

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK JOINT GROUP held in The Wren Room, Countryside Centre, Hinchingsbrooke Countryside Park, Huntingdon on Friday, 12 October 2012.

PRESENT: Councillors M G Baker, Mrs M Banerjee, Ms L Kadic and R J West.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillor N J Guyatt and Mr P Clark, Mr J Craig and Mr M Davey.

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs J Arnold, Mr N Brown, Mr P Hobbs and Mrs H J Taylor..

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 of the Group held on 30th March 2012 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

4. APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED

that County Councillor Ms L Kadic 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 2012/2013 was noted as follows:-

(a) **Cambridgeshire County Council**

County Councillor Ms L Kadic.

(b) **Huntingdonshire District Council**

District Councillors M G Baker, Mrs M Banerjee, N J Guyatt and R J West.

6. SENIOR RANGER'S REPORT

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

(a) Staffing

Members were advised that the new staffing structure of Green Spaces had not been finalised. Matt Johnson, full time Ranger at Paxton Pits would be leaving soon to start a new post with the Wildlife Trust in Derbyshire. Given his responsibility for the day to day care of the cattle, Members noted that it is imperative that his duties are covered.

(b) Volunteers

The Group noted that the number of volunteer days worked currently stood at 900.

(c) Countryside Centre

Details of the number of users of the Countryside Centre for the period April to September 2012 compared to previous years were presented. Members noted that due to the current economic climate fewer companies were booking the centre for training courses. As a result the number of people using the centre had dropped from 5,273 to 4,747 when compared with the same period in the previous year.

(d) Café

Members were reminded that trade in the café was heavily weather-dependant. With appalling weather between April and June, income in the café had decreased by £10,000 compared to the same period last year. Members were encouraged to note that with a brighter and drier July to September café income levels had started to improve.

(e) Financial Position

The Countryside Accountant drew Members' attention to anticipated budget variations in the current year along with an outturn assessment for 2011/2012. In so doing, Members were reminded that the Countryside budget had been reduced by £48,000 at the start of 2012 and that a further reduction of £50,000 was programmed for 2013. The Countryside Accountant explained that Officers were reviewing the Countryside budgets assess whether for existing service provision a further reduction could be sustained. In that respect, the Senior Ranger reported on the impact the cuts were having on the day to day running of the countryside service and the difficulties being faced by staff.

In response to a question by a Member in relation to car park income, the Countryside Accountant agreed to circulate a breakdown of the Country Park car park income and expenditure to all Members.

(f) **Events and Activities**

The Senior Ranger informed the Group of the various events and activities that had been held since the last meeting. Members were encouraged to note that over 600 people took part in the sports taster activity day.

(g) **Park Management**

Members noted that a new energy efficient boiler was being installed at the Countryside Centre.

(h) **Ornamental Pond**

In response to a question by the Chairman, the Senior Ranger confirmed that the sluice gates on the ornamental pond worked in a limited manner and could be used to let water out if necessary.

(i) **Godmanchester Community Nursery**

Having noted the achievements of the Godmanchester Community Nursery, Members agreed to hold a site visit there before the next meeting.

7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting of the Group would be held on Friday 22nd March 2013.

Chairman