



A meeting of the **HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK JOINT GROUP** will be held in **LANCASTER & STIRLING, CIVIC SUITE, PATHFINDER HOUSE, ST MARY'S STREET, HUNTINGDON PE29 3TN** on **FRIDAY, 21 NOVEMBER 2025** at **10:00 AM** and you are requested to attend for the transaction of the following business:-

AGENDA

APOLOGIES

1. MINUTES (Pages 5 - 8)

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 18th July 2025.

Contact Officer: Democratic Services - (01480) 388008

2. 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

3. HEAD RANGER'S REPORT (Pages 9 - 14)

To receive a report by the Senior Ranger on park activities for the period July 2025 to October 2025.

Contact Officer: A Wright – (01480) 388191

4. FINANCE REPORT (Pages 15 - 16)

To receive the Finance Report for the Park.

Contact Officer: B Channon – (01480) 388388

5. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To note that the next meeting of the Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Joint Group will be held on 17th April 2026 at 10:00am.

Contact Officer: Democratic Services - (01480) 388008

12 day of November 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](#)

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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.

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, 18 July 2025.

PRESENT: Councillor M L Beuttell – Chair.

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

APOLOGIES: An apology for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of Councillor Tom Sanderson.

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR

RESOLVED

that Councillor M L Beuttell be elected Chair of the Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Joint Group for the remainder of the Municipal Year.

Councillor M L Beuttell in the Chair.

2. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 24th April 2025 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received

4. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR

RESOLVED

that Councillor C A Lowe be appointed Vice-Chair of the Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Joint Group for the remainder of the Municipal Year.

5. MEMBERSHIP OF THE GROUP

It was noted that the membership of the Group for 2025/26 was as follows:

(a) Cambridgeshire County Council Councillor

T D Sanderson

(b) Huntingdonshire District Council Councillors

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

6. HEAD RANGER'S REPORT

The Group were informed of a busy period for the park with drought issues including management of people and habitats. The infrastructure of the park had been reviewed especially the gateways. The Group heard that timber from the site was being reused on projects within the park and also in neighbouring Hinchbrooke House where timber had been provided to assist with replacing the doors throughout the property.

It was noted that some planned events had been postponed or cancelled due to inclement weather but that the Wild About Festival had been very well attended.

It was noted that sessions at the park were run in conjunction with Fireflies and that this would be improved upon following the completion of the development project.

The Group heard that the tree nursery was working to curate species local to the park and that Huntingdon Elms were disease resistant. With an increase in saplings the team were surveying to ensure the arbocultural management was working.

It was noted that the Kings Walk footpath was maintained by Brompton Parish Council but that the park were happy to work collaboratively to help manage the overgrowth.

It was advised that bookings for the Countryside Centre had now been suspended in preparation for the imminent development work and would recommence following completion of the project.

7. FINANCE REPORT

By means of a report by the Finance Business Partner (a copy of which was appended in the Minute Book), the Group were advised that an underspend on staffing was due to the vacancies of the Head Ranger and Café Attendant positions. It was noted that two zero hour contracts posts had been introduced to the café and that staffing levels would be maintained throughout the development works. It was further noted that the electricity and service charges were lower than anticipated creating a further underspend.

The Group heard that alternative café facilities were being installed to allow for a continuation of the service during the development works, this has allowed for a positive reforecasting of the anticipated income.

8. HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

By means of a presentation by the Head of Leisure, Health and Environment (a copy of which was appended in the Minute Book), the Group heard that the planning permission for the project had now been confirmed. It was noted that the early installation of the play equipment within the park as part of the redevelopment had helped to visualise the transitions ahead. It was also noted that the parks aim

was to become self sufficient whilst still supporting and providing for the local community.

10:40 Councillor J Kerr left the meeting.

The tight timescales of the project plan were observed, however it was noted that these would be managed through the stacking of projects to minimise lengthy disruption across the park.

The ecology of the park was discussed with noted slopes to encourage invertebrates and visitor signage to explain park habitats. Habitats would be further encouraged by the laying of traditional hedges and collaborations on ground works in sharing knowledge and skills would be encouraged where possible.

It was noted that the anticipated project costs had increased since the initial budget however this was larger due to national cost increases particularly in the construction industry. However the Group were reassured that following a forensic analysis of the costs the agreed budget would be comfortable and that payback was anticipated over 4.5 years. Further funding opportunities were being actively pursued.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was requested that an alternate date be sought for the November and April meetings due to Officer availability on Fridays. It was agreed that the Democratic Services Officer would circulate alternative dates which would be agreed by the Group.

Chair

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HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: HEAD RANGER'S REPORT

Meeting/Date: Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Joint Group
21st November 2025

Executive Portfolio: Executive Member Cllr Julie Kerr

Report by: Parks & Countryside Development Coordinator and
Commercial Manager

Ward(s) affected: All Wards

Executive Summary:

This report summarises the summer and autumn 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 – JULY TO OCTOBER 2025

1.1 STAFFING

- Two Rangers and one Assistant Ranger are based at Hinchingsbrooke.
- One staff member is currently on paternity leave.
- The Head Ranger position is being covered by the Parks & Countryside Delivery Manager while staffing is under review.
- One of the two Weekend Wardens secured a new position as Apprentice Ranger at Paxton Pits. All Rangers and the Delivery Manager are working weekends as part of a rota to help fill the gaps and to ensure that Paxton Pits and Hinchingsbrooke remain staffed at weekends.
- Work-parties are run regularly with volunteers to support contracted staff.
- A new district wide Events Development Manager (Juliette Richards) and a Visitor Experience Manager (Scott Fagg) for Hinchingsbrooke Country Park are now in post.
- The cafe is being supported by a member of staff from One Leisure.

1.2 VOLUNTEERS

- Work-parties are continuing to work at full strength with some new volunteers joining.
- SEN volunteer numbers are consistent.
- The Friends of Hinchingsbrooke Country Park have a new Chairman who is very proactive and is keen to raise the profile of the Friends and support the park.

1.3 HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK MANAGEMENT

In July, Hinchingsbrooke Country Park received their Green Flag Award following a mystery shop visit to assess the site. Anglia in Bloom judges also visited the park in July this year and met Rangers and volunteers as well as the Friends group.

Meadow management work started earlier than usual this year due to the drought conditions in Spring and early Summer. Since then, work has continued to install additional benches in the park, replace a large section of fencing along the park boundary and carry out path surfacing repairs. Other projects and tasks include;

- The creation of a tree nursery by the final Groundworks Green Skills project in July. The work party volunteers joined this group to install deer fencing around the outside of the tree nursery. Groundworks are running a community tree planting event on 2nd December.
- Trolls Bridge near the Ornamental Lake has been replaced by a new bridge constructed and installed by Rangers and volunteers.
- Reed management work around the Wildlife Lake has been carried out to ensure the vegetation doesn't overcrowd the lake and that it remains a diverse habitat for dragonflies.

- Wildlife monitoring continued through the summer months including butterfly, reptile and grassland surveys. Winter bird surveys have started this Autumn.
- Orchard management work has been carried out with the help of volunteers.
- Sensory raised beds which were installed earlier in the year were planted up with plants with different smells, textures and colours.
- Log piles have been moved and wood is being processed, some of which is being sold and delivered in tonne bags by the Arb Team. This is generating some income for the park.
- Preparations are now underway to clear the buildings in anticipation of the HCP capital development work to starting. This has been a real team effort with staff and volunteers working hard together to get the site ready.

Looking Forward...

- Continuing to action the demobilisation plan to prepare for the building works on site.
- Tree planting in the tree nursery, filling hedgerow gaps and in Bobs Wood.
- Carrying out the woodland management and routine safety tree work.
- Continuing to install more, new and improved, post and rail fencing to replace the old design which is starting to fail.
- Installation of interpretation features such as way markers.
- Maintenance of park furniture such as picnic benches.

1.4 COMMUNITY GROUPS

Established groups are all operating well, including weekly Parkrun and monthly Zigzag runners, open water swimmers, mountain bike training, and Huntingdon Canoe Club. Fireflies Forest School continues to offer a variety of sessions during term time and in the school holidays.

1.5 CAFÉ

	2023/24 Outturn			2024/25 Outturn			2025/26 YTD Actuals			2025/26 Forecasted Outturn		
	Budget	Actual	Variance	Budget	Actual	Variance	Budget	Actual	Variance	Budget	Forecast	Variance
Staff	65	114	17	163	141	-22	104	79	-25	179	104	-75
Running Costs	90	131	41	123	161	38	66	89	23	113	142	29
Income	-175	-238	-45	-191	-296	-105	-127	-231	-104	-218	-306	-88
Total	-20	7	13	95	6	-89	43	-63	-106	74	-60	-134

Compared to the 2024/25 out-turn, the café at Hinchingsbrooke Country Park has delivered another strong year for income generation, exceeding its income target by over £100k year to date, forecast is expected to be £88k better than budget due to the opening of a temporary café when the development at Hinchingsbrooke Country Park starts. This has resulted in an overall out-turn of £60k surplus, significantly better than the £74k budget deficit.

1.6 EVENTS, ACTIVITIES and PROMOTIONS

July – October 2025

Active For Health (One Leisure)	Wednesdays 2 nd , 9 th , 16 th , 23 rd , 30 th July
Back to Wilderness (axe & knife throwing)	Saturday 12 th July
Hinchingbrooke Hospital SCBU Team Building	Week commencing 14 th July
Bartlett Automotive Staff Summer Party	Sunday 27 th July
Active Lifestyles Summer Sports Sessions	Monday 28 th – Wednesday 30 th July
Cambridgeshire Deaf Association BBQ	Monday 28 th July
Bear Hunt & Picnic (One Leisure)	Thursday 31 st July
Wellies in the Woods (Groundworks)	Fridays 1 st , 8 th , 15 th 22 nd and 29 th August
Harvey Robinson Staff Fun Day	Saturday 2 nd August
Active Lifestyles Summer Sports Sessions	Monday 4 th – Wednesday 6 th August
Active For Health (One Leisure)	Wednesdays 6 th , 13 th and 20 th August
Bear Hunt & Picnic (One Leisure)	Thursdays 7 th , 14 th , 21 st and 28 th August
Active Lifestyles Summer Sports Sessions	Monday 11 th – Wednesday 13 th August
Groundwork Community Engagement	Monday 18 th & Tuesday 19 th August
Active Lifestyles Summer Sports Sessions	Monday 18 th – Thursday 21 st August
Grafham Pay & Play	Saturday 23 rd – Wednesday 27 th August
Active Lifestyles Summer Sports Sessions	Tuesday 26 th – Thursday 28 th August
Groundwork Community Engagement	Monday 1 st & Wednesday 2 nd September
Wellies in the Woods (Groundworks)	Fridays 5 th , 12 th and 19 th September
Hinchingbrooke Hospital SCBU Team Building	Thursday 11 th September
Back to Wilderness (axe & knife throwing)	Saturday 11 th October
Cambourne Village College Curriculum Extension Days	Tuesday 21 st & Wednesday 22 nd October
RAF Wyton Cross Country League Race	Wednesday 29 th October

1.7 COUNTRYSIDE CENTRE

- No bookings have been taken since 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	£15,493

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HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK 2024/25 OUTTURN AND 2025/26 BUDGET AND FORECAST

	2024/25 Outturn			2025/26 Forecast		
	Budget	Actual	Variance	Budget	Forecast	Variance
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Hinchingbrooke Country Park and Management						
Staff	118	117	-1	128	124	-4
Running Costs	37	47	10	47	26	-21
Income	-13	-20	-7	-14	-15	-1
Total	142	144	2	161	135	-26
Countryside Centre						
Staff	32	21	-11	55	12	-43
Running Costs	23	36	13	36	14	-22
Income	-6	-33	-27	-17	-25	-8
Total	49	24	-25	74	1	-73
Café						
Staff	163	141	-22	159	104	-55
Running Costs	123	161	38	99	128	29
Income	-191	-296	-105	-201	-298	-97
Total	95	6	-89	57	-66	-123
Events						
Staff	78	24	-54	105	102	-3
Running Costs	0	3	3	0	0	0
Income	-15	-17	-2	-21	-43	-22
Total	63	10	-53	84	59	-25
Total Hinchingbrooke Country Park	349	184	-165	376	129	-247

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 continued to see strong growth in the café income which has led it to outperform the budget again in 24/25. There was an inflationary increase in the operational expenditure but due to the increase in income the café ended up being 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 majority of underspend is being shown from lower staffing costs across all areas and higher income being achieved in the Café and Events budgets.

The income at the Café is due to the purchase of a temporary structure being offered on site to enable a 'grab-&-go' offering while the development is on-going. While the staffing is lower due to vacancies being realised within the second quarter of the financial year.