

COBTREE MANOR ESTATE CHARITY COMMITTEE MEETING

Date: Wednesday 25 January 2023
Time: 5.00 p.m.
Venue: Town Hall, High Street, Maidstone

Membership:

Councillors Burton (Chairman), Cooper, Parfitt-Reid and S Webb

The Chairman will assume that all Members will read the reports before attending the meeting. Officers are asked to assume the same when introducing reports.

AGENDA

Page No.

- | | |
|---|---------|
| 1. Apologies for Absence | |
| 2. Urgent Items | |
| 3. Notification of Visiting Members | |
| 4. Disclosures by Members and Officers | |
| 5. Disclosures of Lobbying | |
| 6. To consider whether any items should be taken in private because of the possible disclosure of exempt information. | |
| 7. Minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2022 | 1 - 2 |
| 8. Presentation of Petitions (if any) | |
| 9. Any Questions on Notice from Local Residents | |
| 10. Any Questions on Notice from Members | |
| 11. Cobtree Manor Estate Financial Position Report | 3 - 13 |
| 12. Cobtree Estate Update | 14 - 18 |
| 13. Cobtree Estate Financial Management Arrangements | 19 - 24 |

Issued on Tuesday 17 January 2023

Continued Over/:

Alison Broom

Alison Broom, Chief Executive

INFORMATION FOR THE PUBLIC

In order to ask a question at this meeting, please call **01622 602899** or email committee@maidstone.gov.uk by 5 p.m. one clear working day before the meeting (i.e. by 5 p.m. on 23 January 2023). You will need to provide the full text in writing.

In order to make a statement in relation to an item on the agenda, please call **01622 602899** or email committee@maidstone.gov.uk by 4 p.m. one clear working day before the meeting (i.e. by 4 p.m. on 23 January 2023). You will need to tell us which agenda item you wish to speak on.

If you require this information in an alternative format please contact us, call **01622 602899** or email committee@maidstone.gov.uk.

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MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

COBTREE MANOR ESTATE CHARITY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 23 NOVEMBER 2022

Present:

Committee Members:	Councillor Burton (Chairman) and Councillors Cooper, Parfitt-Reid and S Webb
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18. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

19. **URGENT ITEMS**

There were no urgent items.

20. **NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS**

There were no Visiting Members.

21. **DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS**

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

22. **DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING**

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

23. **EXEMPT ITEMS**

RESOLVED: That the public be excluded from the meeting should Members wish to discuss the detail of the report relating to the Cobtree Golf Course.

24. **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 26 OCTOBER 2022**

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 26 October 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed.

25. **PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS**

There were no petitions.

26. **ANY QUESTIONS ON NOTICE FROM LOCAL RESIDENTS**

There were no questions from local residents.

27. **ANY QUESTIONS ON NOTICE FROM MEMBERS**

There were no questions from Members to the Chairman.

28. COBTREE GOLF COURSE

The Committee considered the report of the Leisure Manager concerning the future operation of the Cobtree Manor Park Golf Course and the best way of ensuring capital investment in the Golf Course and its facilities.

Members thanked the Officers for their work in preparing the report.

RESOLVED: That the recommendations set out in the report of the Leisure Manager be approved.

See Record of Decision:

[your-councillors \(maidstone.gov.uk\)](http://your-councillors (maidstone.gov.uk))

29. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 p.m. to 6.40 p.m.

Cobtree Manor Estate Committee

25 January 2023

Cobtree Manor Estate Financial Position

Final Decision-Maker	Cobtree Manor Estate Committee
Lead Head of Service	Director of Finance, Resources & Business Improvement – Mark Green
Lead Officer and Report Author	Paul Holland, Senior Finance Manager (Client)
Classification	Public
Wards affected	Boxley

Executive Summary

The report summarises the current financial position of the Estate covering the activities at the golf course, Kent Life, the Manor Park and the residential properties. Details for the proposed draft budgets for 2023/24 are also included.

Purpose of Report

To update the Committee on the current financial position and any other relevant matters that may impact the financial position of the Trust.

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. That the current financial position be noted.
2. That the proposed budgets for 2023/24 are agreed.
3. That the update on the audit of the 2021/22 accounts is noted.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Cobtree Manor Estate Committee	25 January 2023

Cobtree Manor Estate Financial Position

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	The operation of the Estate directly supports the objects of the Trust as set out when the Council became the Corporate Trustee	Director of Finance, Resources & Business Improvement
Cross Cutting Objectives	The operation of the Estate supports the Council's strategic objective to ensure there are good leisure and cultural attractions in the Borough.	Director of Finance, Resources & Business Improvement
Risk Management	There is a potential reputational risk if the facilities are operated poorly. This is addressed in the annual risk management report.	Leisure Manager
Financial	There is a financial risk to the Trust if the operations cost more than predicted or fail to generate sufficient income to cover the costs of running the estate.	Senior Finance Manager (Client)
Staffing	There are no additional implications arising from this report.	Leisure Manager
Legal	<p>Under the Council's Constitution the Committee as Corporate Trustee is responsible for all matters relating to the Charity with the exception of daily management.</p> <p>Law applicable to charities in England and Wales requires the trustee to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the Charity's financial activities during the year and of its financial position at the end of the year. This update report assists in meeting those requirements</p> <p>There are no further implications arising from this report.</p>	Contracts and Commissioning Team Leader, Mid Kent Legal Services
Information Governance	The recommendations do not impact personal information (as defined in UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018) the Council processes.	Senior Information Governance Officer

Equalities	The recommendations do not propose a change in service therefore will not require an equalities impact assessment	Equalities and Communities Officer
Public Health	There are no additional implications arising from this report.	Public Health Officer
Crime and Disorder	There are no additional implications arising from this report.	Director of Finance, Resources & Business Improvement
Procurement	There are no additional implications arising from this report.	Director of Finance, Resources & Business Improvement
Biodiversity & Climate Change	The implications of this report on biodiversity and climate change have been considered and there are no implications on biodiversity and climate change. A pending decarbonisation study recommendations aims to support areas of the Cobtree Manor Estate to reduce costs from energy consumption, insulate, find low carbon heating solutions, and seek renewable energy options which will save costs in the longer term.	Biodiversity and Climate Change Manager

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 This is a regular update report on the financial position of the Estate, which enables the Committee to see how the various areas of activity are performing. Covid-19 and uncertainty around future contracts present a significant risk to the finances and operations of the estate, emphasising the need for robust management and monitoring of the budget.

3. CURRENT FINANCIAL POSITION

- 3.1 The table below summarises the financial position of the Estate as at 30th November 2022. **Appendix 1** provides a more detailed breakdown of the figures.

	Budget for Year 2022/23	Profiled Budget as at 31st August 2022	Actuals as at 31st August 2022	Variance: Underspend (-) Overspend (+)
Golf Course				
Expenditure	£48,860	£32,573	£25,385	-£7,188
Income	-£139,350	-£69,715	-£64,946	£4,769
Net Expenditure (+)/Income (-)	-£90,490	-£37,142	-£39,561	-£2,419
Manor Park				
Expenditure	£259,260	£169,213	£163,293	-£5,920
Income	-£189,080	-£104,491	-£104,521	-£30
Net Expenditure (+)/Income (-)	£70,180	£64,722	£58,772	-£5,950
Kent Life				
Expenditure	£29,890	£19,927	£14,847	-£5,080
Income	-£70,730	-£35,365	-£35,867	-£502
Net Expenditure (+)/Income (-)	-£40,840	-£15,438	-£21,020	-£5,582
Residential Properties				
Expenditure	£16,180	£10,787	£1,903	-£8,884
Income	-£30,000	-£20,000	-£17,340	£2,660
Net Expenditure (+)/Income (-)	-£13,820	-£9,213	-£15,437	-£6,224
Operational Total	-£74,970	£2,929	-£17,246	-£20,175
Investment Income	-£40,000	-£26,667	-£26,293	£374
Car Park Repayment	£69,650	£69,650	£69,647	-£3
Total for the Year	-£45,320	£45,912	£26,108	-£19,804
Net Expenditure (+)/Income (-)				

3.1.1 Overall Summary Position:

SUMMARY TOTALS

3.2 The current position shows a surplus of £19,804 for the year to date. There are no significant issues to report, but the following points should be noted:

- There has been spend of £14,180 for consultancy work relating to the procurement of the new golf course contract.
- Car parking income is slightly down against the budgeted figure, but this is partially offset by additional income from the café and overall, the budgets for the Manor Park are slightly underspent.
- As reported previously Mytime will be invoiced for £80,000 for rental payments due, with an initial £21,736 for performance based on trading in the early part of the financial year. Given the positive trading position so far this year it is hoped that another significant performance-based sum can be realised.

4. BUDGETS 2023/24

4.1 The proposed budgets for 2023/24 are shown at **Appendix 2**. To ensure some consistency the general approach to setting the budgets was as follows:

- Running costs have been increased by inflation (5%) where applicable.
- Contract income has been increased in line with the agreed schedules.

- Insurance costs have been updated in line with estimated premium increases, which are likely to be 15% due to an increase in premiums.
 - The recharges from Maidstone Borough Council have been updated following a review of the services provided and a revised schedule is shown at **Appendix 3**.
- 4.2 In overall terms the projected surplus from operational activities for 2023/24 is budgeted to be £35,210 compared to the budgeted surplus of £74,970 for 2022/23. After allowing for investment income and the repayment of the car park construction costs the overall net surplus will be £5,560.
- 4.3 The main reason for the reduction in the surplus is the uncertainty around what the value of the new golf course contract will be. The budgeted figure for 2022/23 is £139,110, but the budget allowed for in 2023/24 is shown as £100,000, which is used to show a break-even position for the estate.
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5. AUDIT OF THE 2021/22 COBTREE ESTATE ACCOUNTS

- 5.1 It was the intention to bring the audited accounts for 2021/22 to this meeting for approval. However, there is an outstanding issue with regards to the Balance Sheet that is still being investigated. This is a technical point that has no impact on the resources of the Estate.
- 5.2 Should this issue be resolved the report to approve the accounts will be brought as an urgent item (subject to the approval of the Chairman). The deadline for submission of the audited accounts is 31st January 2023, and should the issue not be resolved in time this deadline may be missed. Whilst this would clearly be very disappointing there would be no financial penalty for this.
- 5.3 If the deadline is missed the intention will be to bring the audited accounts to the next meeting of the Committee in April for approval.
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6. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 6.1 Section 3 - for noting only.
- 6.2 Section 4 - the Committee could ask for adjustments to be made to the draft budgets.
- 6.3 Section 5 – for noting only.
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7. PREFERRED OPTIONS AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 Section 3 - for noting only.

7.2 Section 4 – that the budget is approved and formally adopted so that it is in place for 1st April 2023.

7.3 Section 5 – for noting only.

8. **NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION**

8.1 Officers will continue to monitor the financial position and take appropriate action where necessary.

9. **REPORT APPENDICES**

- Appendix 1: Financial Position
- Appendix 2: Draft Budget 2023/24
- Appendix 3: Draft Maidstone BC Staff Recharges 2023/24

10. **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None.

Cobtree Manor Estate	Approved Budget 2022/23	Profiled Budget as at 30th November 2022	Actual as at 30th November 2022	Variance at end of November 2022
GOLF COURSE				
Repairs & Maintenance	£5,210	£3,473	£1,139	£2,334
Premises Insurance	£2,570	£1,713	£1,713	£0
Professional Services	£0	£0	£14,180	-£14,180
General Expenses - VAT	£2,550	£1,700	£0	£1,700
Controlled Running Costs	£10,330	£6,887	£17,032	-£10,145
Contract Income	-£139,110	-£69,555	-£64,946	-£4,609
Rent Income	-£240	-£160	£0	-£160
Controlled Income	-£139,350	-£69,715	-£64,946	-£4,769
MBC Staff Recharges	£12,530	£8,353	£8,353	£0
Rechargeable Costs	£12,530	£8,353	£8,353	£0
Cobtree Golf Course	-£116,490	-£54,475	-£39,561	-£14,914
MBC 2/9ths share	£26,000	£17,333	£0	£17,333
CMET Total	-£90,490	-£37,142	-£39,561	£2,419

MANOR PARK				
Overtime	£4,000	£2,667	£0	£2,667
Employee Costs	£4,000	£2,667	£0	£2,667
Hard Landscaping	£15,300	£10,200	£8,669	£1,531
Gas	£2,040	£1,360	£1,360	£0
Electricity	£12,040	£8,027	£8,027	-£0
Water Metered	£1,220	£813	£1,236	-£423
Sewerage & Env Services	£1,120	£747	£0	£747
Trade Refuse Collection (Internal)	£8,160	£5,440	£6,732	-£1,292
Premises Insurance	£2,320	£1,547	£1,547	-£0
Equipment Purchase	£0	£0	£0	£0
Equipment Hire	£540	£360	£0	£360
Vehicle Leasing & Running Costs	£2,600	£1,733	£0	£1,733
Vehicle Insurance	£810	£540	£540	£0
Cash Collection	£2,470	£1,647	£0	£1,647
Protective Clothes	£540	£360	£0	£360
Photocopying	£540	£360	£0	£360
General Expenses	£4,080	£2,720	£2,230	£490
General Expenses - VAT	£6,120	£4,080	£3,520	£560
Audit Fee	£5,440	£0	£0	£0
Professional Services Security	£500	£333	£2,930	-£2,597
Professional Services Consultancy	£3,120	£2,080	£0	£2,080
Direct Telephones	£210	£140	£0	£140
Mobile Telephones	£110	£73	£100	-£27
General Insurances	£150	£100	£0	£100
External Print & Graphics	£170	£113	£0	£113
Controlled Running Costs	£69,600	£42,773	£36,891	£5,882
Fees & Charges - Car Parking	-£110,000	-£81,825	-£71,493	-£10,332
Other Income - Cobtree Charity Trust Ltd	-£40,000	£0	£0	£0
Other Income	-£5,000	£0	-£3,835	£3,835
Licences	-£80	£0	£0	£0
Rent Income (Café)	-£34,000	-£22,667	-£29,193	£6,526
Controlled Income	-£189,080	-£104,491	-£104,521	£30
MBC Staff Recharges	£53,060	£35,373	£35,373	£0
MBC Parks Management	£132,600	£88,400	£91,029	-£2,629
Rechargeable Costs	£185,660	£123,773	£126,402	-£2,629
Cobtree Manor Park	£70,180	£64,722	£58,772	£5,950

Cobtree Manor Estate	Approved Budget 2022/23	Profiled Budget as at 30th November 2022	Actual as at 30th November 2022	Variance at end of November 2022
KENT LIFE				
Repairs & Maintenance of Premises	£10,930	£7,287	£3,227	£4,060
Premises Insurance	£8,250	£5,500	£5,500	£0
Equipment Purchase	£0	£0	£0	£0
General Expenses - VAT	£1,530	£1,020	£0	£1,020
Controlled Running Costs	£20,710	£13,807	£8,727	£5,080
Contract Income	-£70,730	-£35,365	-£35,867	£502
Controlled Income	-£70,730	-£35,365	-£35,867	£502
MBC Staff Recharges	£9,180	£6,120	£6,120	£0
Rechargeable Costs	£9,180	£6,120	£6,120	£0
Kent Life	-£40,840	-£15,438	-£21,020	£5,582
RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES				
Repairs & Maintenance	£13,270	£8,847	-£37	£8,884
Electricity	£0	£0	£0	£0
Non-Domestic Rates	£0	£0	£0	£0
Equipment Purchase	£0	£0	£0	£0
Professional Services	£0	£0	£0	£0
Premises Insurance	£290	£193	£193	£0
Controlled Running Costs	£13,560	£9,040	£156	£8,884
Rent Income	-£30,000	-£20,000	-£17,340	-£2,660
Controlled Income	-£30,000	-£20,000	-£17,340	-£2,660
MBC Staff Recharges	£2,620	£1,747	£1,747	-£0
Rechargeable Costs	£2,620	£1,747	£1,747	-£0
Residential Properties	-£13,820	-£9,213	-£15,437	£6,224
OVERALL TOTALS	-£74,970	£2,929	-£17,246	£20,175
Investment Income	-£40,000	-£26,667	-£26,293	-£374
Net (surplus)/deficit for operational & investment activities	-£114,970	-£23,738	-£43,539	£19,801
Repayment of car park construction costs	£69,650	£69,650	£69,647	£3
Net (surplus)/deficit after repayment	-£45,320	£45,912	£26,108	£19,804

Cobtree Manor Estate	Approved Budget 2022/23	Revised Budget 2022/23	Draft Budget 2023/24
GOLF COURSE			
Repairs & Maintenance	£5,210	£5,210	£5,470
Premises Insurance	£2,570	£2,570	£2,960
Professional Services	£0	£0	£0
General Expenses - VAT	£2,550	£2,550	£2,680
Controlled Running Costs	£10,330	£10,330	£11,110
Contract Income	-£139,110	-£139,110	-£100,000
Rent Income	-£240	-£240	-£240
Controlled Income	-£139,350	-£139,350	-£100,240
MBC Staff Recharges	£12,530	£12,530	£12,530
Rechargeable Costs	£12,530	£12,530	£12,530
Cobtree Golf Course	-£116,490	-£116,490	-£76,600
MBC 2/9ths share	£26,000	£26,000	£17,020
CMET Total	-£90,490	-£90,490	-£59,580

MANOR PARK			
Overtime	£4,000	£4,000	£4,000
Employee Costs	£4,000	£4,000	£4,000
Hard Landscaping	£15,300	£15,300	£16,070
Gas	£2,040	£2,040	£0
Electricity	£12,040	£12,040	£1,000
Water Metered	£1,220	£1,220	£1,280
Sewerage & Env Services	£1,120	£1,120	£1,180
Trade Refuse Collection (Internal)	£8,160	£8,160	£8,570
Cleaning - Toilets	£0	£0	£12,000
Premises Insurance	£2,320	£2,320	£2,670
Equipment Purchase	£0	£0	£0
Equipment Hire	£540	£540	£570
Vehicle Leasing & Running Costs	£2,600	£2,600	£2,730
Vehicle Insurance	£810	£810	£930
Cash Collection	£2,470	£2,470	£2,590
Protective Clothes	£540	£540	£570
Photocopying	£540	£540	£570
General Expenses	£4,080	£4,080	£4,280
General Expenses - VAT	£6,120	£6,120	£6,430
Audit Fee	£5,440	£5,440	£5,710
Professional Services Security	£500	£500	£530
Professional Services Consultancy	£3,120	£3,120	£3,280
Direct Telephones	£210	£210	£220
Mobile Telephones	£110	£110	£120
General Insurances	£150	£150	£170
External Print & Graphics	£170	£170	£180
Controlled Running Costs	£69,600	£69,600	£71,650
Fees & Charges - Car Parking	-£110,000	-£110,000	-£110,000
Other Income - Cobtree Charity Trust Ltd	-£40,000	-£40,000	-£40,000
Other Income	-£5,000	-£5,000	-£5,000
Licences	-£80	-£80	-£80
Rent Income (Café)	-£34,000	-£34,000	-£34,000
Controlled Income	-£189,080	-£189,080	-£189,080
MBC Staff Recharges	£53,060	£53,060	£53,060
MBC Parks Management	£132,600	£132,600	£139,230
Rechargeable Costs	£185,660	£185,660	£192,290
Cobtree Manor Park	£70,180	£70,180	£78,860

Cobtree Manor Estate	Approved Budget 2022/23	Revised Budget 2022/23	Draft Budget 2023/24
KENT LIFE			
Repairs & Maintenance of Premises	£10,930	£10,930	£11,480
Premises Insurance	£8,250	£8,250	£9,490
Equipment Purchase	£0	£0	£0
General Expenses - VAT	£1,530	£1,530	£1,610
Controlled Running Costs	£20,710	£20,710	£22,580
Contract Income	-£70,730	-£70,730	-£73,130
Controlled Income	-£70,730	-£70,730	-£73,130
MBC Staff Recharges	£9,180	£9,180	£9,180
Rechargeable Costs	£9,180	£9,180	£9,180
Kent Life	-£40,840	-£40,840	-£41,370
RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES			
Repairs & Maintenance	£13,270	£13,270	£13,930
Electricity	£0	£0	£0
Non-Domestic Rates	£0	£0	£0
Equipment Purchase	£0	£0	£0
Professional Services	£0	£0	£0
Premises Insurance	£290	£290	£330
Controlled Running Costs	£13,560	£13,560	£14,260
Rent Income	-£30,000	-£30,000	-£30,000
Controlled Income	-£30,000	-£30,000	-£30,000
MBC Staff Recharges	£2,620	£2,620	£2,620
Rechargeable Costs	£2,620	£2,620	£2,620
Residential Properties	-£13,820	-£13,820	-£13,120
TOTALS - OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES	-£74,970	-£74,970	-£35,210
Investment Income	-£40,000	-£40,000	-£40,000
Net (surplus)/deficit for operational & investment activities	-£114,970	-£114,970	-£75,210
Repayment of car park construction costs	£69,650	£69,650	£69,650
Net (surplus)/deficit after repayment	-£45,320	-£45,320	-£5,560

APPENDIX 3

13

Service	Description of Service Provided	Hourly Rate	Total Hours p.a.	Total Days p.a.
Communications	Provision of communications service as and when required	£33	11.5	1.6
Democratic Services	Agenda management and attendance at Committee meetings	£32	56.0	7.6
Director of Regeneration & Place	This post no longer has any responsibility for Cobtree	£0	0.0	0.0
Finance	Cobtree Finance Officer - Monthly accounts, budgets and year-end accounts	£54	92.5	12.5
	Other financial services - accounts payable/receivable, VAT and banking	Activity based costing	N/A	N/A
Director of Finance, Resources & Business Improvement	Management services - Cobtree included in the area of responsibility	£110	44.4	6.0
Head of Regeneration & Economic Development	This post no longer exists	£0	0.0	0.0
Human Resources	Provision of HR services including payroll and learning & development	Per Capita charge	N/A	N/A
ICT	Provision of ICT services including Kent Public Sector Network Service charge	Notional charge	N/A	N/A
Legal Services	Provision of legal services	Estimate of expenditure based on previous activity	N/A	N/A
Parking Services	Enforcement services	Contract cost	N/A	N/A
	Software maintenance - parking services system	Contract cost	N/A	N/A
	Operational administration and finance	£26	144.0	19.5
Parks & Leisure	Management of Cobtree Manor Park and strategic direction. Management of contracts for the golf course and Kent Life attraction	£42	495.0	66.9
Procurement	Monitoring and contractual/statutory compliance of the service providers at Kent Life, the golf course and the café	£33	495.0	66.9
Property Services	Property management and maintenance services	£47	120.0	16.2

22/23 Charge p.a.	Draft Charge 23/24 n.a.
£390	£440
£1,790	£1,720
£1,150	£0
£4,950	£5,280
£3,520	£3,620
£0	£4,890
£1,540	£0
£1,600	£1,680
£860	£910
£4,080	£4,290
£1,250	£1,290
£2,520	£2,590
£3,810	£4,200
£27,720	£22,200
£16,520	£17,530
£5,700	£5,970

Allocation across service areas			
Golf Course	Manor Park	Kent Life	Residential Properties
£22	£356	£40	£22
£86	£1,393	£155	£86
£0	£0	£0	£0
£264	£4,277	£475	£264
£181	£2,932	£326	£181
£245	£3,961	£440	£245
£0	£0	£0	£0
£84	£1,361	£151	£84
£46	£737	£82	£46
£215	£3,475	£386	£215
£65	£1,045	£116	£65
£130	£2,098	£233	£130
£210	£3,402	£378	£210
£1,110	£17,982	£1,998	£1,110
£877	£14,199	£1,578	£877
£299	£4,836	£537	£299

Total Charge: £77,400 £76,610

£3,831 £62,055 £6,894 £3,831

£76,610

Agenda Item 12

COBTREE MANOR ESTATE CHARITY COMMITTEE

25 January 2023

Cobtree Estate Update

Timetable	
Meeting	Date
Cobtree Manor Estate Charity Committee	25 January 2023

Will this be a Key Decision?	No
Urgency	Not Applicable
Final Decision-Maker	Cobtree Manor Estate Charity Committee
Lead Head of Service	Katie Exon, Head of Property and Leisure
Lead Officer and Report Author	Mike Evans, Leisure Manager
Classification	Public
Wards affected	Boxley

Executive Summary

An update report on the Cobtree Estate and its constituent venues and facilities.

Purpose of Report

Noting.

This report makes the following recommendation to the Cobtree Manor Estate Charity Committee:

1. That the contents of the report are noted.

Cobtree Estate update

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	The work of the charity links directly to its charitable objectives and the Strategic Plan objectives for the council.	Leisure Manager
Cross Cutting Objectives	The work of the charity links directly to its charitable objectives and the cross-cutting objectives of the council.	Leisure Manager
Risk Management	There are no risk management implications in this report.	Leisure Manager
Financial	Financial implications from this update are managed day-to-day in line with council procedures and policies.	Senior Finance Manager (Client)
Staffing	Staffing implications are managed day-to-day in line with council procedures and policies.	Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement
Legal	There are no specific legal implications at present as this report is presented for noting only.	Team Leader, Contracts and Commissioning MKLS
Information Governance	The recommendations do not impact personal information (as defined in UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018) the Council Processes.	Information Governance Team
Equalities	The report is for noting and contains no recommendations that would propose a change in service, therefore no equalities impact assessment will be required.	Equalities & Communities Officer
Public Health	The Cobtree Estate works towards improving the health of our community and residents through its day-to-day operations.	Leisure Manager
Crime and Disorder	Crime and disorder implications are managed day-to-day in line with council procedures and policies	Leisure Manager

Procurement	Procurement implications are managed day-to-day in line with council procedures and policies.	Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement
Biodiversity and Climate Change	There are no direct implications on biodiversity and climate change within this report.	Biodiversity and Climate Change Manager

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In the last six months Cobtree Estate venues have demonstrated positive customer performance against their most recent pre-pandemic levels (2019).

Cobtree Manor Park

- 2.2 Based on car park usage data in Quarter 3 there have been 8,028 vehicle visits to the Manor Park. This is around 35% lower than for the same period last year. The snowy and icy weather in December is partly responsible for this. Parking Services are assisting with increased patrols.
- 2.3 The year-to-date vehicle visitor figure (2022) of 39,000 is 27% down against the same period in 2021, however 2021 had significantly increased visitor numbers owing to the increase in park usage caused by pandemic restrictions. The snowy and icy weather in December 2022 is also responsible for the reduced parking numbers, with the park closed for 10 days. Parking Services are assisting with increased officer patrols of the park to ensure that every visitor is paying to park.
- 2.4 Following a successful event last year, the GLOW light festival returned to the park in December. In total 22,344 people attended the 24-day festival, despite the event having to be closed for 3 days due to bad weather.
- 2.5 Work is still required to the llama house in the park. Quotes from contractors have been slow and at the time of writing still require further work to make sure that all are quoting for the same level and means of repair. This item will remain on the forward plan until the repairs have been completed.

Cobtree Golf Course

- 2.6 The Golf Course continues to attract visitors and receives consistent positive feedback on social media from those who play there. Negative comments are in the minority and most often revolve around uncontrollable weather impacts on the course condition.
- 2.7 The number of rounds played during Quarter 3 (October to December) is typically much less than for Quarters 1 or 2. A total of 5,100 rounds were

played in the quarter, which mirrors the number played at the same time last year and is 8% higher than both 2019 and 2020, despite being closed for around 10 days in December because of the snowy weather.

- 2.8 The venue has been used for parties and events as well as by several regular users who hold business meetings there.
- 2.9 Course improvements continue with a programme of tree and drainage works, as well as ditch renovations. The course conditions survey shows consistent improvement month-on-month. In a recent extension of some previous antisocial behaviour affecting the course, one of the greens close to the public bridleway was damaged by a motorcycle although effective repairs have been made.
- 2.10 The decision to readvertise the golf course lease and seek a new lease arrangement has now been made public with a press release sent to local media. The lettings agent has visited the site and planned the timeline for the applications process. The lettings particulars are due for release at the end of January.

Kent Life

- 2.11 Overall admission numbers for 2022 were ahead of target going into quarter 4. At the time of writing the latest visitor numbers are not available from the operator to be included in this update. Qualitative reports of the fireworks and Christmas events held in November and December are positive.
- 2.12 The site is currently in its winter maintenance programme, with upgrades to the farmyard enclosures and customer areas high priority before the spring season commences

Cobtree Café

- 2.13 Arrangements for the end of the lease and the letting of a new lease are progressing in line with the obligations in the contract. A report on the new arrangements will be brought to a future meeting for committee approval.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 The Executive can note the information in this report.
- 3.2 The Executive can choose not to note the information in this report, however previous iterations of this committee requested regular updates on the operations of the Estate so knock-on impacts and decisions can be foreknown.

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 It is recommended that the information in this report is noted.

5. RISK

- 5.1 This report is presented for information only and has no risk management implications.

6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 6.1 No consultation has taken place since the last update report.

7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 7.1 Any comments from the Committee will be passed on to the relevant party.

8. REPORT APPENDICES

- None

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- None

COBTREE MANOR ESTATE CHARITY COMMITTEE

25 January 2023

Cobtree Estate Financial Management Arrangements

Timetable	
Meeting	Date
Cobtree Manor Estate Charity Committee	25 January 2023

Will this be a Key Decision?	No
Urgency	Not Applicable
Final Decision-Maker	Cobtree Manor Estate Charity Committee
Lead Head of Service	Katie Exon, Head of Property and Leisure
Lead Officer and Report Author	Mike Evans, Leisure Manager
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

Executive Summary

Decisions are required to review the annual estate management processes for 2023/24, to reduce the requirement for individual decisions throughout the year while retaining good governance over the estate.

Purpose of Report

Decision

This report makes the following recommendations to the Cobtree Manor Estate Charity Committee:

1. That the Cobtree estate financial procedures are changed from their current ones and aligned with the council's financial procedure rules, as set out in the Constitution, and procurement guides.
2. That the specific financial limits previously agreed by CMEC no longer apply, but it be noted that all expenditure must be in accordance with agreed budgets.

Cobtree Estate Financial Management Arrangements

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	The work of the charity links directly to its charitable objectives and the Strategic Plan objectives for the council.	Leisure Manager
Cross Cutting Objectives	The work of the charity links directly to its charitable objectives and the cross-cutting objectives of the council.	Leisure Manager
Risk Management	Risk implications are outlined in section 5.	Leisure Manager
Financial	Accepting the recommendations will allow the estate to be managed more expediently and will result in fewer delays to works in the park. The Committee will continue to receive regular financial performance updates and will be able to assess the impact of this decision going forward.	Paul Holland, Senior Finance Manager (Client)
Staffing	We will deliver the recommendations with our current staffing.	Director of Finance and Business Improvement
Legal	Under the Council's Constitution the Committee as Corporate Trustee is responsible for all matters relating to the Charity with the exception of daily management which will be undertaken by the Director of Finance and Business Improvement. Accepting this recommendation will align the committee's procedures more closely to the Council's constitution.	Senior Legal Adviser – Corporate Governance
Information Governance	The recommendations do not impact personal information (as defined in UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018) the Council Processes.	Information Governance Team
Equalities	The recommendations will not result in a change of service and therefore will not require an equalities impact assessment.	Equalities and Communities Officer

Public Health	We recognise that the recommendations will have a positive impact on population health or that of individuals.	Leisure Manager
Crime and Disorder	Crime and disorder considerations will be managed more efficiently as per parks and open spaces policies and procedures.	Leisure Manager
Procurement	On accepting the recommendations, procurement and purchasing exercises will continue to be followed. Those exercises will be completed in line with council financial procedures, as per the recommendation.	Director of Finance and Business Improvement
Biodiversity and Climate Change	There are no direct implications on biodiversity and climate change as a result of accepting this recommendation.	Biodiversity and Climate Change Manager

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The council, through Cobtree Manor Estate Charity Committee, is the corporate trustee of the charity known as Cobtree Manor Estate. Cobtree Manor Estate Charity (CMEC) Committee operates Cobtree in line with council procedures and policies in all areas including employment, procurement, health and safety, and legal.
- 2.2 The Cobtree budgets are set annually and agreed by CMEC. Cobtree Manor Park finances are managed by the Senior Finance Manager and day-to-day spending is overseen by the Leisure Manager. The Cobtree Park Manager, the Leisure Manager and the Senior Finance Manager meet regularly to monitor and discuss the Cobtree Manor Park budgets.
- 2.3 CMEC follows the majority of council financial procedures, although there is one key difference which is having an impact on the day-to-day operations of the park and on the ability of the park team to deliver the best possible service to customers.
- 2.4 The officer approval limit for Cobtree spending is set at £5,000 without any committee involvement. Purchases costing between £5,001 and £10,000, require an email report and authorisation request to the Chair and Vice-Chair. All purchases over £10,000 require a CMEC committee report and decision and generate other consequences described in paragraph 2.11. These authorisation limits apply to all officers regardless of seniority within the council.
- 2.5 In the terms of reference for CMEC, this committee has responsibility for all matters of the charity, including how its financial procedures and authorisations are managed. Similar decisions have been made by this committee in the past.

- 2.6 The minutes from the meeting of 20 November 2009 show that the CMEC committee was asked to authorise spending of £300 for the installation of a baby change unit and £15 for the purchase of some bait to monitor wildlife in the park. The 9 November 2011 committee meeting included a resolution "that officers be given delegated authority in consultation with the Chairman or the Leader of the Council to authorise unbudgeted expenditure up to the value of £3,000 in emergency situations subject to any such expenditure being reported to the next meeting of the Committee." These instances show that this committee has previously altered its financial procedures and spend limits to better suit the needs of the time.
- 2.7 The single purchase amount was increased to £5,000 at some point between 2011 and 2020. In March 2020 the ability to agree spend between £5,001 and £10,000 via email consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair was added.

The needs of today

- 2.8 Inflation means that over time these spend limits reduce in real terms. In the last 12 months this has been brought into sharper focus. More importantly, the disruptions to supply chains and the labour market make it imperative to get works and supplies ordered and booked in the quickest time possible.
- 2.9 Lead in times for play equipment start at 12 weeks and are often longer. Items of play equipment will often cost more than the £10,000 limit. Requiring a committee decision for such purchases delays what is a vital repair to the play area, prolongs the impact to the visitor experience, and can result in paying a higher price with material prices changing month to month in some instances.
- 2.10 Repairs to infrastructure and properties across the estate are subject to the same constraints and the same risks when not being able to accept a third-party quote in a timely manner. If repairs of this nature are not completed promptly they can lead to issues worsening and final costs increasing.
- 2.11 Bringing a report to the CMEC committee to agree such expenditure requires including quotations from contractors. Because these need to be included as exempt information, the report needs to be on the Forward Plan for a clear 28 days. If a repair or issue occurs too close to the next CMEC meeting the calendar does not give a clear 28 days and additional delays occur or new meetings need to be planned to approve straight forward works and purchases. These additional delays bring with them the risks of prices increasing, risks of materials not being available and risks to the reputation of Cobtree.
- 2.12 In most cases the requests to CMEC are to approve spending that has already been allocated and approved in the annual budget. The quarterly reporting of the budget position provides governance oversight of forthcoming spending and budgetary management without the need to individually approve all purchases over £5,000.

- 2.13 Cobtree Manor Park is managed by the council's Parks and Open Spaces team on behalf of CMEC, with delivery made against the Cobtree Manor Park Management Plan. Annual budgets for the Cobtree estate are structured to achieve the completion of this plan and monitored as per paragraph 2.2.
- 2.14 The council purchasing policies and procedures that are used by the Parks and Open Spaces department for the management of borough council parks provide a sufficient balance between operational agility and governance oversight for the management of parks and could be used with similar effect for the management of the Cobtree estate. Taking the example of play equipment again, a damaged slide in a council-owned park can be assessed and ordered the same day, with authorisation given by the Parks and Open Spaces manager. The same slide in Cobtree Manor Park, which will typically cost more than £10,000 with delivery and installation, requires the issue to be added to the Forward Plan, and a report to be taken to a meeting before the repair can be authorised.
- 2.15 Officers have a good track record of using best value to repair and replace play equipment in council parks using the authorities given to them. The same authority applied to Cobtree Manor Park will ensure the same level of best value and service given to Cobtree visitors too.
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3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 **Retain the current financial arrangements specific to CMEC**
Under the current arrangements CMEC is burdened with report writing and publication for straight forward purchases of goods and supplies. Retaining the current arrangements will retain the bureaucratic approach to purchases, but more importantly it will retain a process that leads to delays, dissatisfaction in service and increased costs from suppliers because of a lack of being able to act decisively. **This option is not recommended.**
- 3.2 **Align the current financial arrangements with those of the council**
The council's purchasing arrangements are used by the Parks and Open Spaces team in the management of all other council parks in the borough. Managers and officers use their diligence and keep a keen eye on value for money to ensure that the parks are as good as they can be. Through this option the CMEC Committee will set the annual Cobtree budgets and enable officers to use identical spend limits to those used with council budgets to achieve efficient, expeditious and effective management of Cobtree Manor Park. **This is the recommended option.**
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4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 Aligning the Cobtree management and financial arrangements with those of the council is the preferred option, for the reasons described in paragraphs 2.8 to 2.15.

5. RISK

- 5.1 The risks associated with this proposal have been considered in line with the Council's Risk Management Framework and are considered to be low. The council's financial arrangements are already in place for council-run parks and those assets are managed to give best value to the council and good service to park visitors.
- 5.2 We are satisfied that incorporating the same financial arrangements at Cobtree Manor Park have a low risk. The operational agility that greater authorisation gives to the park management team could result in financial savings to Cobtree and improved customer satisfaction.

6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 6.1 No consultation has taken place on this matter.

7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 7.1 Following a decision on these recommendations, the new financial arrangements described in the recommendations will be applied from 1 April 2023 onwards.

8. REPORT APPENDICES

- None

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- None