

**Cobtree Staff Welfare Facilities**

<b>Timetable</b>	
<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
Cobtree Manor Estate Charity Committee	26 October 2022

<b>Will this be a Key Decision?</b>	No
<b>Urgency</b>	Not Applicable
<b>Final Decision-Maker</b>	Cobtree Manor Estate Charity Committee
<b>Lead Head of Service</b>	Mark Green, Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement
<b>Lead Officer and Report Author</b>	Mike Evans, Leisure Manager
<b>Classification</b>	Public
<b>Wards affected</b>	All

**Executive Summary**

Decisions are required about the future of Cobtree Manor Park Café. The *Cobtree Café letting* report, also part of this agenda, sets out a direction of travel with the premises arrangements at Cobtree Manor Park Café. A variation to the premises arrangements is likely to require capital expenditure for the provision of suitable staff welfare and storage facilities, with that capital expenditure maximising revenues in other areas and negating the need for future revenue expenditure.

This report provides additional information on building allocations at Cobtree Manor Park and seeks authority for capital expenditure to address the lack of suitable staff welfare facilities.

**Purpose of Report**

Decision

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

1. That, subject to any necessary consents, a new stand-alone staff welfare and storage unit for park staff at Cobtree Manor Park, in keeping with the look and ethos of the park, is installed into the park.
  2. That the old storage container is removed from the park and salvage costs for it are sought.
  3. That capital expenditure of £50,000 for the provision of a stand-alone staff welfare and storage unit is approved.
  4. That the final undertaking of items 1,2 and 3 above are subject to also agreeing applicable café premises terms that make the need for new staff welfare spaces actionable.
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# Cobtree Staff Welfare Facilities

## 1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Implications</b>	<b>Sign-off</b>
<b>Impact on Corporate Priorities</b>	The work of the charity links directly to its charitable objectives and the Strategic Plan objectives for the council.	Leisure Manager
<b>Cross Cutting Objectives</b>	The work of the charity links directly to its charitable objectives and the cross-cutting objectives of the council.	Leisure Manager
<b>Risk Management</b>	Risk implications are outlined in section 5.	Leisure Manager
<b>Financial</b>	Accepting the recommendations will demand new spending of £50,000. Funding has been identified for this within the existing resources.	Senior Finance Manager (Client)
<b>Staffing</b>	We will deliver the recommendations with our current staffing.	Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement
<b>Legal</b>	Acting on the recommendations is within the Council's powers subject to any necessary planning permission or procurement processes.	Team Leader Contracts and Commissioning MKLS
<b>Information Governance</b>	The recommendations do not impact personal information (as defined in UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018) the Council Processes.	Information Governance Team.
<b>Equalities</b>	The recommendations will ensure a continuation of service and therefore will not require an equalities impact assessment.	Equalities & Communities Officer
<b>Public Health</b>	We recognise that the recommendations will have a positive impact on population health or that of individuals, in particular council staff members working at Cobtree Manor Park.	Public Health Officer

<b>Crime and Disorder</b>	Crime and disorder considerations will be managed as per parks and open spaces policies and procedures.	Leisure Manager
<b>Procurement</b>	On accepting the recommendations, the Council will then follow procurement exercises. We will complete those exercises in line with financial procedure rules.	Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement
<b>Biodiversity and Climate Change</b>	The implications of this report on biodiversity and climate change have been considered and there are no direct implications on biodiversity and climate change.	Biodiversity and Climate Change Manager

## 2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 This report is for consideration in conjunction with the report titled *Cobtree Café Letting* which is part of the same agenda.
- 2.2 The proposal to review the retained areas of the Cobtree Manor Park Café (café) are likely to see the park ranger need new welfare facilities. The park ranger previously used a metal storage container in the park for welfare, but this facility deteriorated and became less and less unsuitable. At present the ranger is using the room that was previously the park manager's office for welfare, marked on page 2 of Appendix 1. The park ranger uses the container for storage only.
- 2.3 The office room used by the park ranger is larger than it needs to be and would have more value if it were let as catering hospitality retail space. The *Cobtree Café Letting* report seeks to proceed in that direction of travel and this report seeks authority to manage the consequences of that and to provide suitable staff welfare facilities that are overdue.
- 2.4 The park ranger works full time in Cobtree Manor Park. They are supported by the Mote Park and Cobtree Manor Park Manager who splits his time across both parks. Other members of the Parks and the Grounds Maintenance teams support work and projects at Cobtree throughout the year.
- 2.5 The welfare facilities provided in the container are no longer usable. The container is no longer weather-proof and water ingress has taken the electrics out of action. It has no heating and in the winter water can freeze on the floor inside making it slippery and unsafe. Rust to the container will soon render it unsecure meaning it cannot be used solely as a storage container either. As well as its unsuitability, the container is also a blot on the landscape of Cobtree Manor Park.
- 2.6 Reclassifying the retained and the let spaces of the café presents an opportunity to increase the service provision to the people in the park, to maximise rental yields from a café tenant and to use the yields from the café to provide suitable welfare facilities for staff. A new stand-alone

welfare unit will be more in keeping with the look and the feel of the park and make it a more attractive place to visit.

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### **3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS**

#### **3.1 Not provide new welfare facilities**

The staff in the park have access to welfare via using the vacant park manager's office as a rest area. This office has running water but it is larger than it needs to be and is also part of the café building. Continuing to use it as a staff room means we continue to be a sub-tenant in a café building we let to someone else and we also deny the café the opportunity to use that room as a sales kiosk selling drinks and snacks in the park thus hampering our ability to obtain maximal rents. **Continuing with this set up is not recommended.**

#### **3.2 Use the Elephant House as a parks management building**

Surveys have been undertaken and quotes obtained for converting the Elephant House into a parks management building. The Elephant House is far larger than required for welfare and storage and it could be converted to include a staff room and office. However, doing so requires more investment than a stand-alone unit, it requires additional investment to ensure utilities services can support the building and it sits a fair distance away from the main hub of park activity meaning when in use it would present some operational challenges.

**For those reasons this option is not recommended.**

#### **3.3 Provide a new stand-alone welfare and storage unit in the park**

A new stand-alone unit can achieve what the park needs in a relatively cost-effective way. It can be located close to the main activity areas of the park and in the vicinity of utilities and services. It will be decorated accordingly to match the aesthetic and appeal of the park, making it visible and discreet at the same time. This option will provide suitable provision for park staff and will also release the potential of the café building.

**For those reasons this option is recommended.**

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### **4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

4.1 CMEC seeks to maximise opportunities within Cobtree Manor Park and deliver the best destination park experience possible. The facilities within the park enable CMEC to do that.

4.2 In line with the *Cobtree Café Letting* report, the execution of this expenditure is subject to identifying a tenant who also wishes to proceed in this way. The final terms of a new lease will require a future decision from this Committee when the final let and retained spaces are known and the capital and expenditure implications of that variation can be assessed. The recommendation made today is that capital expenditure of £50,000 is approved in order to make this direction of travel viable.

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## **5. RISK**

- 5.1 The risks associated with this proposal relate to the uncertainties and challenges in recruitment at present. Using the café lettings opportunity to provide improved welfare and working conditions for our staff ensures that we remain attractive to current and future employees and will enable us to deliver the most enjoyable park possible.
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## **6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK**

- 6.1 Parks staff have been informally consulted on this matter and in the assessment of the available options.
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## **7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION**

- 7.1 Following a decision on these recommendations, CMEC will complete the quotation and assessment procedures to obtain the best quote for the provision of the stand-alone unit and its installation. Indicative quotations from one provider that has been used before have been used in the writing of this report and in the assessment of options.
- 7.2 Planners will be engaged so that applications for the relevant permissions for the stand-alone unit can be obtained.
- 7.3 Quotations for all elements of this project and the various variations will be compiled and brought to a future meeting for final decision.
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## **8. REPORT APPENDICES**

- Appendix 1: Plan of the Cobtree Manor Park Café building showing the park manager's office outlined red.
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## **9. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- None