

Cobtree Estate Update

Timetable	
Meeting	Date
Cobtree Manor Estate Charity Committee	22 November 2023

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

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.	Team Leader, Contracts and Commissioning 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	There are no direct implications on biodiversity and climate change within this report.	Biodiversity and Climate Change Manager

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 In the first half of 2023 this committee took some strategic decisions that would impact the long-term future of the estate. These included decisions at the café and the golf course. This report includes operation updates across the estate since those decisions were enacted.

Cobtree Manor Park

- 1.2 In the period April to September 2023 there were 28,893 vehicle visits to the park. This compares to 32,965 visits in the same period in 2022 and is a 12% decrease, taking park visits back to pre-pandemic levels.
- 1.3 The works to the Llama House have been completed and further works to the park ranger office and the park storage container, which were reported to the committee earlier in 2023, will be completed soon subject to planning feedback and approval. The play equipment continues to be monitored and investment in these assets will be required in the short to medium term.
- 1.4 The new café operator is progressing with their internal fit out works and the café will be fully open to visitors this winter. The standard of toilet cleanliness continues to be monitored closely to ensure standards are as park visitors would expect.
- 1.5 The Elephant House has been advertised as a premises available to local business or organisations and tenants who complement the operations of the park are sought. Any new tenant would have restricted vehicular access to the building and restrictions would be placed on regular opening hours, but the building is in a great location and would make an ideal premises for a local small business or group. We are investigating the feasibility of installing mains drainage to the building to make it appeal to a wider pool of applicants. The decision to grant a lease will be one for this committee to take and this item is on the Forward Plan as a separate issue when fully-drafted offers are ready.

Cobtree Golf Course

- 1.6 We welcomed the new golf course operator to Cobtree Manor in October and golfers have enjoyed a seamless transition. The new operator has increased the level of marketing for Cobtree Manor, but the time of year and the weather makes this a difficult period to be pushing and promoting sales. Spring time will be targeted and be a key growth period for the course.
- 1.7 New greenkeeping equipment is already improving standards across the golf course. This is despite the winter weather, and so we look forward to much greater increases in standard next spring when the full benefit will be realised.
- 1.8 Now in residence at the clubhouse, the operator is developing their refurbishment and development plans with the ambition to deliver these upgrades in time for spring/summer 2024.

Kent Life

- 1.9 Kent Life has seen increased visitor numbers for the period April to September, with 95,323 visits this year compared to 94,555 in the same period in 2022, despite a disappointing period of weather in July 2023 when expected numbers were affected.
- 1.10 The team at Kent Life have installed a large marquee to support the weddings that are held there. It also provides an additional indoor aspect to other events, such as Hops n Harvest. They have built a new stable for the shire horse in the top paddock and installed additional rain water harvesting bins around the site.
- 1.11 Following the success of the recent Halloween and fireworks events, attentions are now turning to Christmas and the Winter Wonderland event.

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.

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

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- None