

**COBTREE MANOR ESTATE
CHARITY COMMITTEE**

27 March 2024

Cobtree Estate Update

Timetable	
Meeting	Date
Cobtree Manor Estate Charity Committee	27 March 2024

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	<p>Public report with exempt appendix</p> <p>Exempt Appendix Appendix 1: Exempt Update</p> <p>This appendix contains exempt information as classified in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 in that it contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).</p> <p>The public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in its disclosure. The cost of this work will be included in future financial reports brought to this committee.</p>
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	Risk management implications are shown in section 5.	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.	Deputy Head of Legal
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.	Senior Public Health Officer

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 This report includes operational updates from across the Cobtree Estate. An exempt update is included as exempt appendix 1.

Cobtree Manor Park

- 1.2 In the period October to December 2023 there were 8,893 vehicle visits to the park, which matches the number for the same period in 2022. Overall, for the whole of 2023 there were over 51,900 vehicle visits, compared to the whole of 2022 where there were 55,220 visits.
- 1.3 The new café operator is progressing with their internal fit out works and the café at Cobtree is receiving good feedback from park users.
- 1.4 Toilet cleanliness standards have been monitored closely, as requested by this committee. Improvements were not being achieved and this was a concern to the council, the café operator and park visitors. Cleaning responsibilities for the toilets have been taken on by the café tenant who has given the toilets a full redecoration and attends to them regularly throughout the day. There has been a noticeable improvement, positive feedback from the public and it is hoped the improved visitor experience will translate to increased visitor numbers.
- 1.5 The park has been gifted the Elmer the Elephant sculpture that is themed on Maidstone Zoo and Cobtree Manor Park by the Cobtree Charity Trust. It will be given a permanent home at Cobtree Manor Park. Before its installation it will be part of an exhibition on the history of Maidstone Zoo that is on show in the Mote Park Visitor Centre in April. The exhibition will show the history of the zoo and its role in the town. It includes memories, photographs and audio clips from the zoo and will also enable residents to add their childhood memories of Maidstone Zoo to the exhibition.
- 1.6 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. A separate report on this features in this meeting agenda.

Cobtree Golf Course

- 1.7 In Quarter 3, the first under a new operator, there were 4,986 rounds of golf played and, although slightly under the 5,100 rounds under the previous operator for the same period in 2022, this represents a good start to the new operation in a period that is always weather dependent. Planned improvements to the site will make the course a more attractive proposition to golfers and there is evidence that a number of members that left the club over the past three years are returning.
- 1.8 New greenkeeping equipment is already improving standards across the golf course, despite the winter weather. The real benefit of this won't be realised until the spring when the grass and turf is in its growing season.
- 1.9 In the second half of February 2024, the course was closed for a number of consecutive days because of the wet playing surfaces and safe routes around the course. It is always unfortunate when this is the case, however it is important to protect the course and the golfers. Cobtree was not the only local course to close in this period with other courses in and outside the borough needing to close for the same reasons.
- 1.10 The new operator tenant has submitted their planning application for refurbishments to the clubhouse. The council is supporting in the consultation with golfers on the proposed changes.

Kent Life

- 1.11 Kent Life received 41,555 visits in Quarter 3, which is 9% lower than for the same period in 2022, when there were 45,666 visits. Overall, 2023 total visitor numbers were 178,945 compared to 179,812 in 2022, which is a 0.1% decrease.
- 1.12 Winter activities have been well attended and received with Winter Wonderland being sold out on many days and drawing positive feedback on social media.
- 1.13 The introduction of cardboard recycling bins around the site has led to a reduction in skip use by 50% and the first collection took 4.2 tonnes of cardboard from site.
- 1.14 The application for Gift Aid eligibility has been approved and CMEC can now claim Gift Aid on donations received at Kent Life.

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.
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4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 It is recommended that the information in this report is noted.
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5. RISK

- 5.1 The items in this report are presented for information only and have no risk management implications.
- 5.2 The exempt update contains risks that are included at paragraphs 1.7, 1.8, 1.9 and 1.11. Mitigations to these risks are shown at paragraph 1.10.
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6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 6.1 No consultation has taken place for the purposes of this report.
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7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 7.1 Any comments from the Committee will be passed on to the relevant party.
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8. REPORT APPENDICES

- Exempt appendix 1: Exempt update
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9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- None