

## **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, 11 MARCH 2016** at **10:00 AM** and you are requested to attend for the transaction of the following business:-

### **APOLOGIES**

#### **1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

To elect a Chairman of the Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Joint Group for the remainder of the Municipal Year.

#### **2. MINUTES** (Pages 5 - 12)

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> March 2015 and the Notes of the inquorate meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2015.

#### **3. MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

To receive from Members declarations as to disclosable pecuniary and other interests in relation to any Agenda Item.

#### **4. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN**

To appoint a Vice-Chairman of the Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Joint Group for the remainder of the Municipal Year.

#### **5. MEMBERSHIP OF THE GROUP**

To note the Membership of the Group for 2015/16 as follows:

##### **(a) Cambridgeshire County Council**

Councillor Sir P Brown.

##### **(b) Huntingdonshire District Council**

Councillors R C Carter, T F Hayward, T D Sanderson and R J West.

#### **6. SENIOR RANGER'S REPORT** (Pages 13 - 16)

To receive a report by the Senior Ranger on park activities for the period October 2015 – February 2016.

#### **7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

To note that the next meeting of Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Joint Group will be held on 14th October 2016 at 10am.

Dated this 3 day of March 2016



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 Melanie Sage, Democratic Services Team, Tel No. 01480 388169/e-mail [Melanie.Sage@huntingdonshire.gov.uk](mailto:Melanie.Sage@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.*

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## 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: Councillor R J West – Chairman.  
Councillors T Hayward, B Hyland and T D Sanderson.

APOLOGIES: There were no apologies for absence from the meeting submitted.

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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## HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

NOTES of the inquorate meeting of the HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK JOINT GROUP held in the Countryside Centre, Hinchingbrooke Countryside Park on Friday, 16 October 2015.

PRESENT: Councillors T Hayward and R J West.

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

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs J Arnold, Mr A Green, Mrs S Martin, Mr A Merrick and Mr C Moss.

### 10. OPERATIONS REVIEW UPDATE

Arising from the meeting being inquorate, Members noted that according to the Medium Term Financial Strategy the Operations Division had a target to reduce its budget by £2.3million over the next five years. As a result of this a fundamental service review was currently taking place within the Division. Part of the review involved a restructure and the Interim Head of Operations explained further details of the restructure. The main points were as follows:

- the number of senior managers had reduced from five to three;
- the division would be structured around three distinct business units: Commercial, Environmental and Business Development;
- the Street Cleansing and Grounds Maintenance functions would be integrated in the new Street Scene Service within Environmental Services, deployed in two area teams (north and south). The current Greenspaces Team would be redefined as a development team to support the Street Scene Service; and
- the Countryside Service situated within Environmental Services would continue to be managed as a separate team and would work closely with the Development Team to ensure optimisation of resources.

Other areas discussed included the following:

- It was noted that the income stream from recycling fluctuated dependent upon the demands of the market. This was reflected in the net costs of the Waste Service as the Council received an income share from the sale of recyclates. It was reported that the Council was paid for plastics by weight and not volume.
- Huntingdon Town Council had responsibility for 20 play areas in addition to those maintained by the Council which was too many to be sustainable. However, following a further analysis it was discovered that the north of the town was underprovided. This was being reviewed through a shared needs analysis with the Town Council to determine future priorities.
- As part of needs analysis for St Ives, it was identified that apart from the need to upgrade two play areas, the Town was well provided for in terms of open spaces and allotments.

- The Group were informed that there would be a new Management Plan for the Country Park to determine the future development priorities and maintenance regimes. This would be subject to consultation with the Joint Group. In respect of the remainder of the District, there was not currently a robust database of all the sites owned by the Council. In response to a question it was explained that Parish Councils could assist by sharing information with the Council on sites owned by them.
- The Group noted that the Council did not have the technology to conduct live checks on waste bin enquiries. Currently customers that contacted the Council regarding a missed bin collection were advised to call back at 2.30pm. The Group were informed that refuse collection rounds would be reconfigured to rebalance the rounds and to deliver efficiencies by reducing the number of rounds. In addition Members were advised that a waste collection shared service would not realise many benefits.

Discussion ensued in relation to Hinchingsbrooke Country Park matters. The key points were as follows:

- the post of Countryside Co-ordinator had been redefined as Countryside Manager to place a stronger emphasis on the overall management of the service; and
- the Countryside Centre and Café needed to become more commercial. The meeting rooms would be advertised for hire to organisations that did not normally utilise the Country Park to encourage a broader use and enable a sustainable income stream.

## **11. SENIOR RANGER'S REPORT**

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

### **a) Staffing**

Members noted the appointment of a Senior Ranger as at the end of July 2015 and a Ranger as at the beginning of September 2015. As a result there were now sufficient Ranger capacity to accommodate work experience staff for the ensuing year. The Countryside Centre Cleaner post was vacant having resigned to take up a Caretaker post at Pathfinder House. Consideration was being given to combine the role of Café Supervisor and Countryside Centre Supervisor.

### **b) Volunteers**

A number of long-serving volunteers had recently left having moved from the area. It was reported that three new volunteers had commenced at the Park. A tool use handbook was being developed for training purposes accompanied with a certificate once training was completed.

### **c) Wider District**

There was currently no capacity to undertake additional work around the District. Changes following the LEAN review had

impacted on the ability to provide staff cover particularly when staff had taken leave or had been absent through sickness.

**d) Park Management**

The Country Park had been nominated for the 'Best Biodiversity' category within Anglia in Bloom.

**e) Café**

Members noted that income received at the Café had increased by £9k compared to the same period the previous year. In response to a question the Group were informed that the increased income was attributed to an enthusiastic Team with good personalities, good homemade food as well as the weather conditions.

**f) Events and Activities**

In response to a question it was noted that there were 40 new users of the wheelchairs. The specially adapted bicycles were serviced twice a year with the Friends of Hinchingsbrooke Country Park funding the parts. The Group was reminded that Cambridgeshire County Council provided funding for ten volunteer placements per week for people with additional needs.

**g) Finance**

Members' attention was drawn to the current positive financial position of the Country Park.

**12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The Group noted that their next meeting would be held on Friday 11th March 2015.

Chairman

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## Senior Ranger's report; October 2015 – February 2016

### STAFFING

The new ranger team has been operating at full strength since the last committee meeting, with Sam James, the newest team member, showing the professionalism and dedication expected of a HDC ranger (N.B. Sam is currently only contracted until September 2017).

The Countryside Centre (CC) has not had a cleaner since August, resulting in the other CC staff (and occasionally café and ranger staff) fulfilling those duties - some bookings, especially in the evenings, have had to be turned down, or fitted in so that minimal room changes would be required. It is hoped a new cleaning contract will be in place in the near future. The Countryside Service administration tasks continue to be covered by part-time agency staff.

Jamie Gillies, the Café Manager, left at the end of January. His duties have been covered by the café supervisor, countryside manager, and countryside centre staff.

With Jamie leaving, and as part of the ongoing restructure, a new Hospitality Manager position has been created that will cover the running of both the café and Countryside Centre. This position is expected to be filled no later than the start of May.

A new Events and Promotions officer has also been created within the Countryside Services team, and this position has been filled by Alison Gray (who previously held the Countryside Centre co-ordinator position). She has started her new role, but cannot take on all her new responsibilities until the new hospitality manager is appointed and trained up.

### VOLUNTEERS

September 2015 – February 2016 (minus a three-week break over the Christmas period), a total of 486 volunteers helped with the practical work at the park, as well as assisting with school events, and corporate and community work days. This includes work carried out by the Green team, from Huntingdon Regional College, as well as two new regular volunteers.

### WIDER DISTRICT

On top of HCP volunteer work parties helping at Stukeley Meadows and Spring Common, we have also asked our volunteers to assist with tasks at the Community Nursery, in Godmanchester, as well as at Alconbury tree nursery.

In January, a ranger and a volunteer attended a careers day at St Ivo. School.

### PARK MANAGEMENT

- Completed all High Level Stewardship (grant funding) works at HCP and Spring Common.
- Started a rebuild on our damaged jetty (not fully completed due to high water levels).
- Undertaken a full tree survey of HCP, and have completed most of the remedial work.
- Ongoing winter management that includes; reed clearance, hedge cutting, hazel coppicing (including producing bean poles and pea sticks for the Community Nursery), log production, footpath repairs.

## **CAFÉ**

The café has been quieter over the winter months, interspersed by busier periods during holiday times. A range of new foods have been trialled, such as a greater variety of quick pick finger foods and various hot meal specials. There have also been themed days to coincide with national celebrations, such as Pancake Day and a week celebrating Chinese New Year, and more of these are planned for the future.

Two new casual staff members have been taken on to replace Anastasia and Tabettha, who have finished college and moved on to pastures new.

Volunteers in the form of Eloise, completing her Duke of Edinburgh bronze award, Charlotte, who is a student at Hinchingsbrooke School, and Kathryn, a special needs adult from HRC (ably assisted by her supervisor) have all been assisting as well.

Finally, the café has been requesting feedback from customers, with a café voucher on offer as part of a prize draw. Lots of positive feedback has been received, and a few requests made, as part of this ongoing survey.

## **COUNTRYSIDE CENTRE**

October 2015 – end February 2016

2848 people have used the CC (compared to 3210 in the same period last year), though numbers of groups has remained similar (this time period - 83 groups, 21 of which were HDC based; last year it was 81 and 17 respectively).

2 schools booked the CC for activities, with a further 2 running their own activities outside after training with a ranger.

## **EVENTS and ACTIVITIES**

- Big Draw – 100 people came along, exploring the park and making maps.
- Bear Hunts x2 – these were significantly oversubscribed once advertised on Facebook, 20 young children took part each time.
- Friends of HCP – Willowfest (pre-Christmas) - making wreaths, stars and a Christmas tree, with members of the committee helping.
- Friends of HCP – Christmas Shopping Fair – all the stalls were sold, and it was a fairly busy day. Will look into possibility of hosting at a different time of year, perhaps expanding to outside as well, or in conjunction with other events.
- 2 cross-country events have taken place, one run by Hinchingsbrooke School, the other the local Air Training Corps, with several other races/charity runs planned in the next few months.
- Community pond clearance day – on the Hinchingsbrooke estate, 15 adults and 1 youngster helped clear around the pond and work on the surrounding grassland and hedgerow.
- Environment Agency work party - 10 members from the Peterborough office assisted with planting new conifers along Pine Avenue.

- Following on from the success of the 'Team Bex' charity parkrun, local parents and parkrun marshals have formed 'Junior Team Bex', who make use of the park every week, after school, to take part in fun exercises themed around running (currently 20 children, plus adult supervisors).

## **REGULAR EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES**

This report, and the last one, have covered some of the one off events and activities that have occurred in the last 12 months. This has not included all the regular events and activities that exist throughout the year, organised by other groups;

- GI Jo Fitness (private business)
- Gearo's Soccer and Football Academy (private business)
- BRJ Run and Tri (sports club)
- Nordic Walking (free sessions on behalf of a private business, Nordic Wellbeing)
- Health Walks (HDC)
- Wet Leo's (social club)
- Parkrun (sports event)
- Go Ride (St Ives cycling club)
- Huntingdon Canoe Club (sports club)
- Carrie Bates Dog Training (private business)
- PEDALS adapted bikes (HDC)
- Huntingdonshire Beekeepers Association

## **FRIENDS of HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK**

With the structural changes to Countryside Services, the interaction between HDC and the Friends has been changed with regard to personnel. The Senior Range at HCP will now sit on the Friends committee, in place of Alison Gray, who will no longer be exclusively based at, or working specifically for, the country park. The Friends were also introduced to Kirsten Drew and Jane Moore, who are job sharing the newly created Volunteer Co-ordinator position, who spoke briefly about their roles, and how they can offer support and advice moving forward.

A discussion was held about trying to acquire grant funding for projects. The Friends are going to look for a volunteer who can help specifically with applying for grants, with some targeted adverts planned for the near future. As part of that, the rangers at HCP will create a list of smaller projects that are relatively easy to cost/implement, which can be looked into by anyone who shows an interest.

The Friends continue to look into ways to generate income such as trialling cards for sale at the park, with pictures of the park on them and emblazoned with the Friends logo.

## FINANCIAL POSITION

### HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK BUDGET AND FORECAST 2015/16

	Budget	Forecast	Variation
	2015-16	2015-16	
	£000s	£000s	£000s
<b>Hinchingbrooke Country Park and Management</b>			
Staff	120	120	0
Running Costs	29	50	21
Income	(54)	(75)	(21)
<b>Total Country Park and Management</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>(0)</b>
<b>Countryside Centre</b>			
Staff	60	56	(4)
Running Costs	14	7	(7)
Income	(40)	(37)	3
<b>Total Countryside Centre</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>(8)</b>
<b>Cafe</b>			
Staff	62	70	8
Running Costs	44	45	1
Income	(105)	(120)	(15)
<b>Total Cafe</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>(5)</b>	<b>(6)</b>
<b>Total Hinchingbrooke Country Park</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>(14)</b>