

COBTREE MANOR ESTATE CHARITY COMMITTEE MEETING

Date: Wednesday 24 July 2024
Time: 5.30 pm
Venue: Town Hall, High Street, Maidstone

Membership:

Councillors Cox, Harwood, Jeffery and Wales

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.

<u>AGENDA</u>	<u>Page No.</u>
1. Apologies for Absence	
2. Election of Chairman	
3. Election of Vice-Chairman	
4. Urgent Items	
5. Notification of Visiting Members	
6. Disclosures by Members and Officers	
7. Disclosures of Lobbying	
8. To consider whether any items should be taken in private because of the possible disclosure of exempt information.	
9. Minutes of the meeting held on 27 March 2024	1 - 4
10. Presentation of Petitions (if any)	
11. Question and Answer Session for Member of the Public (if any)	
12. Questions from Members to the Chairman (if any)	
13. Cobtree Manor Estate Financial Position	5 - 13
14. Cobtree Estate Update	14 - 18

Issued on Tuesday 16 July 2024

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 Monday 22 July 2024). You will need to provide the full text in writing.

If your question is accepted, you will be provided with instructions as to how you can access the meeting.

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 Monday 22 July 2024). 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 WEDNESDAY 27 MARCH 2024

Attendees:

Committee Members:	Councillors David Burton (Chairman), Cooper, Parfitt-Reid and Perry
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42. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies.

43. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

44. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

There were no Visiting Members.

45. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

46. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

47. EXEMPT ITEMS

RESOLVED: That all items be taken in public, unless any Member of the Committee wishes to discuss Item 14 – Exempt Appendix to Item 12 – Cobtree Estate Update or Item 15 – Exempt Appendix to Item 13 – Elephant House, in which case the Committee would enter into closed session due to the possible disclosure of exempt information, for the reason specified having applied the public interest test.

48. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 24 JANUARY 2024

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 24 January 2024 be approved as a correct record and signed.

49. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

50. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from members of the public.

51. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO THE CHAIRMAN

There were no questions from Members to the Chairman.

52. CHANGE TO THE ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Chairman advised the Committee that there had been a change to the order in which the reports would be taken as follows:

Item 13 - Elephant House

Item 11 - Cobtree Manor Estate Financial Position

Item 12 - Cobtree Estate Update

53. ELEPHANT HOUSE

EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC FROM THE MEETING

The Committee, wishing to discuss the information in the exempt appendices in private:

RESOLVED: That the public be excluded from the meeting because of the likely disclosure of exempt information for the reason specified, having applied the Public Interest Test:

**Head of Schedule 12A and
Brief Description**

Cobtree Estate Contracts Update 3 – Financial/Business Affairs

The public were excluded from 5.11 p.m. to 5.20 p.m. after which the Committee:

RESOLVED: That

1. The Elephant House is let to applicant A on the terms shown in exempt Appendix 3 to the report subject to an added clause stating that use cannot be changed without consent and an added clause to specify requirements for fencing;
2. As landlord, CMEC invests in upgraded drainage and installs a toilet in the Elephant House;
3. CMEC approves the capital budget proposed in the landlord's works section of exempt Appendix 3 to the report, in order to complete the landlord's works, with a best value approach taken to complete the works;
4. Delegated authority be given to the Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement to agree the final lease with applicant A; and
5. Delegated authority be given to the Head of Mid-Kent Legal Services to enter into such lease documents and any relevant statutory notices and declarations, as required, to complete the lease process.

(See Record of Decision)

54. COBTREE MANOR ESTATE FINANCIAL POSITION

The Senior Finance Manager (Client) introduced his report summarising the financial position of the Cobtree Manor Estate as at 31 January 2024 and stated that the current position showed a surplus of £55,000 for the year to date and no significant issues to report. The following points were noted:

- As previously reported, gas and electricity costs at the café were to be largely recharged to the contractor. The exercise to calculate the recharges would be completed shortly, with invoices raised. This would largely eliminate the overspend;
- Cleaning responsibilities for the toilets had been taken on by the café tenant, who had redecorated and attended to the cleaning regularly. The cost of this approach was less than using external cleaners and the standards were noticeably better;
- The income from the new café contract was higher than budgeted for and there has been no need to date to draw on the additional set-aside budget for the Parks Management agreement with the Council. This resulted in an underspend on the Manor Park budget;
- Investment income and bank interest had been higher than anticipated so there was expected to be a surplus on the activities of the estate at the end of the year with no unexpected or significant costs incurred; and
- In response to a query from the last meeting, the Senior Finance Manager (Client) advised that the recharge costs for the Democratic Services team were considered appropriate. The rate was based on the average salary plus overheads for a Democratic Services Officer, who was responsible for the Committee meetings.

In response to a query, the Senior Finance Manager (Client) advised that the £40,000, listed under 'Other income – Cobtree Charity Trust Ltd' in Appendix 1 to the report, referred to income from an investment the freeholder has, which the Cobtree Manor Estate were entitled to the interest from.

RESOLVED: That the current financial position be noted.

55. COBTREE ESTATE UPDATE

The Head of Property and Leisure introduced the report providing an update on activities at the Cobtree Manor Estate including the following points:

- The new café operators had completed their internal fit-outs and redecoration of the toilets. They had also taken over cleaning responsibilities which were more regular and had received positive feedback from visitors. Visitors were comparable to previous years;
- One of the Elmer the Elephant sculptures themed on Maidstone Zoo and Cobtree Manor Park was kindly gifted by the charity to the Cobtree Estate and would have a permanent home there after being part of an exhibition

on the history of the zoo at the Mote Park Visitor Centre in April;

- There had been a slight decrease in rounds at the golf course in comparison to previous years but the numbers were still positive considering a particularly wet Winter. The new operators were in situ and working on improvements;
- Kent Life were maintaining visitor numbers and providing a good service.

It was noted positively that the first collection of the new cardboard recycling bins had taken place, with 4.2 tonnes of cardboard removed from the site.

RESOLVED: That the Cobtree Estate update be noted.

56. DURATION OF MEETING

5.00 p.m. to 5.31 p.m.

Cobtree Manor Estate Committee	24 July 2024
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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 Downs

<p>Executive Summary</p> <p>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. It also includes an updated cashflow projection.</p>
<p>Purpose of Report</p> <p>To update the Committee on the current financial position and any other relevant matters that may impact the financial position of the Trust.</p>

<p>This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the current financial position be noted. 2. That the updated cashflow projection be noted.

Timetable	
Meeting	Date
Cobtree Manor Estate Committee	24 July 2024

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>	Senior Legal Advisor – Corporate Governance MKLS
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 are for noting and 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.	Leisure Manager
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.	Leisure 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. As these are charitable funds there is a 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 June 2024. **Appendix 1** provides a more detailed breakdown of the figures.

3.1.1 Overall Summary Position:

Provisional Actuals 2023/24		Approved Budget for Year 2024/25	Profiled Revised Budget as at 30th June 2024	Actuals as at 30th June 2024	Variance: Underspend (+) Overspend (-)
	Golf Course				
£44,434	Expenditure	£23,940	£5,985	£5,583	£402
-£89,554	Income	-£60,240	-£15,060	-£15,000	-£60
-£45,120	Net Expenditure (+)/Income (-)	-£36,300	-£9,075	-£9,417	£342
	Manor Park				
£274,747	Expenditure	£264,780	£65,695	£60,948	£4,747
-£173,041	Income	-£181,080	-£34,993	-£34,966	-£27
£101,706	Net Expenditure (+)/Income (-)	£83,700	£30,702	£25,982	£4,720
	Kent Life				
£18,604	Expenditure	£18,580	£4,645	£8,618	-£3,973
-£73,133	Income	-£76,130	-£38,065	-£38,065	£0
-£54,529	Net Expenditure (+)/Income (-)	-£57,550	-£33,420	-£29,447	-£3,973
	Residential Properties				
£19,386	Expenditure	£17,460	£4,365	£3,742	£623
-£32,530	Income	-£30,000	-£7,500	-£7,500	£0
-£13,144	Net Expenditure (+)/Income (-)	-£12,540	-£3,135	-£3,758	£623
-£11,087	Operational Total	-£22,690	-£14,928	-£16,640	£1,712
-£62,141	Investment Income	-£40,000	-£10,000	-£10,796	£796
£3,149	Interest Paid	£1,119	£0	£0	£0
£66,505	Car Park Repayment	£68,531	£0	£0	£0
-£3,575	Total for the Year	£6,960	-£24,928	-£27,436	£2,508
	Net Expenditure (+)/Income (-)				

3.2 The current position shows a small surplus of £2,508 for the year to date. There is a budgeted deficit for the year of £6,960. There are no significant issues to report, but the following points should be noted:

- This is the first full year of the new golf course contract. Income from this contract is significantly less than the previous contract, which is one of the main reasons behind the small projected deficit this year.
- Income from car parking at the Manor Park is slightly down against the budgeted figure, but this is offset by additional rental income from the café and an underspend against the Parks Management budget. The reduced car park income is a reflection of a small fall in visitor numbers to date this year.
- The spend against the Kent Life budget includes the £5,000 cost of a dilapidations assessment that was required to be undertaken.
- The spend against the residential properties budgets includes a charge of £1,140 from Maidstone Property Holdings (MPH) for the costs of a structural engineering assessment at Garden Cottage, which MPH manage on behalf of the Cobtree Estate. This was due reports of subsidence at the property, and underpinning works may be required once investigations are complete.

4. **CASHFLOW PROJECTION**

4.1 An updated cashflow projection for the next 10 years is attached at **Appendix 2**. The key messages/assumptions are as follows:

- Running costs have been increased annually by 5%, and savings of £25,000 (to be identified) have been built into projection.
 - The projected golf course income reflects the nature of the new contract. We receive a base rent each year with a turnover percentage paid in addition. Clearly there is a risk associated with this should turnover be lower than anticipated, but the contractor has a track record of hitting their turnover targets at other sites, so this does provide some assurance going forward. As detailed in the Cobtree Estate Update report, numbers of rounds at the course are already at the highest level for some years within the first 12 months of the new operator's tenure.
 - There are some capital works required in the next two years, which means that the Estate will operate at a deficit over that period, but the amount of the bank balance reflects the fact that previous surpluses have been retained to cover future capital expenditure.
 - It should be noted that a new play area will be required at some point in the future, and at present the Estate does not have enough of its own funds for this. Officers will look at funding options and present these to the committee in due course.
 - In overall terms the Estate will continue to operate at a small surplus for most of the period, and these surpluses will be retained to continue to fund any further capital expenditure that may be required.
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5. **AVAILABLE OPTIONS**

5.1 Sections 3 and 4 - for noting only.

6. **PREFERRED OPTIONS AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

6.1 Section 3 and 4 - for noting only.

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

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

8. REPORT APPENDICES

- Appendix 1: Financial Position
 - Appendix 2: Cashflow Projection
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9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

Provisional Actual as at 31st March 2024	Cobtree Manor Estate	Approved Budget 2024/25	Profiled Budget as at 30th June 2024	Actual as at 30th June 2024	Variance at end of June 2024
	GOLF COURSE				
-£395	Repairs & Maintenance	£5,740	£1,435	£0	£1,435
£23,989	Professional Services	£0	£0	£880	-£880
£0	Refuse Collection	£0	£0	£150	-£150
£940	Premises Insurance	£1,100	£275	£278	-£3
£0	General Expenses	£0	£0	-£1	£1
£0	General Expenses - VAT	£2,810	£703	£703	-£1
£24,534	Controlled Running Costs	£9,650	£2,413	£2,010	£403
-£89,554	Contract Income	-£60,000	-£15,000	-£15,000	£0
£0	Rent Income	-£240	-£60	£0	-£60
-£89,554	Controlled Income	-£60,240	-£15,060	-£15,000	-£60
£3,830	MBC Staff Recharges	£3,920	£980	£980	£0
£3,830	Rechargeable Costs	£3,920	£980	£980	£0
-£61,190	Cobtree Golf Course	-£46,670	-£11,668	-£12,010	£343
£16,070	MBC 2/9ths share	£10,370	£2,593	£2,593	-£1
-£45,120	CMET Total	-£36,300	-£9,075	-£9,417	£342

	MANOR PARK				
£0	Overtime	£4,000	£1,000	£0	£1,000
£0	Employee Costs	£4,000	£1,000	£0	£1,000
£35,753	Hard Landscaping	£16,870	£4,218	£3,430	£788
£469	Gas	£0	£0	-£1	£1
£89	Electricity	£0	£0	-£1	£1
-£306	Water Metered	£1,340	£335	£0	£335
£0	Sewerage & Env Services	£1,240	£310	£0	£310
£8,560	Trade Refuse Collection (Internal)	£9,000	£2,250	£2,917	-£667
£2,210	Premises Insurance	£2,560	£640	£640	£0
£1,976	Equipment Purchase	£2,000	£500	£1,114	-£614
£0	Equipment Hire	£600	£150	£0	£150
£0	Cash Collection	£1,580	£395	£300	£95
£0	Protective Clothes	£600	£150	£0	£150
£0	Photocopying	£110	£28	£0	£28
£5,501	General Expenses	£3,780	£945	£510	£435
£6,620	Audit Fee	£6,000	£0	£0	£0
£27,072	Professional Services	£4,000	£2,000	£2,386	-£386
£1,360	General Insurances	£1,270	£318	£318	-£1
£0	External Print & Graphics	£110	£28	£0	£28
£89,304	Controlled Running Costs	£51,060	£12,265	£11,613	£652
-£93,803	Fees & Charges - Car Parking	-£100,000	-£25,973	-£23,376	-£2,597
-£40,000	Other Income - Cobtree Charity Trust Ltd	-£40,000	£0	-£28	£28
£5,992	Other Income	-£5,000	£0	£0	£0
£0	Licences	-£80	-£20	£0	-£20
-£45,230	Rent Income (Café)	-£36,000	-£9,000	-£11,562	£2,562
-£173,041	Controlled Income	-£181,080	-£34,993	-£34,966	-£27
£62,050	MBC Staff Recharges	£63,530	£15,883	£15,883	-£1
£123,393	MBC Parks Management	£146,190	£36,548	£33,452	£3,096
£185,443	Rechargeable Costs	£209,720	£52,430	£49,335	£3,095
£101,706	Cobtree Manor Park	£83,700	£30,702	£25,982	£4,720

Provisional Actual as at 31st March 2024	Cobtree Manor Estate	Approved Budget 2024/25	Profiled Budget as at 30th June 2024	Actual as at 30th June 2024	Variance at end of June 2024
	KENT LIFE				
£6,194	Repairs & Maintenance of Premises	£5,000	£1,250	£224	£1,026
£0	Professional Services	£0	£0	£5,000	£5,000
£5,510	Premises Insurance	£6,520	£1,630	£1,629	£1
£11,704	Controlled Running Costs	£11,520	£2,880	£6,853	£3,973
-£73,133	Contract Income	-£76,130	-£38,065	-£38,065	£0
-£73,133	Controlled Income	-£76,130	-£38,065	-£38,065	£0
£6,900	MBC Staff Recharges	£7,060	£1,765	£1,765	£0
£6,900	Rechargeable Costs	£7,060	£1,765	£1,765	£0
-£54,529	Kent Life	-£57,550	-£33,420	-£29,447	£3,973
	RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES				
£12,657	Repairs & Maintenance	£11,520	£2,880	£367	£2,513
£819	Premises Insurance	£970	£243	£242	£1
£2,080	Professional Services	£0	£0	£1,890	£1,890
£0	General Expenses - VAT	£1,050	£263	£263	£1
£15,556	Controlled Running Costs	£13,540	£3,385	£2,762	£623
-£32,530	Rent Income	-£30,000	-£7,500	-£7,500	£0
-£32,530	Controlled Income	-£30,000	-£7,500	-£7,500	£0
£3,830	MBC Staff Recharges	£3,920	£980	£980	£0
£3,830	Rechargeable Costs	£3,920	£980	£980	£0
-£13,144	Residential Properties	-£12,540	-£3,135	-£3,758	£623
-£11,087	OVERALL TOTALS	-£22,690	-£14,928	-£16,640	£1,712
-£62,141	Investment Income and Interest	-£40,000	-£10,000	-£10,796	£796
£3,149	Interest Paid (Car park costs)	£1,119	£0	£0	£0
-£70,080	Net surplus/deficit for operational & investment activities	-£61,571	-£24,928	-£27,436	£2,508
£66,505	Repayment of car park construction costs	£68,531	£0	£0	£0
-£3,575	Net surplus/deficit after repayment	£6,960	-£24,928	-£27,436	£2,508

COBTREE MANOR ESTATE TRUST - CASHFLOW PROJECTION

	Base Rent Year 1	Base Rent Year 2	Base Rent Year 3	Base Rent Year 4	Base Rent Year 5	Base Rent Year 6	Turnover Year 7	Turnover Year 8	Turnover Year 9	Turnover Year 10
Year Ending 31st March	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034
Activity	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Golf Course - MBC staff recharges	4	4	4	5	5	5	5	6	6	6
Golf Course - Running Costs	10	10	11	11	12	12	13	14	14	15
Kent Life - Running costs	12	12	13	13	14	15	15	16	17	18
Kent Life - MBC staff recharges	7	7	8	8	9	9	9	10	10	11
Manor Park - Running costs	55	58	61	64	67	70	74	77	81	85
Manor Park - MBC Management Fee	146	153	161	169	178	187	196	206	216	227
Manor Park - MBC staff recharges	64	67	70	74	77	81	85	89	94	99
Residential Properties - Running costs	14	14	15	16	16	17	18	19	20	21
Residential Properties - MBC staff recharges	4	4	4	5	5	5	5	6	6	6
Budget Savings	0	-25	-26	-28	-29	-30	-32	-34	-35	-37
EXPENDITURE	314	305	320	336	353	371	389	409	429	451
Golf Course - Annual payment from operator	60	60	60	70	75	75				
Golf Course - Share of Turnover							79	83	86	90
Kent Life - Annual payment from operator	76	80	83	86	89	93	97	101	105	109
Manor Park - Car parking income	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Residential Properties - Rental income	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30
Cobtree Charity Trust Ltd. Will Trust Income	40	40	40	40	40	40	40	40	40	40
Café/Visitor Centre - Annual payments from operator	41	41	41	41	41	41	41	41	41	41
INCOME	347	351	354	367	375	379	386	394	402	410
Payment: MBC 2/9ths Golf Course Net Surplus	10	10	10	12	13	13	13	14	15	15
Investment Income - Charifund	40	40	40	40	40	40	40	40	40	40
NET OPERATIONAL SURPLUS OR DEFICIT (-)	63	76	63	59	49	35	24	11	-2	-16
Capital Expenditure:										
Car park resurfacing works repayment - total costs £335,000	67									
Storage container	75									
Footpath Repairs	20									
Play Area	20	250								
Elephant House Works	20									
Residential Properties - Underpinning Works (costs tbc)										
	202	250	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
ADJUSTED OVERALL SURPLUS/DEFICIT (-)	-139	-174	63	59	49	35	24	11	-2	-16
Cashflow Forecast:										
Bank Account balance at start of the year	576	436	262	325	384	433	469	492	503	501
Annual surplus/deficit (-)	-139	-174	63	59	49	35	24	11	-2	-16
Bank Account balance as at 31st March	436	262	325	384	433	469	492	503	501	485

Agenda Item 14

COBTREE MANOR ESTATE CHARITY COMMITTEE

24 July 2024

Cobtree Estate Update

Timetable	
Meeting	Date
Cobtree Manor Estate Charity Committee	24 July 2024

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 Contracts Manager
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

Executive Summary

An update report on the venues and activities that comprise the Cobtree Estate.

Purpose of Report

Noting

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. That the Cobtree Estate update be 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 Contracts Manager
Cross Cutting Objectives	The work of the charity links directly to its charitable objectives and the cross-cutting objectives of the council.	Leisure Contracts Manager
Risk Management	There are no risk management implications in this report.	Leisure Contracts Manager
Financial	Financial implications from this update are managed day-to-day in line with council procedures and policies.	Senior Finance Manger (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.	Senior Legal Advisor, Corporate Governance 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 Contracts Manager

Crime and Disorder	Crime and disorder implications are managed day-to-day in line with council procedures and policies.	Leisure Contracts 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	Updates on biodiversity and climate change are included within this report.	Leisure Contracts Manager

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

2.1 This report includes operational updates from across the Cobtree Estate.

Cobtree Manor Park

2.2 In the quarter April to June 2024 there were 12,154 vehicle visits to the park, which is around 7% lower than for the same period in 2023 (13,093). Overall, for the most recent four quarters there have been 48,263 vehicle visits, compared to the previous four quarters where 51,886 vehicle visits were made; also a reduction of 7% .

2.3 The Elmer the Elephant sculpture that is themed on Maidstone Zoo and Cobtree Manor Park is being installed in the café by the Cobtree Charity Trust who attended earlier this month to unveil it. Earlier this year it was part of an exhibition on the history of Maidstone Zoo that was on show in the Mote Park Visitor Centre. The exhibition showed the history of the zoo and its role in the town. It included memories, photographs and audio clips from the zoo and enabled residents to add their childhood memories of Maidstone Zoo to the exhibition.

2.4 There are many positive comments made by visitors to Park staff about the café kiosk operator and the long-awaited re-opening of the main café draws ever closer; expectations are the main cafe will again be in use during late August.

2.5 The operator has taken responsibility of maintaining the café toilets and again visitor comments are very positive with improvements in cleanliness evident to those who can compare the previous toilet cleaning regime.

2.6 The new storage container for park operations was granted planning permission in June. The new container will be more sympathetic to the park setting and will replace the existing container that is beyond the end of its useful life. Delivery and installation is planned and will be arranged when all planning conditions are discharged.

Cobtree Golf Course

- 2.7 In the most recent quarter the number of rounds of golf played at Cobtree under the tenure of the new operator has significantly increased. April to June 2024 had 13,800 rounds played which is the highest single number since the same period in 2018, when 14,200 were played. Indeed, in the three quarters since the new operator took over there have been 23,700 rounds played which is the highest amongst current records.
- 2.8 The operator is planning to invest in water harvesting capabilities where the lake will be increased in size to capture natural sources of water for use around the site. This will aid with course drainage in the winter and water usage needs in the summer.

Kent Life

- 2.9 Kent Life received 47,992 visits in the last quarter, which is 12% lower than for the same period in 2023, when there were 54,803 visits. Overall, there were 176,172 visitor visits in the last four quarters compared to 184,426 visits in the previous four quarters, which is a 4.5% decrease.
- 2.10 Works are due to start this month on repairs to the barn's thatched roof.
- 2.11 A range of summer activities are in place and the site is gearing up for the school holiday period with family orientated events focused around the children's TV character Bluey.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 The Committee can note the information in this report.
- 3.2 The Committee 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.
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6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

6.1 No consultation has taken place for the purposes of this 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
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9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- None