

A meeting of the **HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK JOINT GROUP** will be held in **THE WREN ROOM, COUNTRYSIDE CENTRE, HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRYSIDE PARK** on **FRIDAY, 14 OCTOBER 2016** at **10:00 AM** and you are requested to attend for the transaction of the following business:-

**Contact
(01480)**

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 - 8)

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 11th March 2016.

**M Sage
388169**

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 2016/17 as follows:

(a) Cambridgeshire County Council

Councillor Peter Ashcroft

(b) Huntingdonshire District Council

Councillors R C Carter, Ms A Dickinson, T F Hayward and R J West.

6. SENIOR RANGER'S REPORT (Pages 9 - 14)

To receive a report by the Senior Ranger on park activities for the period March – August 2016.

J Arnold / C Moss

7. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

To resolve –

that the press and public be excluded from the meeting because the business to be transacted contains information relating to the financial and business affairs of a particular person (including the authority holding that information).

8. CONTRACTURAL ARRANGEMENTS AND POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME, HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK (Pages 15 - 20)

To consider a report by the Head of Operations.

**N Sloper
388635**

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To note that the next meeting of Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Joint Group will be held on 24th March 2017 at 10am.

WALK ALONG IMPROVED FOOTPATH

To highlight the support given by the Friends of Hinchingsbrooke Park, at the conclusion of the meeting Members are invited to a walk along the improved footpath on Pine Avenue and at the entrance to Christie Drive.

Dated this 5th day of October 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 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.

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, 11 March 2016.

PRESENT: Councillor R J West - Chairman.
Councillors R C Carter, T Hayward and R J West.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillor T D Sanderson.

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs J Arnold, Mr M Chudley, Mr J Milligan, Mr C Moss and Mrs M Sage,

13. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED

That District Councillor R West be elected as the Chairman of the Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Joint Group for the remainder of the Municipal Year.

Following which Councillor R West took chairmanship of the meeting.

14. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 27th March 2015 and the Notes of the inquorate meeting held on 16th October 2015 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

15. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest received from those Members that were present.

16. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED

That District Councillor T Sanderson be appointed as the Vice-Chairman of the Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Joint Group for the remainder of the Municipal Year.

17. MEMBERSHIP OF THE GROUP

The Membership of the Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Joint Group for 2015/16 was noted 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.

The Group expressed their continued concern at the lack of attendance at the meetings by Cambridgeshire County Council. In an attempt to resolve the matter it was agreed that the Chairman would again write to the Leader of Cambridgeshire County Council to express the Groups' continued concern.

18. SENIOR RANGER'S REPORT

In receiving and noting the content of the Senior Ranger's report on park activities for the period October 2015 – February 2016, comment was made in relation as follows:

(a) Staffing

The Group was informed that following the Café Supervisor ceasing employment, as part of the ongoing restructure, a new Hospitality Supervisor position had been created to manage both the operation of the café and Countryside Centre. It was anticipated that a person would be in post from May 2016.

A new post of Events and Promotions Officer had been created within the Countryside Services team, and this position had been occupied by the former Countryside Centre Co-ordinator. However, until the new Hospitality Supervisor was in post it was impacting on the Events and Promotions Officer being able to fully dedicate to this role.

(b) Volunteers

The Country Park received more interest from students regarding work experience placements than it could accommodate and it had learnt from past experience to be specific as to the requirements of the students and the role.

The Council was considering where apprenticeship schemes could be accommodated, which would include Countryside Services.

The Park received funding from Cambridgeshire County Council for ten adult volunteers who were accompanied by two support workers.

(c) Wider District

As part of the national 'Clean for the Queen' campaign to celebrate the Queen's 90th birthday, a series of community clean-ups events had been organised over a number of sites. The first event was a success and had generated a significant number of volunteers.

(d) Café

In response to question, it was confirmed that there had been cursory investigations as to the viability of relocating the café to within the Countryside Centre. However, the costs and remedial works required to facilitate this had made the idea impracticable.

(e) Countryside Centre

In discussing whether there was further scope as an educational facility it was explained that due to the national curriculum and the resultant lesson timetable it was difficult for secondary schools to allot time to use the Country Park. A number of primary schools already used the Park mainly from Easter through to July.

It was noted that although Hinchingsbrooke Hospital had its own training room, there was a need to better promote the Park at the hospital

(f) Events and Activities

The Group was informed of a new Policy due to be approved by the Cabinet for events in the Council's parks and open spaces and the introduction of fees and charges, which would have an impact on events held at the Country Park.

The new policy framework would establish clear guidelines for the consideration of applications and the staging of events, to provide greater control.

Previously events in Council parks and open spaces were agreed outside of any policy framework, with no coherent structure of fees and charges to ensure the Council recovered the costs incurred with accommodating the events.

There was flexibility within the schedule of charges and deposits depending upon the type of organisation applying to hold an event.

The Group was informed that the Park was part of the Naturally Healthy Week which received national publicity. The Naturally Healthy campaign was submitting a bid for research regarding health benefits from being outside.

(g) Friends of Hinchingsbrooke Country Park

The Friends were seeking a volunteer who could assist with applying for grants.

The Chairman of the Group would be attending the Friends Annual General Meeting.

(h) Financial Position

Members' attention was drawn to the positive financial position of the Country Park. Regarding the Hinchingsbrooke Country Park and Management budget it was noted that there had not been much spend on the maintenance of the building and there had not been as many events organised mid-year. However, combined the running costs and income were on target.

Having installed a log burner in the Centre, £1k funding was received per annum. To generate additional funding the Park was selling surplus logs on a small scale from the Park. However, a more suitable location would be the community nursery.

The nursery was not located within the Park and the Group discussed potential options regarding the future of the nursery.

The Hinchingsbrooke Country Park budget for 2016/17 required savings of £30k to be identified.

Whilst discussing the future of the Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Joint Group it was suggested that it would be preferable to have a Group that considered all open spaces throughout the district, and not solely the Hinchingsbrooke Country Park. Subsequently the Group tasked the Interim Head of Service (Operations) and Cllr Carter along with the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) to consider opportunities on how to progress the matter, which the Group hoped would be expeditiously actioned.

19. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Group noted that their next meeting would be held on 14th October 2016 at 10am.

Chairman

Agenda Item 6

Senior Ranger's Report; March – August 2016

STAFFING

The new staffing structure for Countryside Services has been operational since the last committee meeting, with the Hospitality Supervisor position the last to be filled at Hinchingsbrooke Country Park (HCP).

Currently there are 3 Rangers based at the Park covering 7 days a week, 364 days a year (with 1 weekend a month covered by the Ranger based at the community nursery). One of these has a contract finishing in September 2017. However other Rangers will have duties reduced if the OVV responsibility reverts to County Council and grounds maintenance undertake more grass cutting.

The Hospitality Supervisor (Ian Jackson) covers the running of both the Countryside Centre – assisted by a part-time administrator - and the café. The café has welcomed many new casual staff during the year as others have gone on to university/college. Currently there is just one full time member of café staff.

In conjunction with Ian, the Countryside Centre is now looked after on a day-to-day basis by a part-time administrator, who also does much of the paperwork/finances for the park and admin assistance for the whole of Countryside. A new cleaning contract means we now have 2 hours of cleaning on weekday evenings. At quieter times they assist with cleaning the visitors centre but Rangers continue to help clean the centres after weekend use.

VOLUNTEERS

March 2016 – August 2016

On average each week staff work alongside 6 days' worth of special needs adult placements, funded by CCC, as well as organising work for a 1:1 supervised placement (on Mondays & Tuesdays) and the Hunts. Regional College Green Team (10 special educational needs adults, with at least 2 supervisors, also on Tuesdays)

Approximately 12 fully independent volunteers on Wednesdays and Thursdays (including someone registered as blind), who contribute a significant proportion of the practical management of the site.

We welcomed 6 work experience placements over the summer months (from 6 different schools), giving them the chance to get their hands dirty and gain an insight into countryside management.

Finally, we hosted 3 volunteers who are looking to gain more experience – 2 were previous work experience placements, and one currently studying ecology at university.

WIDER DISTRICT

Rangers from HCP continue to manage other sites, with several work parties organised for Spring Common, Stukeley Meadows, and Views Common. With U&C withdrawing their funding for staff, more input from staff and volunteers will occasionally be needed at Godmanchester nursery.

Countryside Services is also working to encourage local community groups and parish councils to manage pockets of land that previously involved staff time (Rangers will help produce risk assessments and safe working practices, provide training, as well as access to tools). Initially this

will include a community pond clearance in Fenstanton with the parish council, and in Godmanchester with the local In Bloom group.

Huntingdon In Bloom entered Hinchingsbrooke and they awarded the park a certificate of recognition to acknowledge the different volunteer groups and individuals. It is hoped the park can enter as an individual site again in the future.

PARK MANAGEMENT

Over the spring and summer the wide ranging role of the Rangers focusses on the visitors from litter picking and emptying bins, interacting with park visitors – answering queries, dealing with first aid incidents, training people to use the electric wheelchairs and even organising ‘lost child’ searches. This year we have struggled to keep up with the rate of vegetation growth but the main practical tasks were mowing, strimming and hedge-cutting.

Unfortunately, we have also suffered small scale acts of vandalism, in particular to the fence around the play area and one of the new outdoor shelters. Several unauthorised camping groups have been moved on and with the excessive heat many swimmers were informed of the dangers from Weil’s Disease as they exited the water! We also discovered and removed (in conjunction with the police) 2 cannabis plants found growing in our woodlands.

With help from other Rangers a small outdoor shelter next to the café was created for use as a second serving area over the summer. It will provide a focus for events in the future, such as our Santa’s Grotto.

Huntingdon Parkrun have organised a successful fundraising campaign, to provide an external defibrillator– the unit will be ordered and installed in the coming weeks.

We provided training for 6 regular volunteers on the use of strimmer/brush-cutters, which will significantly increase the vegetation management capacity of the team.

CAFÉ

The café has been very busy over the summer months. At the time of writing (10 weeks into Q2) the café’s income over the counter is up £10,000 in comparison to the corresponding period from the last financial year.

There was also a record day for the café on 24th July when we took £2,400 (over £600 up on the previous one-day record.) Both of these were in conjunction with Active Lifestyles sports taster day and this year was also the hottest Sunday of the year!

Ian removed some internal seating, introduced a simplified summer menu and contactless card payment option to speed up the serving customers.

Analysis of food and drink profit margins has occurred and a trial of selling bottled drinks is currently underway. Long term we will be considering different coffee and food items to appeal to a different market and potentially reduce staff costs

COUNTRYSIDE CENTRE

The activity levels and income have remained much the same over this period compared to corresponding years.

August is traditionally quiet so again held the art exhibition which was tailored more to the needs of our users this year. Again volunteers and Friends supervised the event.

Three adult workshops, including photography and basket weaving have proved both popular and another basket making course is organised for December.

Following a complete review use the pricing structure was reviewed and work is now starting in earnest to increase the occupancy rates.

EVENTS and ACTIVITIES

17 school groups to the park, totalling 751 children visited but this is down by about 30% however a number of schools are visiting this term which is up on previous years. There were 3 pre-school Bear Hunts, with 50 individual children overall in attendance and again we hosted the Pre-School Learning Alliance – 3 Rangers leading many of the activities, with about 500 children taking part throughout the day.

3 family events over the summer holidays proved extremely popular – our 2 mini-beast days were attended by 250 children, plus about 200 adults, and a Pirates day nearly 300 children plus 250 adults. Facebook was shown to be the main source of information.

Froglife held 2 events at the park, looking to encourage adults and families to create more environmentally friendly gardens.

The new events policy is now in place and in future the events and promotions officer will be coordinating events across the district. This has provided a clear structure for pricing events and covers health and safety issues to ensure external organisers recognise their responsibilities.

FRIENDS of HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK

The Friends funded footpath improvement works from the Christie Drive and gained some successful media promotion of the work.

The committee have also attended some events and activities promoting the work of the Friends and trying to gain new members

The Friends secured some financial contributions to fund the 'rewards' that were handed out to the successful navigators on our family Pirates Day.

Looking forward, the Friends are currently looking into establishing a bird box sponsor scheme to provide much needed nest sites raise some extra income. They have recently agreed to provide a new tern raft (similar to the very successful ones at Paxton Pits), and are considering other priorities for future funding bids.

FINANCIAL POSITION

HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK BUDGET AND FORECAST 2016/17

	Budget	Forecast	Variation
	2016-17	2016-17	
	£000s	£000s	£000s
Hinchingbrooke Country Park and Management			
Staff	129	122	(7)
Running Costs	20	19	(1)
Income	(54)	(56)	(2)
Total Country Park and Management	95	85	(10)
Countryside Centre			
Staff	70	69	(1)
Running Costs	16	16	0
Income	(37)	(37)	0
Total Countryside Centre	49	48	(1)
Cafe			
Staff	45	55	10
Running Costs	51	52	1
Income	(133)	(138)	(5)
Total Cafe	(37)	(31)	6
Total Hinchingbrooke Country Park	107	102	(5)

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By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

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