

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL
COBTREE MANOR ESTATE COMMITTEE

11TH MARCH 2015

REPORT OF THE COBTREE OFFICER

Report prepared by Joanna Joyce

1. Cobtree Shed

1.1 Issue for Decision

1.1.1 To consider allowing a Cobtree Sheds group to be established in the Elephant House at Cobtree Manor Park.

1.2 Recommendation of the Cobtree Officer

It is the recommendation of the Cobtree Officer:-

1.2.1 That a new Cobtree Sheds group is given permission to set up a shed in the Elephant House at Cobtree Manor Park.

1.2.2 That the new Sheds group is set up and overseen by Medway Valley Countryside Partnership in accordance with the proposal set out in **Appendix A.**

1.2.3 That in addition to the renovation of the Elephant House the Sheds group is asked to provide volunteering time across the estate in lieu of rent.

1.2.4 That the Head of Mid Kent Legal Services draws up a service level agreement with Medway Valley Countryside Partnership on behalf of the Cobtree Manor Estate Trust (CMET) to that effect.

1.3 Reasons for Recommendation

1.3.1 The Cobtree Shed was originally hoping to set up at The Kent Life Sheds following their renovation by the charity Futures for Heroes. Last Summer the building that was due to be used was completely destroyed by fire. After meetings with Futures for Heroes and the Sheds group it was decided that a more public site would be preferable and the Elephant House at Cobtree Manor Park was identified as a possible location.

- 1.3.2 The Shed will provide a hub for volunteering in the heart of Cobtree Manor Park. The Elephant House is currently unused and would provide an ideal venue for restoration and will make an excellent base for a future Sheds workshop.
- 1.3.3 Hosting the Shed in the park will encourage and enable lots of opportunities for volunteering and help in kind across the estate. There will be a wide range of tasks that the group could assist with from conservation and woodland management to mending fences and building bird boxes.
- 1.3.4 The Cobtree Shed has support from a number of professional partner organisations and has funding already established. The Sheds group will be expected to carry out the majority of the work themselves under the supervision and guidance of the Sheds Officer who will be employed by Medway Valley Countryside Partnership.

1.4 Alternative Action and why not Recommended

- 1.4.1 The alternative is not to allow the Shed to be set up at Cobtree Manor Park Elephant House. This is not recommended as the park and estate stand to gain a great deal in volunteering time and skills from a project based on site. The Elephant House is currently unused so this proposal would ensure the building is put to good purpose.

1.5 Impact on the Charity Objects

The governing object is stated as;

“To hold Cobtree Manor and Cobtree Manor Estate for the benefit of the inhabitants of Maidstone and other members of the general public in one or other or all of the following ways:

- i) By maintaining the Cobtree Manor Estate as an open space as defined by the Open Spaces Act 1906 and if the lessees think fit providing thereat facilities for organised games and other sports”.
 - ii) With the consent of ...[the Cobtree Charity Trust Limited and the Kent County Council]... in such other way for the benefit of the inhabitants of Maidstone and other members of the general public as the Council shall from time to time think appropriate.”
- 1.5.1 It is the object of the Charity to use its assets for the benefit of the people of Maidstone; therefore the setting up of a Shed at Cobtree Manor Park directly supports these aims.

1.6 Risk Management

1.6.1 There is a risk that the number of Shedders will be very small and that as a consequence the project will be too large for them. This is considered unlikely because of the large amount of partnership support and funding assisting the project. The previous group at Medway Valley Countryside Partnership was successful and with better long term premises this can be built on.

1.7 Other Implications

1.7.1

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

1.7.2 The Shedders will raise any additional finance required themselves.

1.7.3 A Service Level agreement will need to be drawn up by the legal team.

1.7.4 The Elephant House will have some improvements and therefore be an improved asset for the estate.

1.8 Relevant Documents

1.8.1 Appendices

Appendix A Kent Sheds – Supporting positive mental health, Elephant House, Cobtree Manor Park

1.8.2 Background Documents

None.

IS THIS A KEY DECISION REPORT?

Yes

No

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

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This is a Key Decision because:

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Wards/Parishes affected:

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