

Cobtree Manor Estate Charity Committee

3rd August 2016

Is the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting?

Yes

Cobtree Manor Estate Update Report

Final Decision-Maker	Cobtree Manor Estate Charity Committee
Lead Head of Service	Head of Commercial and Economic Development
Lead Officer and Report Author	Cobtree Officer
Classification	Public
Wards affected	Boxley

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. The Committee is asked to note the contents of the Estate Update.
2. It is recommended that the actions from the initial Café business review (Appendix III) are implemented and a further full review of the café operation is undertaken once these have taken effect, and the results and action plan brought back to the Committee.
3. It is recommended that an update on the financial performance of the café is brought to each meeting of the Committee.

This report relates to the following corporate priorities:

- Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all -
Ensuring there are good leisure and culture facilities.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Cobtree Manor Estate Committee	3 rd August 2016

Cobtree Manor Estate Update Report

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The information in the report is intended to give the Committee an understanding of the day to day work of the Estate and the issues that affect its management. It also provides a record of all that is achieved across the different parts of the estate.
 - 1.2 The work of the estate since March is set out in the Estate Update at Appendix I, and the results of the green flag judging at Appendix II. The Committee is asked to note the contents of the Estate Update.
 - 1.3 A problem with the financial performance of the café has been identified with it currently showing it will only break even in this financial year; an initial review of the operation has been undertaken with results added to the report at Appendix III. It is recommended that these are implemented and a further full review of the café operation is undertaken once these have taken effect, and the results, and action plan brought back to the Committee along with a regular performance update.
 - 1.4 The café and car parking charges were brought in to help make the park more financially self-sufficient as income from the golf course becomes more uncertain. It is therefore important that any problems with performance are identified early and rectified in order to maximise the income potential of the park and reduce the financial burden on the rest of the estate.
-

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Cobtree Manor Estate covers a large area of land left in trust to the people of Maidstone. The Cobtree Trust hold the freehold to the estate whilst the Cobtree Manor Estate Trust (CMET) have a 999 year lease. Maidstone Borough Council is the Corporate Trustee of CMET.

Cobtree Manor Estate Charity - Governing Object

The governing object of the Charity remains that defined in the lease of the Cobtree Estate dated 13 July 1971 between the Cobtree Charity Trust Limited (the lessor) and the Maidstone Borough Council (the lessee). 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."

2.2 The estate update outlines the workings of the estate since the previous report and updates the committee on this. Over this period work has been standard. A good result was achieved through green flag and a number of popular events have been run. The café however is currently predicted only to break even over the course of the year and it is therefore recommended that steps are taken to rectify this, as per the business review (Appendix III) and that this is further reviewed once these have had time to take effect.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

3.1 The committee could choose not to note the information contained in the appendices, and do nothing, however receiving regular reports is in the best interest of good estate management. The recommendations regarding the café are considered important for improving financial performance.

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 It is recommended that the information in Appendix I to the report is noted in order to ensure an accurate record of work across the estate is maintained.

4.2 It is recommended that the actions from the initial review of the café are undertaken and that these are further reviewed once they have had time to take effect, and the results of this and any recommended actions and are brought back to the committee.

4.3 It is recommended that an update on the financial performance of the café is brought to each meeting.

4.4 The above recommendations are considered prudent for the good financial management and monitoring of the estate.

5. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

5.1 The committee has previously resolved to receive regular updates on the ongoing work across the Estate.

6. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

6.1 Any comments from the Committee will be passed on to the relevant parties. Improvements in the performance of the café will be implemented by the Cobtree Manager.

7. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	The work of the charity links directly to its charitable objects and the corporate priorities of the Council.	Head of Commercial and Economic Development
Risk Management	Risks to running the estate are dealt with in the annual Estate Risk Management Report.	
Financial	Financial risks are considered in the ongoing finance updates. Failure to break even by a large amount could have a detrimental effect on the estate finances.	Cobtree Finance Officer
Staffing	No implications.	
Legal	No implications	Deputy Head of the Legal Partnership
Equality Impact Needs Assessment	No implications.	
Environmental/Sustainable Development	No implications.	
Community Safety	No implications.	
Human Rights Act	No implications.	
Procurement	No implications.	
Asset Management	No implications – normal ongoing works.	Parks and Leisure Manager

8. REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix I: Cobtree Estate Progress Report August 2016
 - Appendix II: Green flag feedback
 - Appendix III: Cobtree Manor Park Café Business Review
-

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

There are none.