

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK JOINT GROUP held in Countryside Centre, Hinchingbrooke Countryside Park on Friday, 25 March 2011.

PRESENT: Councillors M G Baker, C R Hyams and County Councillor Mrs L Kadic.

APOLOGY An apology for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of Councillor Mrs M Banerjee.

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs D Breedon and Mrs H Taylor .

2. 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

3. MINUTES

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

4. NOTES

Members received the notes of the meetings held on 26th March and 8 October 2010.

5. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations of interest were received.

6. APPOINTMENT OF VICE- CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED

that County Councillor Mrs L Kadic be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Group for the ensuing Municipal Year.

7. SENIOR RANGER'S REPORT

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

(a) **Staffing**

Members' attention was drawn to recent staff changes including the conclusion of the future jobs fund employees

scheme which had seen trainees undertaking six month appointments working as a ranger or in the café. Mention also was made of the implications for the Country Park of the District Council's voluntary release scheme. The Group was informed that Pat Knight, Countryside Services Manager and Roland Fletcher, Ranger at Paxton Pits, had chosen to be released under the scheme and arrangements were in place to redistribute their workload.

(b) **Volunteers**

The Group noted that the number of volunteers currently stood at over 500. The annual volunteers "thank you" day had been a great success with group games being played at the park.

(c) **Countryside Centre**

Details of the number of users of the Countryside Centre for the period September 2010 to February 2011 inclusive were presented. Members noted that the length of the average room booking had reduced and fewer lunches were being booked which was attributed to organisations/businesses cutting back during the economic downturn.

(d) **Café**

Members were pleased to note that the café continued to be busy and that a small range of goods had gone on sale as a way of increasing the café's income.

(e) **Events and Activities**

The Senior Ranger informed the group of the various events/activities that had been held since the last meeting. A highlight of that period had been the santa's grotto which had proved to be extremely popular with a profit of £600 being made. The Senior Ranger thanked the Executive Councillor for Operational and Countryside Services who had helped on the day by serving refreshments.

(f) **Wider District**

Members noted that a range of work had been undertaken in other parts of the District under the countryside services remit. It was reported that the rangers hut at Coneygear Park had been the subject of a number of acts of vandalism for which the culprits had been arrested and taken to court.

(g) **Park Management**

The Senior Ranger informed the Group of the various work being undertaken at the Country Park, including repairs to the path around the lake and the planting of a hedge at the wildlife wood.

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

It was reported that the Friends of Hinchingsbrooke Country Park were planning to organise a number of events on Good Friday to raise funds for the park. Since the last meeting new interpretation boards had been funded by the Friends.

(i) **Future Budget Position**

Members' attention was drawn to the proposed cuts identified for the countryside service over the next three years. Although it was hopeful that additional income would be generated in year 2, concerns were raised that some staff savings would be required in year 3.

(j) **Pat knight**

The Chairman paid tribute to the contribution made by Pat Knight, Countryside Services Manager, who was due to leave the Council's service on 30th April 2011.

Accordingly, Members placed on record their sincere gratitude to Mr Knight for his contribution to the work of the Park and his vision and commitment to the countryside service.

In reply, Mr Knight thanked Members and Officers for their good wishes and support over the years.

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Group noted that their next meeting would be held on 14th October 2011.

Chairman