

AT A MEETING of the
SIR GEORGE STAUNTON COUNTRY PARK JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
held at Sir George Staunton Country Park, Havant on 30 January 2015

PRESENT

Hampshire County Council

p Councillor Mrs. L Fairhurst (Chairman)
p Councillor Mrs A Briggs (Vice-chairman)
p Councillor R Finch
p Councillor D Keast
p Councillor R.C. McIntosh

p Kerry Bailey, Country Parks Business Manager (SGSCP/QECP)
p Jane Lovett, Honorary Treasurer

p Jo Heath, Head of Countryside
p Tim Speller, Visitor Services Manager (SGSCP/QECP)

East Hampshire District Council

p Councillor Mrs. D.K. Denston
a Mr Martin Healey, Principal Countryside and Biodiversity Officer for EHDC

Havant Borough Council

p Councillor Mrs. Y. Weeks
p Mr Jeff Crate, Senior Economic Development Officer for HBC

Also present was Adrian McKay, the Senior Farm Ranger, for the Park Manager's Report.

The Chairman welcomed Jo Heath the Head of Countryside to the meeting.

75. BROADCASTING ANNOUNCEMENT

The Chairman announced that the press and members of the public were permitted to film and broadcast the meeting. Those remaining at the meeting were consenting to being filmed and recorded, and to the possible use of those images and recording for broadcasting purposes

76 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Martin Healey.

77. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were mindful that where they believed they had a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in any matter considered at the meeting they must declare that interest at the time of the relevant debate and, having regard to the circumstances described in Part 3 Paragraph 1.5 of the County Council's

Members' Code of Conduct, leave the meeting while the matter was discussed, save for exercising any right to speak in accordance with Paragraph 1.6 of the Code. Furthermore Members were mindful that where they believed they had a Non-Pecuniary interest in a matter being considered at the meeting they considered whether such interest should be declared, and having regard to Part 5, Paragraph 2 of the Code, considered whether it was appropriate to leave the meeting whilst the matter was discussed, save for exercising any right to speak in accordance with the Code.

		Action
78.	DEPUTATIONS	
	There were no deputations.	
79.	MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING	
	<p>The minutes of the meetings held on 17 October 2014 were approved as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the following corrections:</p> <p>73: There was a consensus.... That Havant and Portsmouth <u>could</u> be asked... It was suggested....that all County Councillors <u>could</u> give £1,000each....</p> <p>72: Members were informed that the foal had been sold for £2000, as it was not cost effective to send her to be broken. Members expressed concern about the costs and it was agreed that the Park Manager would investigate further</p> <p>The Committee were informed that the Culture-All pass was to be stopped in favour of site specific membership which would be good for the Park. New software called 'Total Loyalty' was being investigated as an option for improving membership tracking and would be compatible for use with the current 'Total Control' software used for shop and café stock control. Signing in by members was continuing to prevent misuse of cards.</p> <p>The Park Manager updated Members on the progress with the paths. She indicated that the main cause of the problems was drainage, which was very labour intensive to fix, although some in-house work had been completed. Quotes from external contractors were awaited, which were expected to be in the region of £15,000 – 20,000. Members queried whether the Community Payback Team could be used for the work, as they had been bought a 'whacker plate' and had done other paths in Leigh Park. It was noted that this team were being used for other work in the Park. Councillor McIntosh indicated that he had not approached Amey since he had been awaiting the viability of</p>	Kerry Bailey

	<p>the JMC.</p> <p>Tim Speller explained that he was awaiting responses from questionnaires that had been sent to all those who had used the barbecues last year.</p> <p>73: Staunton Festival Members were asked whether they would be prepared to give some of their grant towards this; the majority declined pending the outcome regarding the JMC. It was indicated that Havant would not be in a position to put in their usual £5,000 of funding, more likely £500. It was felt that even if Portsmouth agreed to give £5,000 that the Festival was not really viable. It was noted that the target for funding for a one day festival was £10,000. The Park team would investigate other sources of funding; including sponsorship from local businesses No decision was taken.</p> <p>At this point in the meeting Councillor Finch asked to leave since he believed that his presence would not alter the outcome of the meeting.</p>	
<p>80.</p>	<p>FORECAST OUTTURN 2014/15</p>	
	<p>The Honorary Treasurer presented a report providing an update on the current budget monitoring position and details of the anticipated outturn forecast for 2014/15 (see item 5 in the Minute Book).</p> <p>The Honorary Treasurer answered questions raised by Members about the report.</p> <p>The Honorary Treasurer indicated that the Park was doing really well and highlighted the now predicted £29,000 surplus.</p> <p>She brought to Member's attention the 10% reduction in expenditure, due to lower employee costs from staff vacancies and restructuring and supplies and services. It was explained that premises costs was the only budget area that had risen due to council tax on the stable flat.</p> <p>Members were informed that income was 4.7% lower, but this was partly due to the reduction in the Hampshire County Council grant and a reduction in sales and other grants, but that it had been largely offset by increases in visitor numbers and memberships.</p> <p>Some concern was expressed about the stock in the shop.</p>	

	<p>Members were informed that the Visitor Centre Officer for Staunton and Queen Elizabeth Country Parks purchases for both parks and is guided in choice by the different clientele visiting the Parks. Tim Speller, Visitor Centre Manager for Staunton and Queen Elizabeth, explained that the Visitor Services team from Hampshire's parks met regularly to share best practice and offered to provide the minutes of these meetings if the Committee wished.</p> <p>Concern was also expressed about staffing levels and morale on the farm side. The Park Manager assured the Committee that there were plans to increase the number of farm rangers on duty.</p> <p>Members were made aware that as the JMC would still be in existence on 31 March 2015 a Small Bodies Annual Return for 2014/15 would require completion. The Honorary Treasurer asked whether the Committee would delegate authority to the Chairman to approve and sign this.</p> <p>RESOLVED:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That the Outturn Forecasts for 2014/15 contained in Appendices A and B were approved. • That the Chairman was given delegated authority to sign the Small Bodies return for 2014/15. 	
81.	PARK MANAGER'S REPORT	
	<p>The Committee received the report of the Park Manager on the performance and activities at the Park since the meeting on the 17 October 2014 (see Item 6 in the Minute Book). The Park Manager answered questions raised by Members about the report.</p> <p>She explained about the Beacon Partnership, bringing to Members' attention section 2.10 of her report, a brief summary from the Director on its activities. The Partnership provides 6,500 volunteer days from people with learning difficulties and disabilities. It was noted that the Partnership are now responsible for all aspects of plant sales and other garden at the Park.</p> <p>The Committee were informed that about 30 schools were signed up for the Education Membership Scheme and that a much larger education team had been formed following the restructuring. It was noted that the Highbury College animal course was being well promoted.</p>	

	<p>Members raised concerns about the large numbers of cattle and sheep that had been sold and that this was due to a lack of staff. They were reassured that some of the livestock were unsuitable for the Park and that there would still be lambing at Easter as an attraction. It was explained that the County has a Farm Business Adviser whose role is to advise each of the Country Parks on the most suitable breeds and numbers. Currently the farm tenancies were being reviewed. It was noted that the deer had to remain at the Park. It was explained that to exhibit the exotic species that Highbury College have brought to the Park would require a zoo licence. The viability of obtaining one was being Investigated.</p> <p>The Senior Farm Ranger expressed a wish that the farm could expand in to the American Grounds. The main focus of the Park was to provide animals that might be seen from 1819-1859, and should perhaps have more varieties of pheasants. Members thought that the greenhouses could be more utilised, with birds and more butterflies. It was explained to Members that the season for butterflies was so short because it would be unsuitable to deliver this activity in its current location, due to size and high temperature. They were informed that leaf cutter ants and fish that could go in with the water lily were possibilities that were being investigated.</p> <p>The Chairman, on behalf of the Committee thanked Adrian McKay, the Senior Farm Ranger for his seven years of service and wished him well in his new venture in New Zealand</p> <p>Concern was raised by Members about the café area – they praised the quality of the food and staff, but they wished that the café area could be made more welcoming and inspiring. The Park Manager agreed and said that this had also been highlighted in a recent visitor survey; but she stressed that the café was in an old building that had not been built for it. New interpretation panels were due to go up in part of the café which should improve the ambience.</p> <p>RESOLVED:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That the Committee approved the content of the report. 	
<p>82.</p>	<p>FUTURE GOVERNANCE REPORT</p> <p>The Head of Countryside, Jo Heath, presented a report on the proposed future governance of the Park.</p> <p>She explained that although the Executive Member for Culture, Recreation and Communities had approved the continuation of the Joint Management Committee for the Park at his Decision</p>	

Day on 16 September 2014 and that a new agreement had been in the process of being drawn up, East Hampshire District Council had withdrawn from any new agreement and nothing had been heard from Havant Borough Council. It would, therefore, have not been a partnership going forward. She hoped that a way could be found in which Members felt they would be able to continue to support the Park. Members were assured that the current reserves would be ring-fenced to the Park and their opinions were sought on how this money might be spent.

Members of the Committee were invited to make their comments about the Park's future. The majority expressed their disappointment and concern about the Park's future; they felt that it appeared that there was no compromise available on the outcome, and there could have been more consultation.

A number of Members expressed displeasure at section 4.2 in the report regarding the proposal that Members should 'embark on fund-raising' and were of the view that a 'Friends' group should be largely local residents.

The Member for Havant indicated that the grant funding from Havant Borough Council to the Park would have reduced to zero over the next few years.

Councillor McIntosh asked that it be recorded in the minutes how extremely disappointed he was that the JMC was to discontinue and with the management of the process which had led to it. He was not inclined to support any future group involved with the Park that would not have autonomy.

The Member for East Hants, who noted that she had been on the JMC since its inception, conveyed her apologies that the District Council's decision to withdraw from a new joint agreement had triggered this.

The Chairman reiterated that until two weeks before this meeting the JMC was to have continued under a new agreement, but Members needed to consider what, if anything, could take its place. The Committee came to an agreement to hold a further meeting to discuss ways forward for future involvement at Staunton by Members.

The Park Manager affirmed to Members that she felt hugely privileged at having had the support of the JMC

The Head of Countryside tried to appease Members' concerns, stressing that from the Countryside Services' point of view they wanted Staunton to flourish and would be investing in the Park to improve it. She acknowledged that the Countryside Service needed to build up trust with Members and keep them more fully informed in what was happening.

	<p>The Chairman gave her thanks to the participating authorities, their representatives and officers for all their work for Staunton during the time of the JMC.</p> <p>RESOLVED:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That the Joint Management Agreement will cease on 31 March 2015 and will not be continued. • That the Committee would identify and help prioritise which projects to invest the current reserve funds in. • That a final JMC meeting would be held to agree the future arrangement for existing Members to contribute towards the development of Staunton. 	
83.	<p>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</p> <p>There was no other business.</p>	
84.	<p>DATE OF NEXT MEETING</p> <p>The date of the next meeting was scheduled for Thursday 26 March 2015.</p>	