

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

**RECORD OF DECISION OF THE COBTREE MANOR ESTATE CHARITY
COMMITTEE**

Decision Made: 26 February 2010

ACCOUNTS 2008/09

Issue for Decision

To consider the audited Report and Financial Statements for the financial year 2008/09.

Decision Made

That the Report and Financial Statement for the financial year 2008/09, be approved.

Reasons for Decision

In July 2009 the Committee received the un-audited Report and Financial Statements for the financial year 2008/09.

Attached at Appendix A to the Report of the Head of Finance, were the audited 2008/09 Report and Financial Statements from the external auditors, along with the Matters Arising letter and the Letter of Representation.

Following their examination of the Report and Financial Statements the external auditors recommended a small number of changes, which have now been incorporated into the audited version.

The majority of the changes were of a minor or technical nature, and have had a small impact on the amount of the loan outstanding at 31st March 2009, which has now increased by £1,500 from £149,900 in the draft accounts up to £151,400. The main reason for the increase is that there was a miscalculation in the apportionment of capital costs between the Council and the Trust. This was partially offset by an increase in the amount of interest due to the Trust from the Council.

The external auditors did request that an impairment review was carried out to confirm that the values of the Trust's fixed assets had not been adversely affected by the recent economic conditions. The review by the Council's Corporate Property Manager subsequently identified that the value of the assets had actually increased by £173,811, and this has been reflected in the audited Balance Sheet, and the Statement of Financial

Activities. This change has no impact on the resources of the Trust.

There was one further adjustment in respect of the disposal of the Gate House. This had not been included in the Trust's fixed assets on the Balance Sheet prior to the disposal, and the auditors have amended the way the disposal was accounted for in the Financial Statements. This change has no impact on the resources of the Trust. However, members were informed at the meeting that it had transpired there was a typographical error on the Completion Statement and therefore this matter has now been resolved.

Members were informed that the Accounts had been submitted to the Charities Commission before the deadline.

Alternatives considered and why rejected

There are no alternative actions. The accounts and the Letter of Representation are required to be approved by Trustees and signed by the Chairman prior to their submission to the Charity Commission.

Background Papers

None

Should you be concerned about this decision and wish to call it in, please submit a call in form signed by any two Non-Executive Members to the Scrutiny Manager by: 9 March 2010
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MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

RECORD OF DECISION OF THE COBTREE MANOR ESTATE CHARITY COMMITTEE

Decision Made: 26 February 2010

COBTREE MANOR PARK - MASTER PLAN

Issue for Decision

To consider the final draft of the proposed master plan for the Cobtree Manor Park and, if appropriate, to sanction its use for consultation with the general public and other interested parties.

Decision Made

1. That the draft master plan, for use in consultation with the general public and other interested parties, be agreed in principle.
2. That the proposed format for the public consultation, as detailed in the Report of the Cobtree Officer, be further developed to ensure wide publicity and engagement.

Reasons for Decision

At the meeting of the Committee on 20 November 2009 Members were asked to comment upon the outline proposals submitted by the appointed consultant. Although Members expressed reservations at the amount of time to consider the proposals in detail, and a lack of information about the estimated cost, the general theme of the proposals appeared to be endorsed.

With a view to working towards an early start on implementing elements of the scheme where funding can be made available, and to be in a position to seek the views of the Charity Commission on the use of the Charity's permanent endowment fund, Members asked that the final draft of the proposed master plan be submitted to an early meeting prior to it being subject to public consultation and comment from other interested parties.

Over the Christmas and New Year period the consultant had difficulty in obtaining the information requested by Members prior to the despatch of the agenda for the meeting held on 15 January 2010. Members expressed their concern at the delay and requested that the consultant be required to submit his proposals by the 7th February 2010 and that a further meeting be set as soon as possible after this date. The information attached to the report of the Cobtree Officer was received by

the required date and an early copy distributed to the Members of the Committee.

The draft master plan, design specification and estimated project costs were attached at Appendix A to the report of the Cobtree Officer.

Following consideration of the material by Members at this meeting it is intended that the draft proposals be subject to consultation with the general public and other interested parties before final acceptance by this Committee.

Public Consultation

For the proposed public consultation it is suggested that the master plan and brief explanation be placed on display in the Council's "Gateway" and on-site at Cobtree Manor Park. It was proposed that each should be staffed for one half day; for those members of the public wishing to seek further information.

It was proposed that response "cards" be made available at each site for people to record their comments. The "cards" will be designed to seek responses to specific proposals as well as general comments. The displays and a contact telephone number will be advertised through a Council press release.

It was also proposed that individual copies of the draft master plan should be forwarded to the following interested parties for their specific comment: Cobtree Charity Trust Limited, Kent County Council, Boxley Parish Council, Medway Valley Countryside Partnership, Kent Wildlife Trust and the Museum of Kent Life.

A report on the results of the consultation will be collated and submitted to the proposed meeting in March 2010.

The Committee emphasised the importance of the public consultation and that it must be well advertised and felt that the proposed consultation required expanding and developing further. The Committee felt that the Head of Communications could help develop the consultation proposals.

The Master Plan

Members were reminded that the essential objective of the proposals is to increase the number of visitors to the site. Although the proposals have essentially evolved from earlier studies carried out by consultants PMP and W.S. Atkins, the consultant was allowed freedom to introduce his own ideas.

The proposals are broadly in line with the requirements set out by Members. One area where the plan does not perhaps achieve this fully relates to the children's play area which is not "significantly different from similar facilities found in the area."

Other areas which Members might feel warrant further consideration are:

- (i) The northwest corner of the site (shown on sheet CPO6) where the bridle path is not shown to link with the path which goes around the perimeter of the golf course.
- (ii) The animal cemetery (the site of which is shown on sheet CPO2) no proposals are indicated for this area.
- (iii) The possibility of a "tree top walk" which was a suggestion by previous consultants; this is not shown.
- (iv) Reference to the previous use of the site as a zoo; there appears to be no reference, but this may be covered in the proposed information boards; this needs to be confirmed.

At the meeting, the Consultant gave a presentation to Members on the proposed Master Plan and, in principle, the Committee felt it was ready for public consultation. Members raised a number of points with regard to the plan, but it was felt that the consultation would bring out these points and more. The Committee felt strongly that the consultation had to be well advertised and good use made of our website, the press and perhaps having a stand in The Mall Chequers, as well as the Gateway and Cobtree Manor Park itself. The Committee were informed that the Cobtree Trustees had now been given a copy of the report of the Cobtree Officer and the Master Plan and the public consultation would start as soon as the Cobtree Trustees had given their approval to the Master Plan.

Alternatives considered and why rejected

The alternative course of action is to reject the proposals and seek further revisions; this is not recommended as Members have already given tacit agreement to the outline proposals underpinning the draft plan presented for consideration.

Background Papers

None

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