

CABINET

PROPOSED TERMS OF REFERENCE AND METHOD OF OPERATION – COUNTRYSIDE GROUP (Report by Head of Administration)

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 At their meeting on 10th October 2008, the Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Joint Group considered a report which described the current position in relation to the terms of reference and method of operation for the Group. The report had been written in response to uncertainty expressed by Members as to the remit and status of the Group, since an earlier Cabinet decision to reconstitute the body from the Countryside Joint Group to the Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Joint Group in May 2008.
- 1.2 As this issue has caused considerable debate over a number of meetings, the Group agreed to meet informally with the Executive Councillor for Operational and Countryside Services to seek to prepare a report to the Cabinet.
- 1.3 This informal meeting took place on 5th November 2008 and District Councillors M G Baker (Chairman of the Joint Group), Mrs M Banerjee and C R Hyams and County Councillor Mrs E V Kadic were present.

2. VIEWS OF THE GROUP

- 2.1 At the informal meeting, Members were reminded of the constitutional position and the provision, within the membership of the Hinchingsbrooke Group, of representation by a local County Councillor. With these issues in mind and having again discussed their role and function at great length and the programme of activity which had been proposed, the meeting was of the view that Members should be able to continue to monitor the performance of other Countryside Services as well as that of the Hinchingsbrooke Country Park. Therefore it was concluded that the former Countryside Group should be reinstated in addition to the existing Hinchingsbrooke Group, with a remit to monitor the performance of the other Countryside Services across the District.

3. THE PROPOSAL

- 3.1 Bearing in mind the concept of the original Countryside Joint Group and having regard now to its method of operation, the meeting proposed that the new Group should meet on the rising of the Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Joint Group in March and October each year and should comprise the same membership as the Hinchingsbrooke Group with the exception of a County Council representative (currently – Cllrs M G Baker, Mrs M Banerjee, C R Hyams and Ms M J Thomas)
- 3.2 The formal meetings would continue in a similar way to that of the former Countryside Joint Group, with biannual reports to be submitted to Members by the Countryside Services and Service Development Managers of the District Council. Meetings would take place immediately after the Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Joint Group on Fridays in March and October each year and would be administered by the Democratic Services Team. Reports to meetings would provide an overview of countryside, parks and open space matters allowing Members to monitor performance across the Council's countryside portfolio. These meetings would continue to take place in meeting rooms at Hinchingsbrooke Country Park.
- 3.3 Informal meetings of the Countryside Group would be held twice a year in January and June. These would be delivered in the form of site visits across the District. The District Council's Countryside Services and Service Development Managers will be required to provide an itinerary for each visit. Arrangements for these events will be made centrally by the Democratic Services Team. It is proposed that visits would be offered in the first instance to Group Members, and thereafter to new and local Members for induction and training purposes. The first of these visits will take place on Tuesday 20th January 2009 and will take in Barford Road Pocket Park (Eynesbury), St Neots Riverside and Little Paxton Nature Reserve.

4. RECOMMENDATION

- 4.1 That the Cabinet constitute a Countryside Group with effect from the commencement of the 2009/10 Municipal Year and approve the terms of reference for the Group as set out in the Appendix attached.

Background Information

Previous reports and agendas of the Countryside Joint Liaison Group
Previous reports and agendas of the Countryside Joint Group

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APPENDIX

COUNTRYSIDE GROUP PROPOSED TERMS OF REFERENCE AND METHOD OF OPERATION

- 1.** The Group will consider all matters relating to countryside, riverside and other parks and open spaces in the ownership of or managed by Huntingdonshire District Council, with the exception of Hinchingsbrooke Country Park.
- 2.** The Group will not have any executive functions within the meaning of the Local Government Act 2000.
- 3.** The Group will be constituted in accordance with the local Government and Housing Act 1989 and the District Council's Constitution with a membership comprising four members of Huntingdonshire District Council (appointed by the Cabinet).
- 4.** The Group will meet formally on at least two occasions in each year, following the meeting of the Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Joint Group. The quorum for formal meetings shall be not less than three members and attendance will be open to Officers of the District Council.
- 5.** The Group also will meet informally on at least two occasions per year. This will take the form of site visits to countryside facilities managed by the District Council, there will be no formal record taken at this meeting. Site visits will also be extended to other Council Members.
- 6.** The Minutes of the formal meetings of the Group will be presented for confirmation to the ensuing formal meeting. Servicing of meetings will be undertaken by the Democratic Services Team.
- 7.** The Group will liaise on behalf of the District Council, with users of the parks and countryside service and undertake periodic public consultation to which all users, officers and Members would be invited to discuss and plan future development. The Group will present their findings to the Cabinet.
- 8.** The Group will consider annually and, report to Cabinet on, the wider role of the parks and countryside service in offering specialist advice to residents.
- 9.** The Group will ensure, on behalf of the District Council that the parks and countryside service continue to offer support for the Care in the

Community Programme which provides work placements for handicapped adults.

- 10.** The Group will receive and monitor financial information and an annual budget for the parks and countryside services of the District Council as a whole.