

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK JOINT GROUP held in the Countryside Centre, Hinchingsbrooke Countryside Park on Friday, 27 March 2015.

PRESENT: Councillor R J West – Chairman.
Councillors T Hayward, B Hyland and T D Sanderson.

APOLOGIES: There were no apologies for absence from the meeting submitted.

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs J Arnold, Messrs J Craig and A Green.

2. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED

that District Councillor R J West be elected Chairman of the Group for the Municipal Year 2014/15.

COUNCILLOR R J WEST IN THE CHAIR.

3. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 21st March 2014 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4. NOTES

The Notes of the meeting held on 10th October 2014 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

5. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

6. APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED

that District Councillor T D Sanderson be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Group for the Municipal Year 2014/15.

7. MEMBERSHIP OF THE GROUP

The membership of the Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Joint Group for 2014/15 was noted as follows:-

(a) Cambridgeshire County Council

Councillor Sir P Brown.

(b) Huntingdonshire District Council

Councillors T Hayward, B Hyland, T D Sanderson and R J West.

District Councillors expressed concern with the low attendance record of the County Councillor representative. The Chairman is to write to the Leader of the County Council in regards to the County Council representation.

(At 10:05am, during the discussion of the item, Councillor B Hyland entered the meeting.)

8. 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 informed that the Senior Ranger has now retired. The post has not been advertised as there is a freeze on recruitment due to a departmental review. This has left the service short of staff which is not sustainable in the long term. Councillor T D Sanderson is to speak with the Executive Leader and relevant Executive Portfolio Holder regarding the situation.

Jamie Gillies has been appointed as the Café Supervisor and a café assistant has also been appointed both for 18 months. The Country Park has been asked if the café service is able to work more closely with the leisure team in order to find efficiency savings.

The post of Countryside Centre Assistant is currently occupied by a temporary member of staff.

(b) Volunteers

The Joint Group noted that the number of volunteer days worked in the last five months was 486 days.

(c) Countryside Centre

Details of the number of users of the Countryside Centre for the period October 2014 to March 2015 compared to the previous years were presented. It was reported that income for the Centre was up 18.5% for the period. Members were advised that the Country Park is looking at ways to better advertise the Centre's conference facilities in order to increase income.

(d) Café

The Joint Group were informed that the income for the café is

£14,000 up for the year to date. Members were told that economy savings such as changing suppliers have helped to reduce costs.

(e) Events and Activities

Members were informed that the Bear Hunt is a popular event and currently there are 15 children on the waiting list. The August hunt is fully booked however the Country Park staff have provided an additional afternoon hunt. Members thought this was very bearable.

(f) Wider District

Members noted a wide range of work that had been undertaken on other parts of the District.

(g) Park Management

The Joint Group were informed that the Country Park will soon be taking delivery of two new outdoor shelters. Members expressed concern that the shelters could lead to an increase in litter however the Country Park staff hope that any increase will be concentrated around the shelters.

(h) Friends of Hinchingsbrooke Country Park

Members were told that several members of the friends committee are standing down. The committee are hoping to recruit at 'Meet The Friends' events on 29th March and 21st April. The Friends Annual General Meeting is taking place on 21st May.

(i) Financial Position

Members' attention was drawn to the Country Park's controllable budget and forecast for 2014/15. Members were advised that the financial position of the Country Park is good.

It was noted that Mr C Moss is the Country Park's accountant now that Mr N Green has left the Council.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Group noted that their next meeting would be held on Friday 16th October 2015.

Members queried whether the Joint Group should meet on a more frequent basis however it was agreed that more informal meetings would be more appropriate.

Chairman