

AT A MEETING of the SIR GEORGE STAUNTON COUNTRY PARK JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE held at Sir George Staunton Country Park, Havant on 16 MAY 2011.

### **PRESENT**

p Phil Halliwell  
p Gordon Gardner

#### **Hampshire County Council**

p Councillor Mrs L. Fairhurst  
a Councillor I.F.E. Beagley  
p Councillor Mrs A. Buckley  
a Councillor R.C. McIntosh  
a Councillor F. Pearce

p Mike Walls

#### **East Hampshire District Council**

p Councillor Mrs. D.K. Denston  
p Mr S. d'Este Hoare

#### **Havant Borough Council**

p Councillor Y. Weeks  
a Jeff Crate  
a Claire Hughes

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Mrs Yvonne Weeks as the new representative from Havant Borough Council, replacing Councillor M. Fairhurst.

#### **55. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillors F Pearce, I Beagley and R McIntosh, Jeff Crate and Rowlands Castle Parish Council.

#### **56. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members were mindful that, where they believed that they had a personal or personal prejudicial interest in any matter to be considered at the meeting, they should normally, at the time of the debate, declare their interest, and having regard to the circumstances described in paragraphs 9, 10, 11 and 12 of the County Council's Code of Conduct, consider whether to leave the meeting whilst the matter was discussed save for exercising any right to speak in accordance with Paragraph 12 of the Code .

		<b>Action</b>
<b>57.</b>	<b>MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING</b>	
	<p>The minutes of the meeting held on 28 February 2011 were approved as an accurate record and would be signed by the Vice-Chairman at the next meeting.</p> <p><b>Matters arising:-</b> Item 50: Middle Park Road should have read Middle Park Way.</p>	
<b>58.</b>	<b>DEPUTATIONS</b>	
	There were no deputations at this meeting	
<b>59.</b>	<b>TREASURER'S REPORT – FINANCIAL OUTTURN 2010-11</b>	
	<p>The Committee received the report of the County Treasurer on the current financial performance of the Park. (Item 5 in the Minute Book)</p> <p>The Treasurer summarised his report indicating that the financial outturn for 2010/11 had been much better than he had hoped for or gave the Committee to expect at the meeting on 24 February 2011; and that the Park had performed well considering the economic climate and difficult weather conditions during the year. He felt that the key factor in this was that the Park staff had been involved from the start in the budgeting and had been kept up-to-date; each element of the Park had been scrutinised and staff had had to justify expenditure. He highlighted the surplus of over £17,000 in 2010/11 which had made it possible to reduce the deficit in reserves to under £100,000.</p> <p>Other factors that had influenced the outturn were that some income streams that had not been producing a satisfactory return, such as weddings, had been sidelined and the catering had been outsourced; also that there had been an increase in the revenue from the Education and Community programmes and the sale of estate produce.</p> <p>Commenting on the figures for 2010/11, the Treasurer highlighted that there had been an underspend on expenditure compared to the budget and the 2009/10 outturn, due mainly to the outsourcing of the catering and the one-off expenditures in 2009/10 in Education and Community not having to be repeated. He drew Members' attention to the fact that, although the income figures were under those budgeted for, if compared to those for</p>	

2009/10 with the catering figure removed, then there had been a significant improvement. In relation to the shop's performance, Members were asked to note that, although the aim was to produce a profit of 50%, the 44.4% that had been achieved was a good figure.

The Treasurer informed the Committee that a revised budget would be set in July and the aim would be to maximise any surplus to offset the deficit in the reserves as fast as possible.

The Treasurer stressed that the outlook for 2011/12 was just as challenging, but with the Park team being fully involved and committed it was a more positive picture. The Committee were informed that the start of the current financial year had seen an increase in income over the previous year due to the good weather over Easter and the Bank Holidays and the take up of Park membership. The car parking charges, which were to be introduced shortly, and the new soft play area, along with other new income streams would bring in additional revenue. Members were informed that expenditure would still be reined in, but that this could not be sustained for too long without affecting the standard of the Park.

The Treasurer highlighted that the Park's income was very much linked to the number of visitors and their spend in the Park, but that the core running costs of the Park were still mainly from the partners' contributions and he urged all to seek to increase their contributions and try to find new sources of funding for the Park from other budgets in their own authorities.

In answer to a question relating to the uptake of Park membership, the Park Manager stated that with the new database in place it was now possible to remind people to renew, which improved uptake, and that arrangements were in place for people to pay by direct debit.

**RESOLVED:**

That the report be noted.

**60. ANNUAL RETURN AND GOVERNANCE STATEMENT FOR THE AUDIT COMMISSION**

The Treasurer presented the Annual Governance Statement for the Park to the Committee (Item 6 in the Minute Book).

The Treasurer explained that it was a legal requirement that an annual return was made to the Audit Commission summarising the Park's financial activities and that the Annual Governance

	<p>Statement had to be approved by the Committee.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b></p> <p>That the Annual Governance Statement for 2010/11 be approved and signed off.</p>	
<b>61.</b>	<b>PARK MANAGER'S REPORT</b>	
	<p>The Committee received the report of the Park Manager giving an update on developments at the Park. (Item 7 of the Minute Book).</p> <p>Referring to his report, the Park Manager stated that he felt he had been over-optimistic in some of his budget figures for 2010/11 and that the success in achieving a surplus over the year was due to tight expenditure control, a massive advertising campaign, a strong education department, good late membership sales and great weather in the early spring.</p> <p>The Park Manager drew Members' attention to the appendices on visitor numbers and memberships, which he would include in each report to the Committee. He indicated that the uptake of Park membership was a key to income generation and, although he had no target figure, he would like to reach £120,000 by the end of the 2011/12 financial year. Members were asked to note that it was difficult to make an accurate comparison with past visitor numbers as previously education numbers had not been included and families had been counted as one rather than four. The newly installed EPOS system would improve the collation of visitor data. In relation to a question on the impact of the Culture-all Pass on membership, the Park Manager told Members that there had been an increase in sales of the Pass, but it was an important part of the Park's income; the names were entered onto the Park's database and people were reminded to renew through this. He told the Committee that people were encouraged to buy a Park membership.</p> <p>Members were informed that the introduction of wallabies had been delayed due to sickness among the ranger team; numbers had not been decided yet, but the goal was to have joeys as well as adults and it was hoped they would be in place by August. A carthorse mare and foal costing in the region of £2,000 was being investigated.</p> <p>Answering questions relating to the Soft Play Area, the Park Manager stated that he hoped it would be installed by August and would be able to take up to 100 children at a time. Concerns were raised that, while numbers using the area would not be an</p>	<p>Gordon Gardner</p>

<p>issue generally, a scheme would need to be implemented for days with large numbers wanting to use the facility, such as Bank Holidays. Suggestions included that Park members should be given first preference and that there should be timed sessions. The current caterers would have a secondary, mobile, catering facility in the barn. It was envisaged that the barn for lambs would be built at the same time as the Soft Play Area. Members were informed that work was due to start on the Wildlife Centre in September 2011 and there would be a big advertising campaign when it opened.</p>	
<p>In relation to events at the Park, Members were informed that there would only be one Staunton Live event this year, on 21 August 2011, but the content had yet to be decided. There were to be more 'educational' events/workshops throughout the year. The Park Manager was asked to check whether entry would be free on any of the Heritage Days (8-11 September 2011).</p>	Gordon Gardner
<p>Members raised concerns about the need for paid events to bring in revenue. It was noted that the Water Festival and Staunton Live would bring in car parking revenue this year. It was also noted that it was difficult to manage the security of events on the site as people can just walk in; the Park would need a company to manage any paid events.</p>	
<p>The Area Manager informed the Committee that over the weekend of 16/17 June 2012 sports and music events linked to the Olympic Games were being planned at venues around Hampshire, themed around the five continents; Staunton Country Park has been allocated Australasia. Following a question regarding whether there would be celebrations around Hampshire for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee at the beginning of June 2012, it was suggested that there could be a 'street' picnic in Leigh Park with bands and races for children. It was agreed that planning should be started now.</p>	
<p>Commenting on the gardens, the Park Manager drew Members' attention to the double span poly-tunnel which was to be installed shortly and the refurbishment of the Arid House into a Butterfly House. He told Members that plant sales were good, with most raised at the Park. Asked whether the walled garden and glass houses were being promoted to local gardening groups, the Park Manager told members that the gardens were only just beginning to look good with the new planting, but that he would look into it.</p>	Gordon Gardner
<p><b>RESOLVED:</b></p> <p>That the report be noted</p>	

<b>62.</b>	<b>LANDSCAPE ADVISORY GROUP REPORT</b>	
	<p>The Committee received the meeting notes of the Landscape Advisory Group which met on the 13 April 2011 (Item 8 in the Minute Book).</p> <p>The Landscape Advisory Group had reconvened on 13 April 2011 after a gap since 2008. The Park Manager highlighted that the Group felt that two of the key changes needed for Leigh Park Gardens was for new toilets and a use for the Coach House. It was noted that the team working in the stable block were being relocated, which would free up that building for use.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b></p> <p>That the report be noted.</p>	
<b>63.</b>	<b>AOB</b>	
	<p>The Park Manager informed the Committee that there would be a Stakeholder Meeting in the near future.</p> <p>The Park Manager told Members that they were aiming to make parking easier for the fishermen by giving them access to the Leigh Park Gardens site; it was noted that fishermen had to have both an Angling membership and a rod licence, but Park staff would not be checking for rod licences.</p> <p>Members were informed that the Water Festival would be held at the Park on 16/17 July 2011. The Area Manager was asked to speak to the Director of Culture, Communities and Business regarding the possibility of Hampshire County Council supporting the Festival financially in 2012.</p> <p>The Park Manager drew the Committee's attention to the problems faced by the Park rangers in having to deal with local youths in Leigh Park Gardens at weekends in warm weather; although PSNOs do patrols with the rangers, the rangers have not always received back-up from the police when requested to deal with incidents as these have to be prioritised. It was hoped to encourage families to use the Gardens on weekend evenings, but this would require action to control the mess caused by the youths.</p>	<p>Gordon Gardner</p> <p>Phil Halliwell</p>
<b>64.</b>	<b>DATE OF NEXT MEETING</b>	
	The next meeting was scheduled to take place on Monday 5 September at 2.00 pm at the Park.	

