

COBTREE MANOR ESTATE CHARITY COMMITTEE MEETING

Date: Thursday 14 April 2022
Time: 2.00 p.m.
Venue: Town Hall, High Street, Maidstone

Membership:

Councillors Cox, Garten (Chairman), Kimmance, Perry (Vice-Chairman) and Springett

The Chairman will assume that all Members will read the reports before attending the meeting. Officers are asked to assume the same when introducing reports.

<u>AGENDA</u>	<u>Page No.</u>
1. Apologies for Absence	
2. Notification of Substitute Members	
3. Urgent Items	
4. Notification of Visiting Members	
5. Disclosures by Members and Officers	
6. Disclosures of Lobbying	
7. To consider whether any items should be taken in private because of the possible disclosure of exempt information.	
8. Minutes of the meeting held on 10 March 2022	1 - 4
9. Presentation of Petitions (if any)	
10. Question and answer session for members of the public (if any)	
11. Questions from Members to the Chairman (if any)	
12. Queen's Jubilee Project	5 - 9
13. Cobtree Estate Update	10 - 14

Issued on Wednesday 6 April 2022

Continued Over/:

Alison Broom

Alison Broom, Chief Executive

INFORMATION FOR THE PUBLIC

In order to ask a question at this meeting in person or by remote means, please call **01622 602899** or email committee@maidstone.gov.uk by 5 p.m. one clear working day before the meeting (i.e. by 5 p.m. on Tuesday 12 April 2022). You will need to provide the full text in writing.

In order to make a statement in relation to an item on the agenda, please call **01622 602899** or email committee@maidstone.gov.uk by 5 p.m. one clear working day before the meeting (i.e. by 5 p.m. on Tuesday 12 April 2022). You will need to tell us which agenda item you wish to speak on.

If you require this information in an alternative format please contact us, call **01622 602899** or email committee@maidstone.gov.uk.

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MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

COBTREE MANOR ESTATE CHARITY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 10 MARCH 2022

Present: Councillor Garten (Chairman) and
Councillors Cox, English and Springett

Also Present: Mrs Sandra Knatchbull – Chairman, Cobtree Charity
Trust Limited

63. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

It was noted that apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Kimmance and Perry.

64. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was noted that Councillor English was substituting for Councillor Kimmance.

65. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

66. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

There were no Visiting Members.

67. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

68. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

69. EXEMPT ITEMS

RESOLVED: That the items on the agenda be taken in public as proposed.

70. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 25 JANUARY 2022

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 25 January 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed.

71. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

72. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from members of the public.

73. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO THE CHAIRMAN

Questions from Councillor Springett to the Chairman of the Committee

Question 1

There has been a lot of recent press coverage regarding the future of the Carriage Museum, but I am hearing conflicting views on the way forward. Would it be possible for us to have a combined meeting of this Committee and the Trustees of the Trust to discuss the various ideas put forward so far and the feasibility of them?

The Chairman of the Committee responded to the question.

Councillor Springett did not wish to ask a supplementary question of the Chairman of the Committee.

Question 2

As some of the carriages are on loan to us, should we consult the owners to see if they can offer any professional advice on the conditions to keep them in? This would most likely be the royal mews on behalf of the Queen and the Victoria and Albert Museum.

The Chairman of the Committee responded to the question.

Councillor Springett did not wish to ask a supplementary question of the Chairman of the Committee.

To listen to the answers to these questions, please follow this link:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Igs0p_XLK2c&t=1293s

74. COBTREE MANOR ESTATE FINANCIAL POSITION

The Senior Finance Manager (Client) introduced his report summarising the financial position of the Cobtree Manor Estate as at 31 January 2022. The report covered the Golf Course, Kent Life, the Manor Park and the residential properties. The report also included an update on the review of the Charity's investment of the permanent endowment with Charifund, including alternative investment options.

Financial Position

The Senior Finance Manager (Client) advised the Committee that:

- The current financial position remained healthy. There was an £11k underspend against the profiled budgets as at 31 January 2022 together with a projected year-end surplus of £50k which might be exceeded slightly provided that there were no unanticipated major items of expenditure between now and the end of March.
- Car parking income continued to be high; the figures now included £9k for car parking charges from the organisers of the winter lights trail.
- The only significant item of expenditure was £9k on play area parts that were needed to ensure that the equipment remains fit for ongoing use.

Investment Options

The Senior Finance Manager (Client) advised the Committee that:

- The value of the investment with Charifund had fallen from £891k as reported to the last meeting of the Committee to £812k the previous day. This fall was likely to reflect the reaction of the financial markets to the current situation in Ukraine. The lowest figure during the pandemic was £670k.
- In terms of investment options going forward, the Council's treasury management advisors had said that whilst they did not specifically advise on charitable funds, they would be willing to provide some guidance once any potentially suitable funds had been identified. They did suggest, however, that checks should be made to see if there were any limits or restraints on what types of investments can be made.
- A review of the available documents had been undertaken and there were no specific references to investments in any of those. It was therefore suggested that some draft investment objectives be drawn up in line with Charity Commission guidance for consideration at the July 2022 meeting of the Committee together with alternative investment options to meet these objectives.

During the discussion, it was suggested and agreed that a meeting of the Committee be arranged to take place at the earliest opportunity to discuss how the Queen's Platinum Jubilee might be commemorated at the Cobtree Manor Park and that all Members be invited to attend to share ideas. Suggestions put forward at the meeting included tree planting, a water fountain or a sundial.

RESOLVED:

1. That the financial position of the Cobtree Manor Estate as at 31 January 2022 be noted.
2. That the Officers draw up draft investment objectives for consideration at the July 2022 meeting of the Committee together with alternative investment options to meet these objectives.
3. That a meeting of the Committee be arranged to take place at the earliest opportunity to discuss how the Queen's Platinum Jubilee might be commemorated at the Cobtree Manor Park and that all Members of the Council be invited to attend to share ideas.

75. **KENT LIFE CONTRACT EXTENSION**

The Leisure Manager introduced his report setting out details of a proposal to extend the Kent Life operations contract in line with the current contract conditions to enable Planning Solutions to make a significant capital investment into the site. It was noted that:

- Kent Life was leased to and managed by Planning Solutions. The contract of operation was for a term of ten years commencing on 1 December 2015 with an option to extend that term by five years.
- Planning Solutions wished to make a significant capital investment into the site to convert an under-used storage area (not the artifact store) to a seated restaurant complementing the tea rooms next door and sharing the same kitchen. The restaurant would also include a grocery area selling local food and produce.
- The extension of the contract was required to justify the investment. The investment would be a condition of the extension. A new head lease would be negotiated and agreed with the operator.

The Committee supported the proposal as it would enhance the visitor experience at Kent Life and increase the value of the asset.

RESOLVED: That delegated authority be given to the Head of Regeneration and Economic Development in liaison with the Head of Mid-Kent Legal Partnership (interim) for the purpose of extending the Kent Life operations contract, and completing any other necessary ancillary documents, with Planning Solutions by the pre-determined five-year extension period.

76. **DURATION OF MEETING**

2.00 p.m. to 2.25 p.m.

Cobtree Manor Estate Charity Committee

14 April 2022

Queen's Jubilee Project

Final Decision-Maker	Cobtree Manor Estate Charity Committee
Lead Head of Service	John Foster, Head of Regeneration and Economic Development
Lead Officer and Report Author	Mike Evans, Leisure Manager
Classification	Public
Wards affected	Boxley

Executive Summary

A report on a Cobtree Manor Park project to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.
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Purpose of Report

Decision

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That delegated authority is given to the Leisure Manager and the Mote Park and Cobtree Manor Park Manager to complete the installation of an interactive sundial to mark the Queen's Jubilee. 2. That up to £5,000 of the operational surplus in the Cobtree Manor Estate Charity's accounts be used for the completion of this project. 3. That the Chair of Cobtree Manor Estate Charity Committee ask the Chair of Economic Regeneration and Leisure Committee if the Carriage Museum can be more open and more available to the public in June 2022 to mark the Jubilee weekend. |
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Timetable

Meeting	Date
Cobtree Manor Estate Charity Committee	14 April 2022

Queen's Jubilee Project

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	The work of the charity links directly to its charitable objectives and the corporate priorities for the council.	Leisure Manager
Cross-Cutting Objectives	The work of the charity links directly to its charitable objectives and the cross-cutting objectives of the council.	Leisure Manager
Risk Management	The risks of following and not following the recommendations in this report are included in section 5.	Leisure Manager
Financial	The recommendations will increase the appeal of the park and could attract more visitors.	Senior Finance Manager (Client)
Staffing	Staffing implications are managed day-to-day in line with council procedures and policies.	Head of Regeneration and Economic Development
Legal	There are no legal implications to accepting this recommendation.	Team Leader, Contracts and Commissioning
Privacy and Data Protection	There are no new implications as a result of this report and recommendation.	Policy and Information Manager
Equalities	There is no impact on Equalities as a result of the recommendations in this report. An EqIA would be carried out as part of a policy or service change, should one be identified.	Equalities & Communities Officer
Public Health	The Cobtree Estate works towards improving the health of our communities and residents through its day-to-day operations.	Leisure Manager
Crime and Disorder	Crime and disorder implications are managed day-to-day in line with council procedures and policies.	Leisure Manager

Procurement	Procurement implications are managed day-to-day in line with council procedures and policies.	Head of Regeneration and Economic Development
Biodiversity and Climate Change	The implications of this report on biodiversity and climate change have been considered and there are no implications on biodiversity and climate change.	Biodiversity and Climate Change Manager

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At its 10 March meeting, the Cobtree Manor Estate Charity Committee resolved to explore using some of the operational surplus achieved this financial year to install something into the Manor Park to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.
- 2.2 Various ideas were suggested at the 10 March meeting and it was resolved that all members should be invited to contribute additional ideas before the committee decided which idea or ideas would be taken forward.
- 2.3 All members were invited via email to submit ideas and to attend an online discussion to evaluate the merits of each idea.
- 2.4 The discussion was held on 21 March and was supported by the park manager, who advised on the logistical and operational advantages and disadvantages of the ideas, and tourism colleagues who advised on best practice and some national and other local projects that are also marking the jubilee celebrations. The jubilee celebrations will last all of 2022 and do not need to be focused around the bank holiday weekend in June. This gives a longer lead in time for installation projects and makes them more deliverable.
- 2.5 The ideas discussed were:
1. Tree
 2. Silver birch tree to fit with platinum theme
 3. Flower bed of Queen's favourite flowers (lily of the valley)
 4. Water fountain
 5. Sundial
 6. Beacon
 7. Carriage
 8. Animal sculpture trail
 9. Plaque rubbings spread around the park as a trail
 10. Elephant sculpture
 11. Bench
 12. Concrete mosaic bench decorated by community
- 2.6 Following discussions and technical input from officers the preferred idea amongst those members present is to install an interactive sundial that requires people to use their own shadows to tell the time. The sundial is made from a series of stones sunk into the ground following a set pattern.

It will be installed in the park and accompanied by a rose bed that can be in bloom during the summer jubilee celebrations.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

3.1 Do not mark the Queen's Jubilee

CMEC can choose to not mark the jubilee with an installation. This would contradict previous resolutions and would overlook the opportunity to attract more visitors to the park.

This option is not recommended.

3.2 Mark the Queen's Jubilee with a project other than the interactive sundial

Through invitations to all members and a discussive analysis of the submitted ideas, attended by members of this committee, CMEC has evaluated the advantages, disadvantages and preferences of multiple ideas. Selecting a different installation project at this stage would go against the preferences and advice available via the discussive analysis.

This option is not recommended.

3.3 Mark the Queen's Jubilee by installing an interactive sundial in Cobtree Manor Park

Following members' feedback and technical advice from officers, discussive analysis has identified a desire to install an interactive sundial in Cobtree Manor Park and decorate it with a bed of roses that can be in bloom during the summer jubilee celebrations. This option is long-lasting, has links to the passing of time, is educational on physics and nature, and will attract new visitors to the park

This is the recommended option.

3.4 Highlight and celebrate Maidstone's links to Queen Elizabeth II, in particular the royal carriages held in the Carriage Museum

A number of carriages in the Carriage Museum are on loan from the Royal Household or were donateded by the Royal Family. These links to the Queen could be celebrated this year. The Carriage Museum is within Economic Regeneration and Leisure Committee's portfolio.

It is recommended that the Chair of Cobtree Manor Estate Charity Committee ask the Chair of Economic Regeneration and Leisure Committee if the Carriage Museum can be more open and more available to the public in June 2022 to mark the Queen's Jubilee.

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 The preferred option is to install an interactive sundial into Cobtree Manor Park and decorate it with a rose bed. The benefits of this option are listed in paragraph 3.3.

- 4.2 At the time of writing the Mote Park and Cobtree Manor Park Manager does not have accurate quotes for this work. Using evidence from previous projects and knowledge of the scope of the work involved, it is anticipated this project can be completed for less than £5,000.
- 4.3 The Leisure Manager and the Mote Park and Cobtree Manor Park Manager will advance and complete this project and will inform committee members of progress.
- 4.4 In addition to the recommendation in paragraph 3.4, officers will also keep the notes on the other ideas, in particular the animal trail and sculpture trail, and look to deliver these in the short to medium term where budgets or funding make this possible.
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5. RISK

- 5.1 If a project is not delivered to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, the Cobtree estate may miss an opportunity to join in the celebrations.
- 5.2 The committee will also miss an opportunity to install new infrastructure that is educational on physics and nature, interactive, long-lasting and able to attract new visitors to the park.
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6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 6.1 Consultation with all members has been undertaken via:
- email,
 - online submission of suggested ideas,
 - discussion of the merits and practicalities of each idea
 - sharing of preferences
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7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 7.1 With agreement from CMEC, officers will deliver this project by summer 2022 and publicise its completion.
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8. REPORT APPENDICES

- None
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9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- None

Agenda Item 13

Cobtree Manor Estate Charity Committee

14 April 2022

Cobtree Estate Update

Final Decision-Maker	Cobtree Manor Estate Charity Committee
Lead Head of Service	John Foster, Head of Regeneration and Economic Development
Lead Officer and Report Author	Mike Evans, Leisure Manager
Classification	Public
Wards affected	Boxley

Executive Summary

An update report on the Cobtree Estate and its constituent venues and facilities.

Purpose of Report

Noting

This report makes the following recommendation to this Committee:

1. That the contents of the report are noted.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Cobtree Manor Estate Charity Committee	14 April 2022

Cobtree Estate Update

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	The work of the charity links directly to its charitable objectives and the corporate priorities for the council.	Leisure Manager
Cross Cutting Objectives	The work of the charity links directly to its charitable objectives and the cross-cutting objectives of the council.	Leisure Manager
Risk Management	There are no risk management implications in this report.	Leisure Manager
Financial	Financial implications from this update are managed day-to-day in line with council procedures and policies.	Senior Finance Manager (Client)
Staffing	Staffing implications are managed day-to-day in line with council procedures and policies.	Head of Regeneration and Economic Development
Legal	There are no specific legal implications at present as this report is presented for noting only.	Team Leader Contracts and Commissioning
Privacy and Data Protection	There are no new implications as a result of this update report and recommendation.	Policy and Information Team
Equalities	No impact identified as a result of this update report and recommendation. An EqIA will be required for the project phase.	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 Manager
Crime and Disorder	Crime and disorder implications are managed day-to-day in line with council procedures and policies	Leisure Manager

Procurement	Procurement implications are managed day-to-day in line with council procedures and policies.	Head of Regeneration and Economic Development & Section 151 Officer
Biodiversity and Climate Change	The implications of this report on biodiversity and climate change have been considered and there are no implications on biodiversity and climate change.	Biodiversity and Climate Change Manager

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Cobtree Manor Park

- 2.1 Latest car park usage data to 27 March 2022 showed more than £110,000 nett income for the financial year. This equates to 66,266 paid vehicle visits and is a positive variance of £5,000 against the reprofiled budget.

Golf Course

- 2.2 The new golf course manager is in place and has overseen good course usage despite a period of mixed course conditions due to some extreme weather. In the January to mid-March period there has been a similar number of rounds (4,451) as in the same whole Quarter in 2019 (4,591).
- 2.3 The ongoing course improvement works, including drainage and arboriculture, has contributed to an improving aesthetic as well as playing experience for golfers. Boundary works by both MBC and MyTime Active have helped to manage the public rights of way through and around the course.

Kent Life

- 2.4 The venue has introduced a new pricing structure where there is one standardised entry fee for all. A new, online ticketing system has been implemented.
- 2.5 Severe weather in February led to the site having to close for one day and there was some minor damage sustained. The poor weather impacted on half-term customer levels not least following a need to close the lower car park due to flooding.
- 2.6 The Environment Agency is still using part of the venue car park as their works are over-running. There has been some discussion with their contractor on compensation for their extended use of the area, but no outcome yet.
- 2.7 Leak issues in the artefact store have been resolved through roof maintenance and some remedial works have taken place to reduce cellar

flooding; further investigations are in planning and a proactive insurance claim is being investigated still.

- 2.8 It was resolved at the last Committee meeting that Planning Solutions would be offered an extension to their current contract and legal documents are being prepared. The proposed extension would extend the contract end date from 2025 to 2030.

Cobtree Café

- 2.9 The operator has been required to carry out and has completed emergency plumbing works in the toilets. They are also required to resolve some maintenance issues there too, which will be completed in April. MBC has completed some minor drainage improvements at the toilet entrance thresholds.
- 2.10 In terms of café business, the operator reported a Quarter 3 performance 34% better than the same period in 2019 and comparable with 2018; although during Covid in 2020 business was 26% higher than this year.
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3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 Committee can note the information in this report.
- 3.2 Committee can choose not to note the information in this report; however the Committee has requested regular updates on the operations of the Estate.
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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 This report is presented for information only and has no risk management implications.
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6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 6.1 No consultation has taken place since the last update 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.

8. REPORT APPENDICES

- None
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9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- None