



A meeting of the **HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK JOINT GROUP** will be held in **COUNTRYSIDE CENTRE, HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK, BRAMPTON ROAD, HUNTINGDON, PE29 6DB** on **FRIDAY, 18 JULY 2025** at **10:00 AM** and you are requested to attend for the transaction of the following business:-

AGENDA

APOLOGIES

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR

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

2. MINUTES (Pages 5 - 6)

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on

Contact Officer: Democratic Services - (01480) 388008

3. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

To receive from Members declarations as to disclosable pecuniary, other registerable and non-registerable interests in relation to any Agenda item. See Notes below.

Contact Officer: Democratic Services - (01480) 388008

4. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR

To appoint a Vice-Chair 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 2025/26 as follows:

(a) Cambridgeshire County Council

Councillor T D Sanderson

(b) Huntingdonshire District Council

Councillors M L Beuttell, J E Kerr, C A Lowe and D J Shaw.

6. HEAD RANGER'S REPORT (Pages 7 - 10)

To receive a report by the Acting Head Ranger and Assistant Ranger on park activities for the period April 2025 to July 2025.

Contact Officer: H Lack (01480) 388658

7. FINANCE REPORT (Pages 11 - 12)

To receive the Finance Report for the Park.

Contact Officer: G McLean (01480) 388388

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To note that the next meeting of the Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Joint Group will be held on 14th November 2025 at 10:00am.

Contact Officer: Democratic Services - (01480) 388008

10 day of July 2025

Michelle Sacks

Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and other Registerable and Non-Registerable Interests.

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

Filming, Photography and Recording (including Live Streaming) at Council Meetings

This meeting will be filmed for live and/or subsequent broadcast on the Council's YouTube site. The whole of the meeting will be filmed, except where there are confidential or exempt items. If you make a representation to the meeting you will be deemed to have consented to being filmed. By entering the meeting you are also consenting to being filmed and to the possible use of those images and sound recordings for webcasting and/or training purposes. If you have any queries regarding the streaming of Council meetings, please contact Democratic Services on 01480 388169.

The District Council also permits filming, recording and the taking of photographs at its meetings that are open to the public. Arrangements for these activities should operate in accordance with [guidelines](#) agreed by the Council.

Please contact Democratic Services, Tel No: (01480) 388169 / email: Democratic.Services@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](#).

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.

This page is intentionally left blank

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK JOINT GROUP held in Countryside Centre, Hinchingsbrooke Country Park, Brampton Road, Huntingdon, PE29 6DB on Friday, 25 April 2025.

PRESENT: Councillor M L Beuttell – Chair.

Councillors C Lowe and D J Shaw.

APOLOGIES: An apology for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of Councillor S L Taylor.

IN ATTENDANCE: N/A.

17. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings held on 15th November 2024 and 2nd April 2025 were approved as a correct record of the meetings and signed by the Chair.

18. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No interests were declared.

19. HEAD RANGER'S REPORT

The Group received and noted the contents of the Head Ranger's report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) and a PowerPoint presentation on park activities for the period January to April 2025. In doing so, comment was made as follows:

Staffing

The Group were advised that there were now two full time Rangers on site who worked alongside Assistant Rangers and weekend Wardens to manage the Park, it was noted that the Head Ranger oversaw this structure. It was also noted that a steady stream of volunteers and work parties had assisted the team with work onsite.

Friends of Hinchingsbrooke Country Park

It was noted that the Friends had supported work at both the Paxton Pitts and Holt Island sites and that £4,000 had been received in donations in 2024 but that they hoped to grow their membership online in 2025.

Winter Works

Work had been undertaken to create spaces within the Park to allow light which would support biodiversity. The Mill continued to process wood from works on site and had supplied Hinchingsbrooke House

with planks which had been utilised in repairing doors in the property.

Events

The new Commercial Manager was now in post. It was advised that events in the reporting period had continued to be successful with the different approach to Santas Grotto being noted. A strong attendance for the Easter events due to the favourable weather was observed.

Development Project

It was advised that forward bookings for the Countryside Centre would be paused from September 2025 to allow for the development work to be carried out. The Group heard that weekly project meetings would be held to manage the project.

20. FINANCE REPORT

The Group received and noted the contents of the Finance report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) for the period January to April 2025. In doing so, comment was made as follows:

The provisional outturn for the 2024/25 year was discussed with the underspent being attributed due to the realigning of the business case and delayed development project however the Park remained in a good position financially.

21. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Group is due to be held on 18th July 2025 at 10:00am.

Chair

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: HEAD RANGER'S REPORT

Meeting/Date: Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Joint Group
DATE. 18th July 2025

Executive Portfolio: Executive Member
Cllr Julie Kerr

Report by: Acting Head Ranger and Assistant Ranger

Ward(s) affected: All Wards

Executive Summary:

This report summarises the winter months, the progress and issues over the period and provides a summary of the future months.

Recommendation:

The Group is asked to review and comment upon the report and note the progress made to date.

HEAD RANGER'S REPORT

1.1 STAFFING

- Two Rangers and one Assistant Ranger are based at Hinchingsbrooke typically working Mon to Fri.
- One staff member is currently on light duties due to a **non-work**-related injury.
- The Head Ranger has left the council and position is under review.
- Weekends are covered by Weekend Wardens. The site is covered every weekend.
- Work-parties are run regularly with volunteers to support the limited staff.
- The Café and Events Supervisor has left the council as part of the Commercial restructure. Two new roles are currently being advertised with a closing date of 29th July. These are Events Development Manager and Visitor Experience Manager.

1.2 VOLUNTEERS

- Work-parties are continuing to work at full strength, some volunteers have moved on, but their places have been quickly filled.
- SEN volunteer numbers are consistent.

1.3 HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK MANAGEMENT

Harvest season has arrived early due to drought conditions during Spring and early Summer. Rangers are engaged in hay meadow management already across the district. Prioritised park furniture maintenance has been completed, and we hope to revisit this after the early hay cut.

- Footpath repairs on grass footpath North of main lake and the path leading to the new plantation
- Tern raft uncovered before tern nesting began
- Wildlife surveys have been carried out including orchid and butterfly surveys. Orchid numbers have suffered this season due to adverse climate conditions and grazing by non-native invasive species.
- Mowing of paths and park started early in the season but has not been needed as much due to drought conditions.
- Due to vandalism, the decking area by café has been restored in a temporary capacity due to the development project.
- Reed cutting to maintain views from bird hides due to new health and safety regulations around working near water. Training has been requested for future years.
- Memorial benches have been installed using a byproduct of milled timber from winter woodland management.
- Repairs of Trolls bridge are underway but have taken longer than planned due to staffing capacity.
- The final GroundWorks GreenSkills project is also due to begin on site Wednesday 9th July. This project aims to create a tree nursery on site.
- New benches and a new fence have been installed.

Looking Forward...

- Complete hay meadow management.
- Completion of repairs to Trolls bridge.
- Installation of interpretation features such as way markers.
- Continuing to install more, new and improved, post and rail fencing to replace the old design which is starting to fail.
- Maintenance of park furniture such as picnic benches
- Starting woodland management works

1.4 COMMUNITY GROUPS

Established groups are all operating well, including weekly Parkrun and monthly Zigzag runners, mountain bike training, and Huntingdon Canoe Club.

1.5 CAFÉ

	2023/24 Outturn			2024/25 Provisional Outturn		
	Budget	Actual	Variance	Budget	Actuals	Variance
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Staff	65	114	17	163	139	-24
Running Costs	90	131	41	123	159	36
Income	-170	-228	-45	-191	-296	-105
Total	-15	17	32	95	2	-93

	2023/24 Outturn			2024/25 Outturn		
	Budget	Actual	Variance	Budget	Actual	Variance
Staff	65	114	17	163	141	-22
Running Costs	90	131	41	123	161	38
Income	-175	-228	-45	-191	-296	-105
Total	-15	17	32	95	6	-89

Compared to the 2023/24 out-turn, the café at Hinchingsbrooke Country Park has delivered another strong year for income generation, exceeding its income target by over £100k. However, this success has been offset by higher-than-expected running costs, which, have resulted in an overall out-turn of £6k – significantly better than the budgeted deficit of £95k.

1.6 EVENTS, ACTIVITIES and PROMOTIONS

May 2025 – July 2025

RAF Wyton 8k	Wednesday 7th May
Hinchingsbrooke Hospital SCBU Team Building	Wednesday 14th May
ZigZag Birthday Run	Sunday 18th May
Camswim English Channel Training Camp	Thursday 22nd to Sunday 25th May (Early Mornings)
Active For Health (One Leisure)	Wednesday 4th June

Bark In The Park	Saturday 7th June
CANCELLED DUE TO WEATHER	
Active For Health (One Leisure)	Wednesday 11th June
Hinchingsbrooke Hospital SCBU Team Building	Friday 13th June
Active For Health (One Leisure)	Wednesday 18th June
BRJ Club Run	Saturday 21st June (4.30am to 9.30pm)
Orienteering Training	Wednesday 25th June
Active For Health (One Leisure)	Wednesday 25th June
Active For Health (One Leisure)	Wednesday 2nd July
Active For Health (One Leisure)	Wednesday 9th July
Hinchingsbrooke Hospital SCBU Team Building	Week commencing 14th July - Date TBC
Active For Health (One Leisure)	Wednesday 16th July
Active For Health (One Leisure)	Wednesday 23rd July
Cambridgeshire Deaf Association BBQ	Monday 28th July
Active For Health (One Leisure)	Wednesday 30th July
Bear Hunt & Picnic (One Leisure)	Thursday 31st July

1.7 COUNTRYSIDE CENTRE

- The business support officer continues to manage the booking process for the countryside centre.
- No bookings are being taken from September in readiness for the expected development works.

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/25	2025/26 to date
Bookings	412	42	124	199	118	104	32
Users	12931	1033	3473	6160	3559	4173	
Income	£31,590	£4,572	£14,150	£28,721	£26,500	£35,413.80	£12,873.36

HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK 2023/24 OUTTURN AND 2024/25 BUDGET AND PROVISIONAL OUTTURN

	2024/25 Outturn			2025/26 FOT		
	Budget	Actual	Variance	Budget	FOT	Variance
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Hinchingbrooke Country Park and Management						
Staff	117	111	-6	0	102	102
Running Costs	38	215	177	45	8	-37
Income	-13	-89	-76	-11	-4	7
Total	142	237	95	34	106	72
Countryside Centre						
Staff	32	21	-11	0	19	19
Running Costs	23	36	13	22	0.3	-21.7
Income	-6	-33	-27	0	-6	-6
Total	49	24	-25	22	13.3	8.7
Hospitality						
Staff	163	139	-24	0	155	155
Running Costs	123	159	36	113	43	-69
Income	-191	-296	-105	-218	-218	0
Total	95	2	-93	-105	-20	85
Events						
Staff	78	24	-54	0	16	16
Running Costs	0	3	3	1	0	-1
Income	-15	-17	-2	-74	-74	0
Total	63	10	-53	-73	-58	15
Total Hinchingbrooke Country Park	349	171	-178	-122	41.3	164.3

Comments on Variances

2024/25

The budgets for 24/25 were aligned to the previously revised business case which was signed off at the Change board. It wasn't updated to the most recent business case as this was not approved until February/March.

Due to the delay in the redevelopment of the country park the centre was still able to hire its rooms throughout the year.

HDC has continued to see strong growth in the café income which has led it to outperform the budget again in 24/25. We have seen inflationary increase in the operational expenditure but due to the increase in income it is likely that the café will be a small cost to the council in 24/25.

The events manager post was recruited to part way through the year and the vacant events officer post has led to an underspend within employee costs.

2025/26

The Commercial area's have been forecast to budget currently. We will be able to get a more accurate picture of this area as we progress through the year. The variance of £72,000 within Hinchingsbrooke Country Park and Management is made up of salary costs which will need to be offset by income within the commercial areas of the budgets. With the targeted income being £11,000 higher than current staffing costs, we can expect this variance to be offset as we begin to get a more precise understanding of what the income outturn will be.