

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK JOINT GROUP held in the Countryside Centre, Hinchingsbrooke Countryside Park on Friday, 9 October 2009.

PRESENT: District Councillors M G Baker, C R Hyams and Mrs M J Thomas.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of District Councillor Mrs M Banerjee and County Councillor Mrs L Kadic.

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs J Arnold, P Knight, Mrs S Martin, A Roberts and Mrs J Walker.

1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED

that District Councillor M G Baker be elected Chairman of the Group for the ensuing Municipal Year.

Councillor M G Baker in the Chair.

2. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 9th April 2009 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations of interest were received.

4. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED

that District Councillor Mrs M J Thomas be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Group for the ensuing Municipal Year.

5. MEMBERSHIP OF THE GROUP

The membership of the Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Joint Group for 2009/2010 was noted as follows:-

(a) **Cambridgeshire County Council**

County Councillor Mrs L Kadic.

(b) **Huntingdonshire District Council**

District Councillors M G Baker, Mrs M Banerjee, C R Hyams

and Mrs M J Thomas.

6. 2008/09 FINAL ACCOUNTS

The Group received and noted a report by the Treasurer (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) reflecting the final accounts for the Country Park for the 2008/09 financial year.

In noting that net expenditure for the Country Park was below the budgeted figure, Members were advised that employee costs had increased as extra staff had been employed in the cafe, however these costs had been mostly offset by additional income from the cafe.

Having regard to income, Members noted that the variation of £51k above the budgeted figure was the result of higher than anticipated Section 106 receipts being utilised at the site. Furthermore, the cafe had generated more income than expected, though other income was slightly lower than the amount in the budget.

Councillor Hyams reported that he had been liaising with District Councillor T D Sanderson and the Service Development Manager on the possibility of investing Section 106 money further to improve play areas. He also expressed the view that possible changes to car parking and the café could have an effect on the Park's trading performance in the future.

7. SENIOR RANGER'S REPORT

In receiving and noting the contents of the Senior Ranger's report, comment was made as follows:-

(a) Volunteers and Staffing

Members were informed of recent staffing changes and noted that the number of volunteers currently stood at 491.

(b) Countryside Centre

Details of the number of users of the Countryside Centre for the period April to September 2009 inclusive were presented. Members noted that the number of school bookings was significantly lower than in the previous year, which was attributed to schools cutting back on school trips to ease the financial pressure on parents during the economic downturn.

(c) Cafe

Members were encouraged to note that the cafe was performing well and that local suppliers were being used wherever possible.

(d) Events and Activities

The Senior Ranger presented the Group with details of the events and activities over the Spring/Summer period.

Members were pleased to note that local organisations appeared to be choosing to hold events at the Country Park. Particular attention was drawn to the Multiple-Sclerosis Society Walk in which 150 people had taken part.

(e) **Wider District**

Members noted that a range of work had been undertaken in other parts of the District. The Senior Ranger informed the Group that with contributions from Park Rangers, Coneygear Park had been awarded Bronze and Silver Awards in the National and Anglia in Bloom Competitions respectively, and that Huntingdon Park had received a Gold Award from Anglia in Bloom.

(f) **Park Management**

The Senior Ranger informed the Group of the various work being undertaken at the Country Park. Particular mention was made of the new footpath to the Park from the parking area. As visitors seemed reluctant to change their previous habits, play equipment would be installed to encourage families to use the new route.

(g) **Friends of Hinchingsbrooke Country Park**

Members were pleased to note that membership of the Friends of Hinchingsbrooke Country Park currently stood at 80 members. The Senior Ranger reported that a Christmas event would be held on Sunday 15th November.

(h) **Miscellaneous**

Members were encouraged to note that the amount of damage, litter and drunken behaviour over the summer had been low. This was attributed to joint working between the Police, CCTV, PCSOs and the Rangers.

Members discussed the possibility of repositioning or adding a further bird hide to the site. The Group was informed that the hide was purposely sited in a wild area but was presently not well used. The Countryside Services Manager added that bird watchers tended to go to Paxton Pits. Furthermore, hides were costly to install and run as they attracted anti-social behaviour.

8. BOUNDARY MANAGEMENT

The Countryside Services Manager updated the Group on progress with the installation of fencing at various locations around the boundary of the Park. It was proposed that the boundary then would be inspected every three months.

Members were reminded of the consultation that had previously taken place with a number of owners of land abutting the Country Park. In addition, it was reported that all those who contacted the Park on this matter received a formal response from the Park's Management. It

was agreed that the situation would be reviewed at the next meeting of the Group.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Group noted that their next meeting would be held on Friday 26th March 2010.

Chairman