

A meeting of the **HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK JOINT GROUP** will be held as a **REMOTE MEETING VIA ZOOM** on **FRIDAY, 16 OCTOBER 2020** at **10:00 AM** and you are requested to attend for the transaction of the following business:-

AGENDA

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 3 - 6)

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 13th March 2020.

Contact Officer: H Peacey - (01223) 752548

3. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

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

Contact Officer: Democratic Services - (01223) 752548

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 2020/21 as follows:

(a) Cambridgeshire County Council (appointment until 2021)

Councillor Ms A Costello.

(b) Huntingdonshire District Council

Councillors Mrs M L Beuttell, T D Sanderson, R J West and Mrs S R Wilson.

6. SENIOR RANGER'S REPORT (Pages 7 - 14)

To receive a report by the Senior Ranger on park activities for the period March to September 2020.

Contact Officer: M McGettigan - (01480) 388666

7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To note that the next meeting of the Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Joint Group will be held on 12th March 2021 at 10:00am.

Contact Officer: H Peacey - (01223) 752548

2 day of October 2020



Head of Paid Service

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Non-Statutory Disclosable Interests

Further information on [Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Non - Statutory Disclosable Interests is available in the Council's Constitution](#)

Filming, Photography and Recording at Council Meetings

The District Council 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.

Please contact Habbiba Peacey, Democratic Services Officer, Tel No: (01223) 752548 / email: Habbiba.Peacey@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 Joint Group.

Agenda and enclosures can be viewed on the [District Council's website](#), together with a link to the Broadcast of the meeting.

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK JOINT GROUP held in the Wren Room, Countryside Centre, Hinchingsbrooke Country Park, Brampton Road, Huntingdon, PE29 6DB on Friday, 13 March 2020

PRESENT: Councillor R J West – Chairman.

Councillors T D Sanderson, Mrs S R Wilson and Mrs M L Beuttell.

APOLOGY: An apology for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of Councillor Mrs A Costello.

8 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Group held on 11th October 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

In response to a question, the Senior Ranger confirmed that the slide was ready to be returned to the play park but that wet weather had prevented its re-installation.

D Adeoye confirmed that the position in respect of the income from S106 projects had not changed since the last meeting and that projects were continuing to come to the end of their life which would impact upon the accounts at the end of the financial year and future years.

9 MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor Mrs S R Wilson declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in Minute No. 20/11 by virtue of her membership of Godmanchester Town Council.

10 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

Owing to membership changes, the Group were informed that the post of Vice-Chairman now remained vacant. In doing so, Members placed on record their thanks to Councillor J M Palmer for his contributions to the work of the Group. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that Councillor Mrs M L Beuttell be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Joint Group for the remainder of the Municipal Year.

11 SENIOR RANGER'S REPORT

The Group received and noted the contents of the Senior Ranger's report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on park activities for the period September 2019 to March 2020. In doing so, comment was made as follows:

Hinchingbrooke Country Park Management

Whilst being encouraged to note the range of work being undertaken at the Country Park over the reporting period, the Senior Ranger reported that winter tree felling work had not commenced owing to delays with the processing of a felling licence from the Forestry Commission and higher levels of wet weather in recent months. In response to a question raised by Councillor Mrs M L Beuttell, it was reported that there were various areas across the Park where trees would be felled which included the main woods to enable light to reach the ground and encourage the growth of plants and flowers.

In noting that there were sufficient supplies of felled and split wood to fuel the site this year, the Group were informed that the Park were part of the Biofuel User Scheme which enabled funding to be received. The Senior Ranger advised that investigations would be made into whether the Country Park could produce and sell biofuel to the public. At present, the Country Park were only permitted to undertake the former.

A brief discussion ensued on the viewing platform at the pond which was regarded as being unsafe. There have been delays with this work owing to ineffective communication with the supplier of the metal footings required for the platform. The matter was being pursued and the Senior Ranger was hopeful that the work would be completed in the near future.

Hinchingbrooke Country Park Development Proposals

In response to questions, it was confirmed that the Business Plan for the development of the Country Park was due to emerge in April 2020. The Plan would then make its way through the formal decision-making process. Members were hopeful that this would be in Summer 2020.

Godmanchester Nursery

The Group were informed that Godmanchester Nursery would formally transfer over to Godmanchester Town Council on 31st March 2020.

Volunteers

It was noted that there was an average of 86 volunteer days per month which was welcomed by Members.

Community Groups

The Countryside Manager drew attention to the opening of the viewing gallery at the apiary hosted by Huntingdonshire Beekeeper's Association on 9th April 2020. Members were encouraged to attend. The Chairman acknowledged the

popularity of the Fireflies Forest School which continued to be popular despite the wintery weather.

Staffing

In discussing staffing levels, comment was made at the difficulty in completing chainsaw work over the reporting period. The work required fully trained and able staff and volunteers. As a result, hazardous trees have been cordoned off with barrier tape to reduce the risk to the public.

Coronavirus

In discussing the current pandemic, the Country Park confirmed that they were following guidance issued by the District Council and had adopted basic measures on site to enable the Country Park to remain open and fully operational. To date, two cancellations had been received for room bookings which was expected to rise further. It was anticipated that in the event of school closures, members of the public may wish to visit the Park for fresh air and exercise but that it was likely the Café might not be fully operational.

Financial Position

Members' attention was drawn to the financial position of the Park where overspends were reported on Hinchingsbrooke Country Park and Management and the Café. The reduction in income from S106 projects coming to the end of their life were attributed to the former and expenditure on café assistants and an increase in costs for catering supplies were attributed to the latter. Members were however encouraged to note that an underspend of £20,000 had been achieved at the Countryside Centre owing to the generation of income from events including New Year's Eve and the Christmas Grotto and the hire of rooms.

In response to a question raised by Councillor T D Sanderson, D Adeoye undertook to circulate details of S106 projects around to the Group. Staffing in the café was also discussed where it was noted that staff were either paid on an hourly, permanent or casual basis.

Other matters that were discussed included the car parking machines. Regarding the café, discussion took place on the introduction of OAP days and Friendship Cafes, both of which may have the potential to encourage volunteers. In noting the installation of a new fast cook oven in the café and a change of internal layout, Members were informed of the potential benefits which included increases to the speed of service and income.

Healthy Open Spaces and Play Strategy

Members were pleased to note that plans were underway to develop a Healthy Open Spaces and Play Strategy which was currently undergoing public consultation. The Group were encouraged to submit their comments online, details of which had previously been circulated to Members. The Strategy was due to be considered by the District Council's Cabinet on 16th July 2020.

12 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting of the Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Joint Group would be held on 16th October 2020.

Chairman

Senior Ranger's Report

March 2020 – September 2020

Matthew McGettigan

STAFFING

Some of the pressure on the team was relieved as cover was no longer needed at GCN. However, COVID 19 lead to the halting of volunteer workparties which has helped increasing work on the small staff team.

The Park became significantly busier due to the lockdown with additional visitor numbers being driven by pressures on mental health, the need to exercise in a safe and socially distanced way and those who are remote working seeking fresh settings to do this from – particularly in good weather.

This situation was made even more challenging as our attempts to embrace social distancing initially lead to us setting up a rota to have one staff member on site at a time. This reduced our ability to work efficiently and meant some tasks which require more than one staff member for safety reasons, such as chainsaw work, could not be undertaken.

VOLUNTEERS

When the COVID 19 lockdown was first announced we halted all volunteering.

More recently we have restarted most volunteer roles – this was done in a phased way whereby we invited less vulnerable groups back first allowing us to slowly adapt to new working practices. Workparties have been thoroughly risk assessed and safe working practices put in place to mitigate the risk of spreading COVID 19.

We have not yet welcomed back all SEN volunteers.

The Green Team volunteers have started back week beginning 28th September.

COUNTRY PARK MANAGEMENT

As described above we have faced huge challenges completing the country park's usual management work. It is a great testament to the whole team that we have been able to complete the following.

During lockdown, the Rangers have been extremely busy due to increase park usage however we were able to Complete the following Tasks:

- Keep up with increased litter and antisocial behaviour.
- Maintain mown amenity grassland areas and mown paths.
- Install the first layer of a new path along the Top Ride in Bob's Wood. This ride has become very wet in previous winters so the new path will be of great help.
- Carry out important tree safety works.
- Repairs to potholes around the Main Lake Path.
- Carry out a major "spring clean" tidy up and re-organise of the yard and workshops.

Since the Volunteer Workparty has returned we have been able to undertake the following tasks:

- Install a new post and rail fence around the area that is becoming part of the yard extension
- Carry out the seasonal wild-flower meadow cut. - This is ongoing but due to favourable weather is ahead of schedule and producing a good result.
- Refurbish and repair park furniture and signage.

Looking Forward we aim to:

- Finish cutting the last meadows.
- Cutting back invasive willows around the Main Lake.
- Cutting reeds in selected areas of the Main Lake.
- Hedge laying round the Christy Drive balancing pond.
- Felling in the New Plantation
- Tree works around the Ornamental Lake

COMMUNITY GROUPS

All community group activities halted due to Lockdown, but many have now resumed with suitable safety procedures

Huntingdon Canoe Club

Activities restarted in line with British Canoeing Guidance.

Huntingdonshire Beekeeper's Association

The viewing gallery refurbishments have been completed but the gallery has remained closed. The grand opening event will be rescheduled at a future date.

SATELLITE SITES

Views Common

The site has been heavily affected by the A14 works and additional work to repair a gas main near the Iron Bridge in Huntingdon. As a result, very little management has taken place.

We have been in discussions with the District's Tree Officer about conserving some Veteran and rare species of Oaks on the site.

Stukeley Meadows

This site has also been affected by increased usage due to COVID 19. We have been assisting with maintaining the closure of the play equipment and with additional litter picking. The "mini meadows" have been cut as part of the usual management of the site.

Spring Common

The meadow has been cut and removed from site. This has included the pictorial meadow area which, although successful was positioned on top of the naturally occurring Cowslips. It remains to be seen whether these will recover in future years.

We are planning to cut back, and stump treat the willow encroachment on site this winter.

COUNTRYSIDE CENTRE

The centre reopened for one booking a day using both rooms to allow for social distancing on July 20th. Most organisations have now got used to remote meetings, so bookings are significantly reduced.

However, the weekly dog training and Youth Theatre have restarted, Blood Transfusion service are having monthly sessions and a new Jiu Jitsu fitness group has started.

July to March 31st bookings predicted £7,000 however there is a provisional new weekly booking worth and additional £1700

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21 March to September
countryside centre bookings	204	339	408	412	25
countryside centre number of users	7253	11404	12965	12931	620

The member of staff employed within the countryside centre left in July and has not been replaced, so costs have been reduced. The Countryside Manager is currently managing the bookings with the ability to negotiate timings and charges.

CAFÉ

Catering income over the café counter	2017 - 2018	2018 - 2019	2019 2020	2020 2021
Quarter 1 April - June	£55,681	£45,005	£53,687	£18,117 COVID closed until 23/05/2020
Quarter 2 July – September	£52,600	£51,962	£64,650	£49,709 20/9/2020
Quarter 3 October – December	£33,364	£38,896	£29,348	
Quarter 4 January - March	£28,249	£43,749	£23,679 16/03/2020 closed due to COVID	
Total	£169,896	£179,612	£171,364 (budget £155,000)	

The café closed its doors on the 16th March and reopened on the 23rd May following the outbreak of COVID-19. Since reopening it has been “grab and go” mainly with only one member of staff and shorter opening hours.

The result of this has been better than could have been imagined. Through selling pre-packaged goods the dates are longer and waste is near zero. Other than making sandwiches there is no food prep, and our percentage of overall profit is now higher at around 68% with staffing costs being at an all-time low.

It is not known how this will change in the winter, as eating ice cream outside is popular in warm weather. Currently considering options for hot take away if the demand is there.

Going forwards, plans for better facility, more like a restaurant are needed as part of the development. In the meantime, looking to change the café into a quality gift sales point, with grab and go options to be sustainable over the development phase and regardless of COVID situation.

EVENTS

What started out as a fully packed events calendar ended up being a blank sheet, we cancelled Robin Hood day, Mother's Day roast, Easter Sunday fun day and the food festival. The grotto will be recreated as a zoom call from Santa, and New Year's Eve party will not occur.

Taking into consideration of all the rules that now surround social distancing and bubbles, we marked 104 squares 4m x 2m for a maximum 6 people. These "boxes" were pre booked and 6 films shown followed by use as a boogie boxes for a 70's 80's night.

These events were welcomed by all who attended adding they felt safe and the event was well organised. The police attended and were also content these were COVID secure

Cinema events £5550 profit

Boogie night £2076 profit

Total £7626

Significant use of Facebook has been the best way to advertise the events, and the statistics show the first post reached 25K- proving how keen people were to get out and about again once lockdown was lifted!



16 June - 13 July · Last 28 days

39.3K

Post Reach

24.8K

Engagements

3.5K

Link Clicks

Posts ?

27 posts published in the last 28 days.

MOST ENGAGING

RECENT

MOST ENGAGING POSTS



Flix & Picnics -
Every Saturda...
16 June

Reach 25.1K
Engagements 5K



When booking
for flix and Pi...
12 July

Reach 5.5K
Engageme... 1.4K



Flix & Picnics
- Every Saturd...
17 June

Reach 7.5K
Engageme... 1.2K



We are
delighted to s...
10 July

Reach 4.6K
Engageme... 759

This page is intentionally left blank

HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK 2019/20 OUTTURN AND 2020/21 BUDGET AND FORECAST

	2019/20 Outturn			2020/21 Forecast		
	Budget	Actual	Variance	Budget	Forecast	Variance
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Hinchingbrooke Country Park and Management						
Staff	102	102	0	100	101	1
Running Costs	23	37	14	33	30	-3
Income	-47	-31	16	-47	-30	17
Total	78	108	30	86	101	15
Countryside Centre						
Staff	35	38	3	27	24	-3
Running Costs	18	11	-7	18	15	-3
Income	-41	-57	-16	-41	-8	33
Total	12	-8	-20	4	31	27
Café						
Staff	38	69	31	54	61	7
Running Costs	65	68	3	65	54	-11
Income	-155	-154	1	-155	-100	55
Total	-52	-17	35	-36	15	51
Total Hinchingbrooke Country Park	38	83	45	54	147	93

Comments on Variances

2019/20

The overspend on HCP and Management is due the reduction in income from S106 projects (commuted sums) coming to the end of their life. An increase in the purchase of materials and equipment also contributed to the overspend.

The underspend of £20k for the countryside centre mainly stems from the increased income from New Year's Eve and the Christmas Grotto; plus, increased bookings from room hire.

The café was overspent by £35k, this was due to the number of café assistants employed over the course of the financial year.

2020/21

There is an expected overspend across Countryside due to COVID. A collapse in income from the closure of the Hinchingbrooke Country Park during the lockdown has been forecasted. It is expected that the use of the café and the centre will not reach pre-COVID levels during the rest of the financial year.

This page is intentionally left blank