

AT A MEETING of the SIR GEORGE STAUNTON COUNTRY PARK JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE held at Sir George Staunton Country Park, Havant on 10 November 2010.

**PRESENT**

p Phil Halliwell  
p Gordon Gardner  
p Kerry Bailey

**Hampshire County Council**

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

**31. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Jeff Crate (Havant Borough Council).

**32. 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> |
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| <b>33.</b> | <b>MINUTES</b>  |                |
|            | The minutes of the meeting held on 29 July 2010 were approved and signed by the Chairman. |                |

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| <b>34.</b> | <b>DEPUTATIONS</b>   |                                       |
|            | There were no deputations at this meeting  |                                       |
| <b>35.</b> | <b>TREASURER'S REPORT</b>  |                                       |
|            | <p>The Joint Committee (JMC) received the report of the County Treasurer giving the revised budget for the park for the current year (2010/11) and a draft forward budget for next year (2011/12). (Item 5 in the Minute Book).</p> <p>The Treasurer summarised his report, explaining that, although income to date was slightly down on the previous year, expenditure was being tightly controlled and there would be a small surplus if there were no unforeseen circumstances and there was an increase in visitor numbers.</p> <p>In answer to Members' questions he explained some of the significant differences between the previous and current year's figures in the tables and appendices in the report, particularly relating to catering, conferences and events and grants. Members requested that staff costs be listed separately to make shop sales more realistic. It was agreed that the Treasurer would give a breakdown of staff expenditure in each part of the park at the next meeting.</p> <p>Members asked for clarification about the income and expenditure of the Education Service and whether it was viable. The Education Officer stated that £28,000 had been generated in the previous year from school visits and there were 34 member schools each paying £100 – this had now been raised to £200 - and that one of the two Education Officer posts was funded by Portsmouth Water. The Education Officer was asked to prepare a report giving a breakdown of the figures for the next meeting.</p> <p>Members raised concerns about the relationship between the forward budget and the need to increase visitor numbers significantly and whether this was realistic. Discussions focussed on the reduction in funding due to the expected partner contribution cuts and the need to increase visitor numbers and find other sources of income. The Park Manager stated that a good take up of the membership scheme was expected, which was already going well, current members had not been contacted yet. There were also plans to deal with the weather issues that had affected the park the previous winter to maintain and increase visitor numbers.</p> <p>The Treasurer pointed out that the deficit on reserves, which was currently underwritten by Hampshire County Council, would not be allowed to continue indefinitely and that the revised and forward budgets aimed to provide revenue to be able to reduce this. He stressed that his forward budget was a</p> | <p>Mike Walls</p> <p>Kerry Bailey</p> |

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|            | <p>cautious and realistic one.</p> <p>Members agreed that they would lobby their relevant authority to help ensure the future of the park.</p> <p>RESOLVED:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) That the revised budget for 2010/11 as shown in Appendices A and B be approved.</li> <li>(ii) That the partner contributions for 2011/12 as shown in Appendices A and C be approved.</li> <li>(iii) That the budget for 2011/12 as shown in Appendices A and C be approved.</li> <li>(iv) That members will lobby their relevant authority to help ensure the future of the Park.</li> </ul>  |                       |
| <b>36.</b> | <b>PARK MANAGERS REPORT</b>  |                       |
|            | <p>Councillor Buckley declared a personal interest as a member of the Water Festival Committee – this was not part of the report, but came to light during discussions.</p> <p>The Committee received the report of the Park Manager giving an update on recent work which had been undertaken and future projects. (Item 6 of the Minute Book)</p> <p>In addition to the report the Park Manager informed Members that the Park had a new logo. To increase visitor numbers the Park was being promoted through the ‘Best of Hampshire’s Countryside’ and ‘Hampshire’s Top Attractions’ voucher schemes and could also be found on Twitter, Facebook and Flickr. It was confirmed that the funding contract with Portsmouth Water had been secured for another three years and that local member schools would now be charged £200 per year.</p> <p>Members were made aware that the Higher Level Stewardship contract would not materialise until April 2011.</p> <p>In discussions about funding and events It was noted that the outlook for funding next year’s Water Festival was not good as Hampshire County Council was not providing a grant. It was noted that the Park needed a more prominent presence at the event. Following up comments on the use of mowers on the site, it was suggested that joint working with Havant Borough Council be explored.</p> <p>Two further reports were tabled by the Park Manager with the agreement of the chairman:</p> <p><b>Projects – Indoor Play Area, Wallaby Walk, American Grounds, and Walled Gardens.</b></p> <p>The Park Manager gave details of four projects that would be income-generating, bring in new attractions and would increase visitors considerably. These projects would be funded by the £162,000 currently held by Hampshire County Council. This</p> | <p>Gordon Gardner</p> |

money was ring-fenced and originally intended for use as matched funding for a failed lottery bid. The JMC had been advised to access these funds before they were withdrawn as a consequence of the current financial situation facing all local authorities.

The Indoor Play Area – this project would bring people into the Park regardless of the weather and it was hoped that this could be open by February 2011. Answering questions about the project the Park Manager confirmed that there would be areas for all age groups, that there would be heating in the building, and that there would be space for refreshments and seating area for adults with the larger play area option. Some concerns were raised that it may not be staffed at quiet times which would be a health and safety issue and further clarification was requested.

The Wallaby Walk – this new attraction would be launched in July 2011. The Park Manager envisaged that after two years there would be a change of animal or introduction of another new one to maintain visitor interest.

American Grounds Fencing – the Park Manager stressed that the fencing had to be replaced and in the long term the more expensive metal fencing would be more cost effective. The project would also increase field areas that could be utilised for other purposes.

Bow Wall Border in Walled Garden – this project has been started and the Park Manager was looking to recoup the costs of plants; the savings in time and costs on annual plants would be given to other garden projects.

The Park Manager and the Area Manager were requested to put together a business plan for these items as quickly as possible in order to secure the funding.

### **Parking**

The Park Manager presented a report on the introduction of a £2.00 per day car parking charge in the Park. Members acknowledged that the £80,000 cost of managing Leigh Park Gardens needed to be dealt with. Some disquiet was expressed by Members about the validity of the car parking figures that were provided and that the report had not been made available before the meeting. There was considerable discussion about the implications and the implementation of parking charges. It was confirmed that those making purchases in the shops would have their fee reimbursed, as would those visiting the Park, and that measures would be taken to try and ensure visitors did not park on the grass verges.

There was discussion on the issue of the enforcement of charges, but it was felt that most visitors would comply. The Area Manager was asked to check on the legal position

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|            | <p>regarding the giving of fixed penalty notices to non-payers. Dog walkers and anglers would be encouraged to take up the individual membership which would be inexpensive. It was also confirmed that the idea to implement charges came from Hampshire County Council, that it would bring the Park in line with other Parks in the county, and that the scheme would produce an income. It was noted that the reverse of the tickets would be used to advertise up-coming events. Members agreed that Leigh Park Gardens were not being marketed enough.</p> <p>The recommendation to implement car parking charges was put to the vote: In favour – 4, Against – 3.</p> <p>Members agreed that, in view of the negative press following the previous meeting's discussion on car parking charges, the press release should be good, strong and informative about the need for and the proposed use of this revenue. The Area Manager was requested to organise the press release.</p> <p>RESOLVED:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) That the Park Manager's Report be approved</li> <li>(ii) That the Joint Management Committee approves in principle that the Indoor Play Area, The Wallaby Walk and American Grounds Fencing should be taken forward as soon as possible, subject to obtaining the funding from Hampshire County Council.</li> <li>(iii) That the replanting of the Bow Wall Border in the Walled Garden be approved.</li> <li>(iv) That the Joint Management Committee approves the implementation of parking charges at the Park.</li> </ul> | Phil Halliwell |
| <b>37.</b> | <b>EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY UPDATE PRESENTATION</b>   |                |
|            | This item was deferred until the next meeting  | Kerry Bailey   |
| <b>38.</b> | <b>KEY OFFICERS GROUP MEETING</b>  |                |
|            | The meeting notes of the meeting held on the 7 October 2010 were received and deferred until the next meeting. (Item 8 in the Minute Book)   |                |
| <b>39.</b> | <b>STAKEHOLDERS MEETING</b>  |                |
|            | The meeting notes of the meeting held on 29 October 2010 were received and deferred until the next meeting. (Item 9 in the Minute Book)  |                |
| <b>40.</b> | <b>DATE OF NEXT MEETING</b>  |                |
|            | The next meeting will take place on 28 February 2011 at 2.00pm.  |                |

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| <b>41.</b> | <b>AOB</b>                                |  |
|            | This was deferred until the next meeting. |  |