

AGENDA

COBTREE MANOR ESTATE CHARITY COMMITTEE MEETING



Date: Wednesday 14 March 2012

Time: 5.00 p.m.

Venue: Town Hall, High Street,
Maidstone

Membership:

Councillors Garland, Greer, Hotson and
J.A. Wilson (Chairman)

Page No.

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Notification of Visiting Members
3. Disclosures by Members and Officers
4. Disclosures of Lobbying
5. To consider whether any items should be taken in private because of the possible disclosure of exempt information.
6. Minutes of the meeting held on 11 January 2012

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Continued Over/:

Issued on 6 March 2012

The reports included in Part I of this agenda can be made available in **alternative formats**. For further information about this service, or to arrange for special facilities to be provided at the meeting, **please contact DEBBIE SNOOK on 01622 602030**. To find out more about the work of the Committee, please visit www.maidstone.gov.uk

Alison Broom

**Alison Broom, Chief Executive, Maidstone Borough Council,
Maidstone House, King Street, Maidstone, Kent ME15 6JQ**

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|----|--|--------|
| 7. | Report of the Head of Finance and Customer Services - Cobtree Trust Financial Position 2011-12 | 5 - 8 |
| 8. | Report of the Cobtree Officer - Park Ranger's Progress Report | 9 - 13 |

KEY DECISION REPORT

- | | | |
|----|--|---------|
| 9. | Joint Report of the Assistant Director of Environment and Regulatory Services and the Cobtree Officer - Implementation of the Master Plan for Cobtree Manor Park | 14 - 43 |
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MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

COBTREE MANOR ESTATE CHARITY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 11 JANUARY 2012

Present: Councillor J.A. Wilson (Chairman) and
Councillors Garland, Greer and Hotson

39. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

40. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

There were no Visiting Members.

41. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

Ms Joanna Joyce, Acting Cobtree Officer, disclosed an interest in the exempt report of the Assistant Director of Environment and Regulatory Services relating to the appointment of the Cobtree Officer by virtue of being the prospective post holder.

42. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

43. EXEMPT ITEMS

RESOLVED: That the item on Part II of the agenda be taken in private as proposed.

44. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 9 NOVEMBER 2011

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 9 November 2011 be approved as a correct record and signed.

45. FINANCIAL POSITION 2011/12

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Finance and Customer Services setting out details of the financial position in respect of the Golf Course and Manor Park as at 30 November 2011.

Investments

It was noted that the market value of the investments held with Charifund had increased to £1.281m, which was just below the purchase value.

Loan Repayment

It was noted that following the audit of the 2010/11 accounts there was still a sum owing to the Borough Council, but this would not cause any operational issues and the Charity would become debt free during 2011/12.

RESOLVED: That the financial position in respect of the Golf Course and Manor Park be noted.

46. RESPONSE TO MANAGEMENT LETTER 2010/11

DECISION MADE

That the draft response to the Management Letter issued at the conclusion of the audit of the 2010/11 accounts, as set out in Appendix B to the report of the Head of Finance and Customer Services, be approved.

To view full details of this decision, please follow this link:-

<http://meetings.maidstone.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=535>

47. DEALING WITH FUTURE SURPLUSES

DECISION MADE

That the annual surplus be invested with Charifund until the final options for funding the Master Plan are confirmed.

To view full details of this decision, please follow this link:-

<http://meetings.maidstone.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=536>

Arising from the discussion on this report, the Parks and Leisure Manager advised the Committee that the bid submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund Parks for People scheme for funding of £500,000 towards the cost of implementing the proposed enhancements and improvements to the Cobtree Manor Park set out in the revised Master Plan had been refused. A report reviewing the options for funding and implementing the works would be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee.

48. PARK RANGER'S PROGRESS REPORT

DECISION MADE

1. That the work undertaken by the Park Ranger and the future work planned, as set out in Appendix A to the report of the Assistant Director of Environment and Regulatory Services, be noted.
2. That the draft programme of events for the coming year, as set out in Appendix B to the report of the Assistant Director of Environment and Regulatory Services, be endorsed and that the sum of £2,200 be

included in the estimates for 2012/13 to cover the cost of engaging external event leaders.

3. That the number of leaflets detailing events be increased from 2,000 to 3,000 for 2012 and that the sum of £450 be included in the estimates for 2012/13 to cover the cost of design and printing.

To view full details of this decision, please follow this link:-

<http://meetings.maidstone.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=537>

49. INTRODUCTION OF ELECTRONIC GATE COUNTERS AT COBTREE MANOR PARK

DECISION MADE

1. That agreement be given to the introduction of electronic gate counters at the main entrance to Cobtree Manor Park in order to count the number of visitors coming into the Park by vehicle.
2. That agreement be given to expenditure of £2,005.50 to cover the cost of installing electronic gate counters at Cobtree Rural Park.
3. That the visitor figures should be reported to the Committee on a quarterly basis.

To view full details of this decision, please follow this link:-

<http://meetings.maidstone.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=538>

50. FEASIBILITY STUDIES TO INVESTIGATE POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENTS TO LAND LEASED TO THE MUSEUM OF KENT LIFE TRUST

DECISION MADE

1. That a feasibility study be commissioned to investigate the possibility of linking the towpath at Allington Lock with Cobtree Manor Park by a combined footpath and cycle way along the route shown on the plan attached as Appendix A to the report of the Assistant Director of Environment and Regulatory Services.
2. That a feasibility study be commissioned to investigate the possibility of providing allotments on land leased to the Museum of Kent Life, shown edged red on the plan attached as Appendix B to the report of the Assistant Director of Environment and Regulatory Services, opposite Cobtree Manor Park and adjacent to the proposed footpath and cycle way.

To view full details of this decision, please follow this link:-

<http://meetings.maidstone.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=539>

51. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC FROM THE MEETING

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

Head of Schedule 12 A and Brief Description

Exempt Report of the Assistant Director of Environment and Regulatory Services – Appointment of the Cobtree Officer	1 – Information re. Individual
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52. APPOINTMENT OF THE COBTREE OFFICER

DECISION MADE

That Ms Joanna Joyce be appointed as the Cobtree Officer subject to the recommendations made by Messrs King and Taylor, who act as external auditors to the Charity known as the Cobtree Manor Estate, as outlined in the exempt report of the Assistant Director of Regulatory and Environmental Services and set out below.

To view full details of this decision, please follow this link:-

<http://meetings.maidstone.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=540>

53. DURATION OF MEETING

5.00 p.m. to 5.40 p.m.

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

COBTREE MANOR ESTATE COMMITTEE

14TH MARCH 2012

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF FINANCE & CUSTOMER SERVICES

Report prepared by: Paul Holland (Senior Accountant)

1 FINANCIAL POSITION 2011/12

1.1 Issue for Decision

1.1.1 To consider the current financial position of the Golf Course and Manor Park as at 31st January 2012.

1.2 Recommendation of the Head of Finance & Customer Services

1.2.1 That the current financial position as at 31st January 2012 is noted.

1.3 Reasons for Recommendation

1.3.1 Attached at **APPENDIX A** is the current financial position as at 31st January 2012. If any significant financial issues arise during February these will be reported verbally to the meeting.

1.3.2 The statement also includes details of any capital expenditure, the projected loan repayment position, deposits held and total investments held at **APPENDIX B**.

1.4 Investments

1.4.1 The market value of the investments held with Charifund has now risen to a point where the value is £51,000 greater than the purchase value. This is an improvement on the position previously reported where the market value had been below the purchase value.

1.5 Loan Repayment

1.5.1 It has previously been anticipated that the loan would be repaid by 31st March 2011. However, as was reported to the last meeting there is still a sum owing to the Borough Council following the audit of the 2010/11 accounts, but this will not cause any operational issues and Trust will become debt free during 2011/12.

1.6 Alternative Actions and Why Not Recommended

1.6.1 The Committee could choose not receive updates during the year on the financial position, but this would not be consistent with good financial management.

1.7 Impact on the Charity's Objectives

1.7.1 The net surplus on the activities of the Golf Course and Manor Park are to be used to further the long term aims and objectives of the Trust, particularly the proposed master plan for the development of the Manor Park.

1.8 Risk Management

1.8.1 Good financial management allows more informed decisions to be made regarding the ongoing activities of the Trust.

1.9 Other Implications

Financial	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Staffing	<input type="checkbox"/>
Legal	<input type="checkbox"/>
Social Inclusion	<input type="checkbox"/>
Environmental/Sustainable Development	<input type="checkbox"/>
Community Safety	<input type="checkbox"/>
Human Rights Act	<input type="checkbox"/>
Procurement	<input type="checkbox"/>
Asset Management	<input type="checkbox"/>

1.10 Financial Implications

Financial Implications are detailed in the report above.

<u>NO REPORT WILL BE ACCEPTED WITHOUT THIS BOX BEING COMPLETED</u>				
Is this a Key Decision?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If yes, when did it appear in the Forward Plan? _____				
Is this an Urgent Key Decision?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<u>Reason for Urgency</u>				
Not applicable				

APPENDIX A - COBTREE GOLF COURSE & MANOR PARK
CURRENT FINANCIAL POSITION

April - January 2012

Golf Course

Category	Actual (£)	Estimate to Date (£)	Full Year Estimate (£)
Employee Costs	10,566	10,570	12,680
Premises Costs	14,348	31,430	40,360
Supplies & Services	762	2,950	149,510
Recharges	27,042	27,040	32,450
Capital Charges	190,266	190,270	192,060
Income	-222,227	-243,480	-278,610
GRAND TOTAL	20,757	18,780	148,450

April - January 2012

Manor Park

Category	Actual (£)	Estimate to Date (£)	Full Year Estimate (£)
Employee Costs	28,649	28,500	34,230
Premises Costs	44,247	52,020	64,590
Transport	218	500	600
Supplies & Services	7,896	20,340	29,790
Contract Costs	7,837	7,520	9,020
Recharges	24,292	24,290	29,150
Capital Charges	1,215	0	1,220
Income	-15,448	-14,300	-168,600
GRAND TOTAL	98,906	118,870	0

This is the actual expenditure to date compared against the projected estimate up to the end of January 2012.

APPENDIX B

COBTREE CAPITAL SCHEMES

Scheme	Budget (£)	Actual to Date (£)
No schemes planned at present		
Total	0	0

Maidstone BC (2/9ths)	0	0
Cobtree Trust (7/9ths)	0	0
	0	0

CURRENT LOAN POSITION

	£
Balance outstanding at 31st March 2011	10,460
Projected loan repayment 2011/12	-10,460
Balance outstanding at 31st January 2012	0

DEPOSITS HELD ACCOUNT

	£
Balance as at 31st March 2011	-5,498
Deposits received 2011/12	0
Balance as at 31st January 2012	-5,498

TOTAL INVESTMENTS HELD

	£
Total investments made up to 31st March 2011	1,290,000
Balance Sheet (Market) Value 31st March 2011	1,352,395
Market Value as at 31st March 2012	1,340,571

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

COBTREE MANOR ESTATE COMMITTEE

14th March 2012

REPORT OF THE COBTREE OFFICER

Report prepared by Joanna Joyce, Cobtree Officer

1. Park Ranger's progress report

1.1 Issue for Decision

1.1.1 To consider work of the Park Ranger at Cobtree Manor Park.

1.2 Recommendation of the Cobtree Officer

1.2.1 It is recommended that the Committee note the actions taken by the Park Ranger and the future work set out in **Appendix A** to the report.

1.3 Reasons for Recommendation

1.3.1 The Committee previously resolved to receive a progress report on the work of the Park Ranger at each meeting. Attached at **Appendix A** is the report for the most recent period.

1.3.2 The Committee's attention is drawn to the "7 Ages" sculpture for which installation has been delayed due to poor weather. This is now due to be completed in the next few weeks.

1.4 Alternative Action and why not Recommended

1.4.1 The alternative course of action is to reject the request for endorsement of the rangers work contained within the report. This is not recommended as the recommendations are in the best interests of the future management of Cobtree Manor Park.

1.5 Impact on Corporate Objectives

1.5.1 The work of the Park Ranger directly supports the achievement of the Charity's objectives.

1.6 Risk Management

1.6.1 There are no additional risks to the Charity arising from this report.

1.7 Other Implications

1.7.1

- 1. Financial
- 2. Staffing
- 3. Legal
- 4. Equality Impact Needs Assessment
- 5. Environmental/Sustainable Development
- 6. Community Safety
- 7. Human Rights Act
- 8. Procurement
- 9. Asset Management

There are no other implications from the work proposed in this report.

1.8 Relevant Documents

There are none.

1.8.1 Appendices

Appendix A - Rangers Progress update January – February 2012.

1.8.2 Background Documents

Cobtree Manor Park Management Plan

How to Comment

Should you have any comments on the issue that is being considered please contact either the relevant Officer or the Member of the Executive who will be taking the decision.

Cllr John A Wilson

Cobtree Manor Estate Committee Chairman

Telephone: 01622 720989

E-mail: JohnAWilson@maidstone.gov.uk

Joanna Joyce

Cobtree Officer

Telephone: 01622 602719

E-mail: JoannaJoyce@maidstone.gov.uk

IS THIS A KEY DECISION REPORT?

Yes

No

X

If yes, when did it first appear in the Forward Plan?

.....

This is a Key Decision because:

.....

Wards/Parishes affected:

.....

Appendix A

COBTREE PARK RANGER'S PROGRESS REPORT **JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2012**

1. On-going projects

1.1. Community involvement

- Volunteer work and student placement on-going.
- A thank-you letter from Chairman to the regular volunteer was received and much appreciated.

1.2. Publicity and marketing

- The diary of Cobtree events 2012 sent for publishing on Cobtree Charity Trust Limited website, Valley of Vision events booklet, Visit Maidstone website, MVCP website, The Net monthly local events booklet and website and parish clerks.
- Cobtree Park leaflet including a diary of events is in the process of being designed and produced.
- The draft of the new Cobtree Manor Park webpage is underway.
- A list of species/varieties of trees and shrubs confirmed as currently present at the park has been compiled and is ready to be included on the website.

1.3. Park maintenance and development – work underway:

- Routine winter maintenance of trees and shrubs ongoing.
- A 3-year programme of shrub renovation has been developed and implementation commenced.
- Winter maintenance of access routes is ongoing (woodchip on paths, edging of paths and car park etc).
- Planting of 12 trees sponsored by Boxley Parish Council has been completed.
- Repairs to the boundary fencing along the Golf Course boundary are completed.
- Management Plan updating is underway.

- Completion of the installation of the "7" Ages sculpture which was delayed by recent snow.

2. Work planned for the spring period:

- Grass cutting commencing early March
- Labelling of selected trees
- Distribution of the new leaflet
- Reviewing und updating the contents of the Ranger's walks-and-talks
- Developing new events and activities

Agenda Item 9

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

COBTREE MANOR ESTATE COMMITTEE

14TH March 2012

JOINT REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND REGULATORY SERVICES AND THE COBTREE OFFICER

Report prepared by:
Joanna Joyce, Cobtree Officer
Paul Holland, Senior Accountant
Jason Taylor, Parks and Leisure Manager
Ian Trueman, Senior Solicitor

1. **REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MASTER PLAN FOR COBTREE MANOR PARK**
- 1.1 Issue for Decision
- 1.1.1 To consider the project plan set out within this report ("the project plan") for the implementation of the proposed enhancements to Cobtree Manor Park as outlined within the report dated June 2010 prepared by Adam S. Bailey Garden Design and updated in March 2012 ("the Master Plan").
- 1.2 Recommendation of the Assistant Director of Environment and Regulatory Services and of the Cobtree Officer
- 1.2.1 It is recommended that the Cobtree Manor Estate Charity Committee agrees to and endorses the formal withdrawal of the previous resolution to the Charity Commission and replaces that resolution with the resolution set out in paragraph 1.2.2 below.
- 1.2.2 The Cobtree Manor Estate Charity Committee agrees, approves and resolves to pass the following:
 - (i) For Officers to approach the Charity Commission using either the Cobtree Manor Estate Charity's statutory powers under Section 75A of the Charities Act 1993 as amended by the Charities Act 2006, or other appropriate powers seeking the release of £1,065,000.00 of the permanent endowment in the following terms:

That the Committee acting as the trustee to the registered charity known as Cobtree Manor Estate (no. 283617) resolves to release from its permanent endowment funds to implement, in three phases, the enhancements to Cobtree Manor Park outlined in the report dated June 2010, as updated in March 2012, prepared by Adam S. Bailey Garden Design ("the Master Plan"); such implementation being in full compliance with the objects of the charity and seen in its best interests in order to encourage greater use of Cobtree Manor Estate by the general public.

- (ii) Should the Charity Commission give its approval for the releasing of part of the permanent endowment as outlined in (i) above to expend those moneys (i.e. £1,065,000.00) on completing phases 1, 2 and 3 of the Master Plan.

It is further recommended:

- 1.2.3 The Committee endorses and approves the Master Plan attached as **Appendix D**; this plan being an update of the original plan prepared by Adam S. Bailey as approved by the Committee at its meeting on July 7th 2010.
- 1.2.4 The Committee approves the repayment programme recommended by the Senior Accountant within this report (**Appendix A**) and authorises officers to approach the Charity Commission seeking its approval for the implementation of that repayment programme.
- 1.2.5 The Committee approves the project plan (**Appendix B**) and the implementation of the design details set out within the Master Plan by three separate phases;

Phase 1 – Installation of the first phase of the play area.

Phase 2 – Other Works such as: The picnic area, the hard path network and nature trail paths, way finding posts and maps, viewing platform and pond clearance, car park resurfacing and edging, woodland management and park tree works, boundary planting, new arboretum trees, car park replanting, improved boundary fencing around the estate bridal path, trim trail, outdoor seating and bins, sculptures, bridal path rerouting and resurfacing, Llama house renovation, and the final phase of the play area.

Phase 3 – The building of the visitor centre and café.

- 1.2.6 The Committee approves the location (as indicated on the **Appendix E** map) and the design of the play area and authorises the Head of Legal Services to enter into a contract for the construction of the first phase of the play area (phase 1) once release of the permanent endowment funding has been agreed by the Charity Commission.
- 1.2.7 The Committee endorses the Officers decision to bring to a later meeting of the Committee reports seeking approval for:
- 1.2.7.1 The detailed design of the phase 2 works including the second phase of the play area and entering into a contract or contracts for these phase 2 works.
- 1.2.7.2 The final design of the visitor centre and café.
- 1.3 Reasons for Recommendation
- 1.3.1 As stated Committee Members have previously endorsed the Master Plan dated June 2010 of which **Appendix D** is an updated version, for the future enhancement of the Cobtree Manor Park. It was resolved (in July 2010) that:
- (i) The Master Plan be endorsed as the “guiding principles” document for the future development of the Cobtree Manor Park;
- (ii) The play equipment should remain the highest priority element of the scheme; and
- (iii) The officers report with a future project plan, including design specifications, phasing and funding proposals.
- 1.3.2 Following the failure of the project to achieve funding through the Heritage Lottery Fund all funding will now need to be sourced as recommended by the Senior Accountant.
- 1.4 Charity Commission Approval
- 1.4.1 The Committee has previously resolved to approach the Charity Commission for its approval to use up to £500,000.00 of the permanent endowment.
- 1.4.2 It is recommended that the Committee agrees to the formal withdrawal of this existing resolution (the Charity Commission has already informally been advised of this) and its replacement with a new resolution seeking approval to use £1,065,000.00 of

the permanent endowment in order to fund all 3 phases of the project plan. This approach to be coupled with details of the repayment programme identified by the Senior Accountant within this report (**Appendix A**).

1.5 Funding recommendations

The implementation of the Master Plan as detailed elsewhere in this report will cost an estimated £1,065,000.00. There are three options available to fund the works:

- Use of the permanent endowment;
- An external loan from a financial institution;
- A loan from Maidstone Borough Council.

1.5.1 It is recommended that the permanent endowment is used for funding. The Charity Commission have indicated in principle that the endowment funds could probably be used, but with the condition that there is a plan in place to replenish the endowment fund to its current level over a period of time.

The advantage of using the endowment monies is that the required funds can be drawn down as they are required, and the replenishment of the funds can be scheduled to accommodate the ongoing annual cashflow requirements of Cobtree Estate. The disadvantage of using these funds is that there will be a loss of investment income when the funds are initially drawn down, although as the fund is replenished investment income should rise accordingly.

1.5.2 An estimated cashflow projection, along with details of the proposed use and replenishment of the endowment funds is attached at **Appendix A**. At this stage these figures are indicative, as the final costs of the plan are subject to confirmation once the relevant contracts have been finalised. It should also be noted that the return on investments, both from the permanent endowment and the annual investment income from Cobtree Charity Trust Ltd are subject to the prevailing economic climate and the impact this may have on investment returns. The projection also assumes that the golf course contract will continue to produce a similar return, but this cannot be guaranteed in the longer term.

1.5.3 For these reasons and because of the possibility of unforeseen items of major expenditure arising the annual sum for replenishment will be subject to adjustment. This is also an

advantage of using the endowment monies for funding, as the flexibility to vary the annual sum does exist provided the Charity Commission agree to such flexibility being incorporated into the repayment programme. The cashflow projection shows a period of 15 years, with the initial level of repayment lower to reflect the impact of the loss of investment income in the early years. It is intended that details of the replenishment of the fund will be reported as part of the regular financial monitoring reports that the Committee receive. Although the cashflow projection does not show the fund being replenished to its current level it does demonstrate to the Charity Commission that the endowment funds can be replenished over time, subject to a number of assumptions and risks as identified above.

1.6 Project Plan

1.6.1 Attached at **Appendix B** is an outline project implementation plan which indicates the timescales within which it is anticipated the various enhancement proposals could be completed once adequate funding has been approved. Phases are as follows (subject to Charity Commission approval):

- Phase 1, Play area, March 2011 – July 2012
- Phase 2, Parks works, June 2012 – February 2013
- Phase 3, Visitor Centre/Café works, March 2012 – May 2013

1.6.2 Attached at **Appendix C** is a breakdown of each phase and the tasks and allocated funding, each element has an additional 10% contingency funding allocated.

- Phase 1, Play area, £170,000 (£153,000 and £17,000 contingency).
- Phase 2, Parks works and second phase of the play area £482,500 (£434,250 and £48,250 contingency).
- Phase 3, Visitor Centre/Café works, £384,500 (£346,050 and £38,450 contingency).
- Additional costs £28,000 (£25,200 and £2,800 contingency).

1.7 Project Phasing

1.7.1 It is recommended that the project is implemented in three phases.

1.7.2 Phase 1, Play area

The play area design at the revised value of £170,000 (£153,000 and £17,000 contingency) was tendered for and the preferred design identified, and now needs to be finally approved by the Committee because it:

- Provides an unusual bespoke destination play area.
- Caters for children across a wide variety of ages.
- Will provide an attraction to draw visitors to the park.

Revised drawings of the play area design will be made available at the meeting for the Committee to inspect. The location of the play area as indicated on the map marked **Appendix E** will also need to be approved.

1.7.3 There is the potential to further improve this design by working with the winning company. Any alterations will be brought to the attention of the Committee for approval prior to the commencement of the second phase of the play area installation. This will be undertaken as part of Phase 2 of the Master Plan works. A total of £180,000 (£162,000 and £18,000 contingency) has been budgeted for these additional improvements.

1.7.4 The play area works are scheduled for March 2011 - July 2012 (subject to Charity Commission approval).

1.7.5 Phase 2, Other works

Remaining Parks works from the master plan and second phase of the play area totalling £482,500 (£434,250 and £48,250 contingency).

Works to include;

The picnic area, the hard path network and nature trail paths, way finding posts and maps, viewing platform and pond clearance, car park resurfacing and edging, woodland management and park tree works, boundary planting, new arboretum trees, car park replanting, improved boundary fencing around the estate bridal path, trim trail, outdoor seating and bins, sculptures, bridal path rerouting and resurfacing, Llama house renovation and the second phase of the play area installation.

- 1.7.6 The final designs and specifications for materials, and outlines for these works will be brought to the Committee for approval prior to the commencement of works.
- 1.7.7 It is recommended that these remaining works are tendered for separately and carried out following the completion of the play area in accordance with the project plan after prior approval of the Committee, **Appendix B**.
- 1.7.8 Depending on the decision of the Charity Commission and the procurement process these works are scheduled for June 2012 – February 2013.
- 1.7.9 Phase 3, Visitor Centre and Café
The budget for the Visitor Centre and Café is £384,500 (£346,050 and £38,450 contingency). Final designs and specifications for the building will be brought to the Committee for its approval prior to any contract being tendered for.
- 1.7.10 It is recommended that the Visitor Centre and Café is tendered separately and works are commenced following the completion of the other works in phase 2, as identified in section 1.7.5, and according to the project plan **Appendix B**.
- 1.7.11 The Visitor Centre/Café is an important hub for the park and will also provide interactive information boards, cycle stands, interpretational signage and renovation of the elephant house.
- 1.7.12 Depending on the Charity Commission and the procurement process the Visitor Centre/Café works are scheduled for March 2012 – May 2013.
- 1.8 Alternative Action and why not Recommended
- 1.8.1 The alternative course of action is to not implement the agreed Master Plan. This is not recommended as the Committee has already endorsed the original version of the Master Plan as outlining the best programme for the future development of Cobtree Manor Estate.
- 1.8.2 A second alternative is that the project is delayed and Heritage Lottery Fund grant funding re-applied for. This is not recommended as there is still only a limited chance of success due to the high competition for funding, and this would delay the project for another year. As a funding source has been identified it is recommended that the advice of the Senior Accountant is followed.

1.8.3 The plan could be funded via an external loan or a loan from the Borough Council. However, this would mean a commitment to regular fixed repayments, which could potentially have cashflow implications depending on how the economic climate develops in future years, and if a major item of unforeseen expenditure were to occur. The use of the endowment funds is a more flexible approach to funding that can take into account the impact of the economic climate, on the basis the Charity Commission agrees to the basic approach recommended in this report.

1.9 Impact on Charity Objects

1.9.1 The whole essence of the Master Plan is to seek to better meet the objects of the Charity by increasing the attractiveness of Cobtree Manor Park and thus increase the number of visitors to it, thereby enhancing public benefit of the park to the inhabitants of Maidstone and indeed of the County and elsewhere generally. The improvements set out in the Master Plan will build upon the increasing popularity of Cobtree Manor Park already evidenced through activities such as guided walks already operating in the park.

1.10 Risk Management

1.10.1 Risk assessments will need to be reviewed at each stage of the implementation process. The greatest risk is that the project will go over budget and that the proposals might fail to attract an increased number of visitors to the park.

1.10.2 The cashflow projection does contain a number of assumptions regarding future financial performance and economic conditions. However even after allowing for increased running costs the Cobtree Manor Estate will still be generating a healthy annual surplus to replenish the endowment fund, although the time period over when this happens could potentially be impacted by future events that are outside the control of officers. The endowment fund will also still contain an adequate minimum balance of approximately £0.4m after the monies for this project have been withdrawn.

1.11 Other Implications

1.11.1

Financial

Staffing

Legal	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Social Inclusion	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Considerations for Disabled Persons	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Environmental/Sustainable Development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Community Safety	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Human Rights Act	<input type="checkbox"/>
Procurement	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

- 1.11.2 The implementation of the Master Plan will cost an estimated £1,065,000.00. The financial implications are outlined in the report.
- 1.11.3 A new approach will have to be made to the Charity Commission seeking an order or scheme for the use of the permanent endowment fund for this project.
- 1.11.4 The funding required has been increased from the original estimated sum of £873,300. This further £191,700 is a result of revised costs following additional further information and equates to;
- £72,000 in additional funds for the Visitor Centre/Café following advice from building experts,
 - £4,500 for a project engineer not originally included but which has proved worthwhile in the Mote Park project;
 - £4,500 for bridle path rerouting and resurfacing which was not included in the original project cost; and
 - £1,530 increase for benches and way finding posts as these have proven more expensive than anticipated in the Mote Park project.
 - £90,000 for the improvements to the play area winning design.
 - £19,170 for an additional 10% contingency.
- 1.11.5 The building of the Visitor Centre will result in a need for further staff to run it. It is initially intended that this will be part of the café franchise. There will also be a requirement for an additional

member of parks staff as the workload from additional school groups and visitors increases.

- 1.11.6 The net surplus generated by the golf course/park is currently in the region of £70,000 per annum. This will be used to fund the additional staff costs for the Park and Visitor Centre, and then any remaining surplus will be reinvested into the endowment funds to replace those withdrawn to finance the Master Plan.
- 1.11.7 The addition of a visitor centre will allow better resources for visitors and enable better social inclusion by increasing the number of courses and events that can be run in the park, allowing time for more specialist and inclusive courses to be included in the programme.
- 1.11.8 The implementation of the proposals will result in better access to the park and its facilities for disabled persons.
- 1.11.9 Every effort will be made to ensure that all materials are obtained from sustainable sources and that environmental considerations remain a high priority.
- 1.11.10 It is anticipated that an increase in the number of park users will assist in deterring unwanted persons from visiting the site.
- 1.11.11 The Council's procurement processes will be used at every stage of the implementation process of the project plan.

Background Documents

Cobtree Manor Park Master Plan – update March 2012 **Appendix D**

How to Comment

Should you have any comments on the issue that is being considered please contact either the relevant Officer or the Member of the Executive who will be taking the decision.

Cllr John A Wilson

Cobtree Manor Estate Committee Chairman

Telephone: 01622 720989

E-mail: JohnAWilson@maidstone.gov.uk

Joanna Joyce

Cobtree Officer

Telephone: 01622 602719

E-mail: JoannaJoyce@maidstone.gov.uk

NO REPORT WILL BE ACCEPTED WITHOUT THIS BOX BEING COMPLETED

Is this a Key Decision? Yes No

If yes, when did it appear in the Forward Plan? October 2011

Is this an Urgent Key Decision? Yes No

Reason for Urgency

Appendix A

COBTREE CASHFLOW PROJECTION

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Current Debt Balance	17,910								
Golf Club Surplus	146,390	152,900	157,487	162,212	167,078	172,090	177,253	182,571	188,048
Debt Repayment	17,910								
Manor Park Deficit	127,380	113,580	116,987	120,497	124,112	127,835	131,670	135,620	139,689
Investment Income	-65,000	-65,000	-65,000	-65,000	-65,000	-65,000	-65,000	-65,000	-65,000
Additional Costs									
Play Area Maintenance		8,000	12,500	12,875	13,261	13,659	14,069	14,491	14,926
Additional Staffing Costs			24,000	24,720	25,462	26,225	27,012	27,823	28,657
Café Franchise			-1,700	-1,751	-1,804	-1,858	-1,913	-1,971	-2,030
Visitor Centre Costs			7,500	10,000	10,300	10,609	10,927	11,255	11,593
Loss of Charifund Interest		24,955	37,548	36,263	34,978	33,693	32,408	31,123	29,581
Net Surplus	-66,100	-71,365	-25,652	-24,608	-25,769	-26,926	-28,080	-29,229	-30,632
Endowment Replenishment	66,100	70,000	25,000	25,000	25,000	25,000	25,000	25,000	30,000
Adjusted Surplus	0	-1,365	-652	392	-769	-1,926	-3,080	-4,229	-632
Assumptions & Notes									
Inflation (As per Budget Strategy)	-	-	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%

2011/12 & 2012/13 figures as per current estimates

Appendix A

COBTREE CASHFLOW PROJECTION

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
Current Debt Balance							
Golf Club Surplus	193,689	199,500	205,485	211,649	217,999	224,539	-231,275
Debt Repayment							
Manor Park Deficit	143,880	148,196	152,642	157,221	161,938	166,796	171,800
Investment Income	-65,000	-65,000	-65,000	-65,000	-65,000	-65,000	-65,000
Additional Costs							
Play Area Maintenance	15,373	15,835	16,310	16,799	17,303	17,822	18,357
Additional Staffing Costs	29,517	30,402	31,315	32,254	33,222	34,218	35,245
Café Franchise	-2,091	-2,154	-2,218	-2,285	-2,353	-2,424	-2,497
Visitor Centre Costs	11,941	12,299	12,668	13,048	13,439	13,842	14,258
Loss of Charifund Interest	28,039	26,497	24,698	22,899	20,843	18,787	16,475
Net Surplus	-32,030	-33,424	-35,071	-36,713	-38,607	-40,496	-42,638
Endowment Replenishment	30,000	30,000	35,000	35,000	40,000	40,000	45,000
Adjusted Surplus	-2,030	-3,424	-71	-1,713	1,393	-496	2,362

Assumptions & Notes

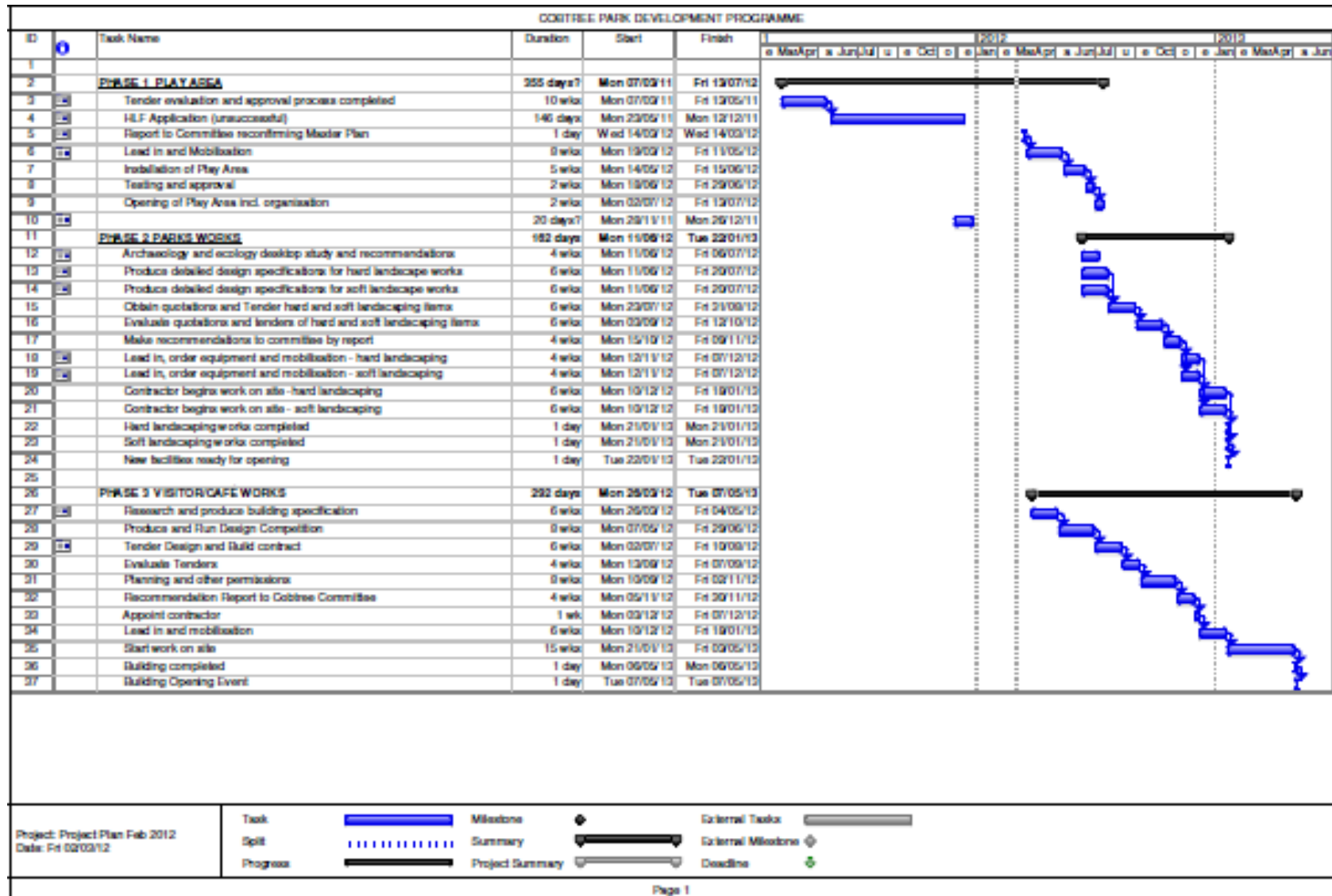
Inflation	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%
(As per Budget Strategy)							

2011/12 & 2012/13 figures as per current estimates

Appendix B

Project plan (please see next page)

Time scales for phases 1, 2 and 3 could be subject to some change depending on the approval of the Charity Commission and the tendering process used and final decisions on design. Each phase shall be brought to the Committee for prior approval. A larger version of this plan will be brought to the Committee Meeting.



Appendix C

Breakdown of costs per phase

		Item	Cost	Total Phase Cost	
PHASE 1	1	Play area inc equipment (initial)	£153,000	£153,000	
PHASE 2	2	Play area inc equipment (additional)	£162,000		
	3	Picnic Area including benches, surfacing and possibly BBQ's	£15,750		
	4	Hard Path network, as shown on map.	£117,000		
	5	Nature Trail Paths, as shown on map	£10,800		
	6	Way finding posts and maps	£5,400		
	7	Viewing platform and pond clearance	£9,000		
	8	Car Park Resurfacing and Edging	£9,000		
	9	Woodland management and park tree works	£20,700		
	10	Boundary Planting	£4,500		
	11	New Arboretum trees	£3,600		
	12	Car park replanting	£4,500		
	13	Improved boundary fencing around estate/bridle path	£9,000		
	14	Trim trail	£19,800		
	15	Outdoor seating and bins	£12,600		
	16	Sculptures	£22,500		
	17	Bridle path rerouting and resurfacing	£4,500		
		18	Llama house renovation	£3,600	£434,250
	PHASE 3	19	Café Building/Visitor Centre	£315,000	
20		Interactive information boards	£9,000		
21		Cycle Stands	£2,250		
22		Interpretational Signage	£10,800		
23		Elephant house	£9,000	£346,050	
ADDITIONAL	24	Project Manager (est.)	£13,500		
	25	Engineer	£4,500		
COSTS	26	Landscape Architect designs and drawings (est.)	£4,500		
	27	Planning Fees (est.)	£2,700	£25,200	
TOTAL	28	Cost of all works	£958,500		
	29	Contingency (10%)	£106,500		
	30	TOTAL COST	£1,065,000		

Appendix D

Cobtree Manor Park Master Plan (Update) 2012

Cobtree Manor Park Maidstone

Master Plan (Update)

March 2012

Introduction

This master plan document is an update of the one original produced on behalf of the Cobtree Estate Committee by Adam S Bailey Garden Design in January 2010. As such some information has been taken directly from Adams original document but this document provides an update to this original document.

The key emphasis for the design from the start has been to attract visitors to explore and enjoy the full extent of the park at all times of the year. This requires the design to draw visitors up through the park on a series of routes designed with different users in mind, whilst offering a range of attractions which are both sympathetic to the feel of the park and to its past history as a private zoo.

Any heavy bias towards seeing the park as having a zoo 'theme' has been avoided as it is felt that this would not sit well with the natural feel of the park and instead the design draws in more subtle elements which are intended to educate and stimulate children and adults of all ages.

Another major consideration has been the necessity to retain and manage the existing impressive tree collection, effectively reducing the impact of the new design on the existing trees by weaving the design around them rather than requiring their extensive removal in order to install the new scheme.

Main benefits of the new design

The new design will aim to increase the number of visitors to the park by a number of key proposals. These proposals will also seek to remedy a number of on-site problems which currently detract from the quality of the park. The major key benefit of the whole scheme is that the new design has a minimal impact on the existing tree stock and wildlife habitats, enhancing and improving rather than removing long-established features in order to install the new scheme.

Master Plan

This updated map of the site, gives a rough guide as to where the new elements of the park will be located. The exact locations of these elements will be finalised following further consideration and site visits.



Elements of the Improvement Plan

1. Play Area

It was identified very early on that families particularly those with children rarely visited the park, apart from walking around the park there was not a great deal on offer. If visitor numbers from this group were going to be encouraged to use the park it will be important that facilities appropriate to this were provided, one of the most important reasons that families visit parks is to use the play area. Very early on in the project the Committee expressed a wish for Cobtree to not just have an off the shelf play area as often provided in parks but to have a bespoke play area which must have a "wow factor".

The council uses the Eastern Shires Purchasing Organisation (ESPO) Framework agreement for the purchase and installation of play equipment and the appropriate organisations we contacted with a brief to provide designs to provide a bespoke play area, with the "wow factor" which must be relevant to the park, its surroundings and history. Following this a number of designs have been submitted to the council, these have now been through the tender process, and been presented to the Committee.

The preferred supplier has now been chosen and the design will be shown to the committee at their March 2012 meeting.

The chosen design is based around the theme of Cobtree Zoo and will be totally unique to Cobtree Manor Park.

2. Picnic Area

This is another feature that families look for when they visit parks. It is proposed that this is located at the bottom of the park to allow school groups using the visitors centre to eat packed lunches. Visitors may also wish to eat food purchased in the café in the picnic area.

Barbeques are now a feature of many parks, although not currently in Maidstone, advice would be taken from police and Community Safety Team as to whether this should be considered as an option.

As the park grows in popularity it is likely in the future that an additional picnic area may be required and this could be located further into the park.

The following would be required of this area:

- In keeping with the rest of the park.
- Accessible to all park users
- Be maintained within existing park resources.

- Fit for purpose.

3. Hard Path network

This hard path will allow families with push chairs and small children to get out into the park and to the new play area, whatever the conditions. The current hard path limits the areas that families can access for some months of the year. This can be seen on the Master Plan Map. Final locations of this path will be decided following further consideration and site visits.

The brief for the path design would include the following:

- Provide adequate stability to enable pushchairs, wheelchairs, etc to use at all times of the year.
- Fit in aesthetically in the park.
- Be able to be mechanically swept and cleaned.

4. Nature Trails

The Woodland and Parkland trails will provide circular walks for visitors taking in interesting features around the park such as the Llama House and Arboretum. Information will be provided on these features by signage. The surface of these paths will be less structured and boots will be needed at certain times of the year. These paths will be clearly marked to make them identifiable to users. There would also be a map available in the park and on the Park website.

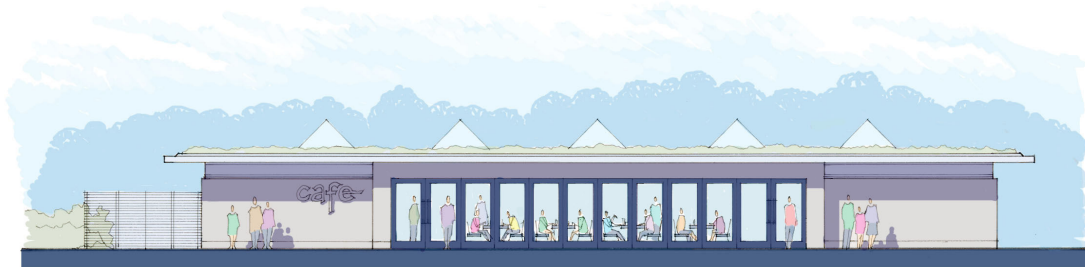
The brief for the park would include:

- Enable access by pedestrians wearing appropriate footwear, without getting muddy.
- Fit aesthetically in the park.
- To be able to be resurfaced within existing park resources.

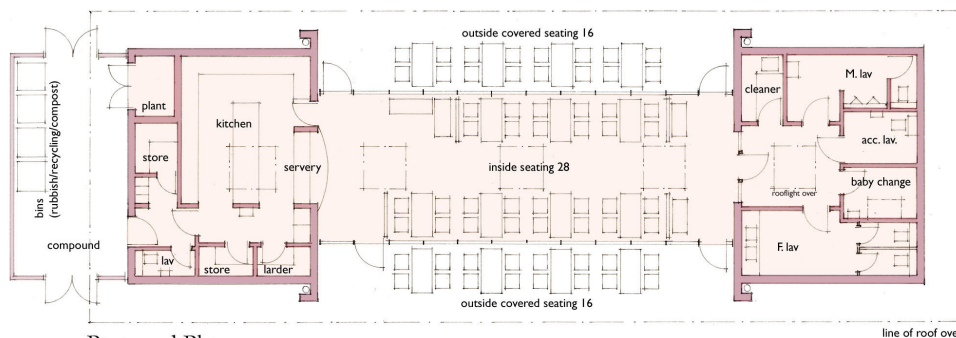
5. Café/ Visitor Centre

The original proposal was to have a café/visitor centre and a separate education building located in the Elephant House. Because school groups tend to visit during the daytime on week days and the busiest time for a café would be weekends, evening and in school holidays it is now proposed to combine the two facilities. As well as making the building more economical to run this will also make staffing considerably easier.

This building would need to be designed by an architect but below is an example of a similar type of dual use building to be constructed in Derby at a cost of £270,000. Following advice we shall budget £350,000 for the building to give something that will fit our requirements more closely.



Proposed Elevation



Proposed Plan

The specification below shows what we would be looking to be included in the design of the Visitor Centre in Cobtree Park:

- Café with Kitchen
- Indoor seating area that can be used for café at weekends, evenings and holidays and indoor education area at school time.
- Indoor and Outdoor Toilets
- Outdoor covered seating area as above
- Rangers Office
- Rangers/Staff Mess Room
- Storage for Buggy and Tools
- Education area with interpretation/interactive features
- Touch screen panels – containing more in-depth information about the park – history, Sir Garrard, etc.
- Sustainable features
- The building will have the potential to be extended in future

- It will contain facilities that meet current legislation for provision for disabled access including toilets etc.
- The building will be sympathetic to its environment and could look something like this similar building at Trosley Country Park (see below).



6. Viewing Platform Feature

It is proposed to have viewing platform at the edge of the pond. As this area is some distance it is proposed to incorporate some sort of meeting area and focal point, where people could sit and where information could be provided. This type of feature is also ideal for school groups that visit the park.

The brief for this feature is:

- Provide a meeting place/focal point and feature within the park.
- Enable access to pond area for education purposes.
- Fit in aesthetically with park

7. Car Park

The existing car park will remain the same size but does need to be resurfaced and the boundary clearly defined to stop cars entering the park. It has been proposed that the car park be surface in a Kentish Ragstone material with larger boulders defining the edges. The car park will incorporate cycle stands to provide secure parking for visitors that cycle to the park.

The brief for the car park is as follows:

- Surface to be easily maintained using existing resources
- Perimeters to be marked possibly using local stone
- Cycle stands
- Fit in aesthetically with the park

8. Woodland Management

As well as improving the Arboretum by introducing new trees it is also proposed to carry out works to any trees in that park that require it to ensure that trees are in the best possible condition. Some areas of the park including the car park and some boundaries require additional planting and fencing to improve definition.

9. Trim Trail

This equipment would be incorporated in the Nature trails and path network. It would provide a course around the park for users to carry out various activities such as pull ups, sit ups and climbing. The equipment is very rustic and will fit in with the surrounding. Trim trails have been very popular in other "country" type parks and attract a different type of user to the park.

The brief for the trim trail is as follows:

- Provide items/equipment for exercise activities.
- Be maintained within existing park resources.
- Fit for purpose.
- Uniform design used.
- Information on how to use.

10. Outdoor Seating and Bins

There are currently a large number of different types of park furniture and bins in the park. As some of these are in a poor state of repair a review will take place. It is highly likely that with the new features in the park that bins and benches will need to be replaced, relocated and new items purchased. Existing items will be restored and recycled where possible, especially commemorative benches.

11. Interpretational Signage

It is important that visitors, particularly schools have the opportunity to learn about what they are seeing in the park. A series of interpretational signage will teach visitors the significance not only of what they see today but also some of the history of the park as well as the natural environment.

12. Elephant House

An approach has recently been made by a local art group looking at the possibility of using the Elephant house as a work shop and gallery. As there are currently no services in the building a sum has been added to the budget to investigate this option further.

13. Sculptures in the Park

One of the things which could really make the park different from other similar parks is to have sculptures hidden around the park. These could be linked to the parks history and the play area has included sculptures based on the Zoo theme. These could be hidden in the park for visitors to find, this should be particularly popular with school groups. Local artists could be approached and this would be an opportunity to showcase their work.



Example of sculpture in Shorne Country Park

An initial brief for the sculptures in the park is:

- Provide interest to visitors
- To be linked with an activity for visitors
- Have relevance to the surroundings
- Feature the work of local artists

14. Llama House Repairs

This original feature in the park needs some work to make sure that it is in top condition. As one of the surviving enclosures from the original zoo it is likely that there will be a considerable amount of interest from visitors.

Project Costs

The table below has been put together using information from other projects, existing specifications, estimates provided by suppliers and respected sources. The overall project would need to be tendered which mean that prices would could fluctuate.

		Item	Cost	Total Phase Cost	
PHASE 1	1	Play area inc equipment (initial)	£153,000	£153,000	
PHASE 2	2	Play area inc equipment (additional)	£162,000		
	3	Picnic Area including benches, surfacing and possibly BBQ's	£15,750		
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COSTS	26	Landscape Architect designs and drawings (est.)	£4,500		
	27	Planning Fees (est.)	£2,700	£25,200	
TOTAL	28	Cost of all works	£958,500		
	29	Contingency (10%)	£106,500		
	30	TOTAL COST	£1,065,000		

Project Plan/Timescales

A project plan is enclosed with this document as **Appendix B**. This document gives timescales to carry out the various stages of the work, but the start dates shown are dependant on finances being approved.

Depending on how the work is phased timescales may alter. The installation of the play area which is currently shown as Phase 1 has now been tendered so is ready to progress when approval is given.

Appendix E

Play area location map (area marked in red)

