booked to use the country park this year but many more use the facility without us knowing. This year we did not offer to work with any groups because of the pressures on staff time-we could not work into the evenings and still cover the day time commitments.

As part of the review of countryside, work is occurring to increase occupancy of the Countryside Centre. Research into patterns of use has occurred and these findings are currently being formed into a simplified letting procedure using daily delegate rates. This will necessitate a rewrite of the booking system but long term should maintain our priority customer and minimise the paperwork.

## **EVENTS and ACTIVITIES**

- Evening Bat Walk x2
- Hosted Huntingdonshire Sports Festival in partnership with Sports and Active Lifestyles team (a very wet day!)
- Mini-beast Day x2 very popular thanks to facebook!

- Bear hunts x2 very popular thanks to facebook! (And another one booked for November)
- Bell boating session in partnership with Sports and Active Lifestyles team- but this year were not as popular as in previous years
- Den building (a very wet day!)
- Hosted HBKA Honey Show and Wildlife Trust plant sale
- Big Draw - 4<sup>th</sup> October
- Each Saturday Park Run has approx. 15 runners. "Team Bex" charity run had 500+ attendees and was featured on Anglia News

### **FRIENDS of HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK**

For a variety of personal reasons the majority of the long standing committee resigned at the AGM in May. However we have managed to gather a very enthusiastic team of individuals to form a new committee. They are considering changing the membership renewal date to all the same and offering direct debit payments.

They have created a list of ideas for next year, specifically fund raising to improve a footpath off Christie Drive and to provide more toddler specific play equipment.

They have allocated tasks so responsibility is shared and have attended one event to sell quiz sheets and publicise the Friends as they recognise that they need to be more visible amongst park users. Their next event is the annual Christmas fair (Nov 15th)

# FINANCIAL POSITION

## HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK BUDGET AND FORECAST 2014/15

	<b>Budget 2015-16</b>	<b>Forecast 2015-16</b>	<b>Variation</b>
	<b>£000s</b>	<b>£000s</b>	<b>£000s</b>
<b>Hinchingbrooke Country Park and Management</b>			
Staff	120	117	(3)
Running Costs	29	43	14
Income	(54)	(70)	(16)
<b>Total Country Park and Management</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>(5)</b>
<b>Countryside Centre</b>			
Staff	60	58	(2)
Running Costs	14	6	(8)
Income	(40)	(34)	6
<b>Total Countryside Centre</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>(4)</b>
<b>Café</b>			
Staff	62	65	3
Running Costs	44	45	1
Income	(105)	(120)	(15)
<b>Total Cafe</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>(10)</b>	<b>(11)</b>
<b>Total Hinchingbrooke Country Park</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>(20)</b>