AGENDA

COBTREE MANOR ESTATE CHARITY COMMITTEE MEETING

Date: Friday 3 October 2014
Time: 10.30 a.m.
Venue: Town Hall, High Street, Maidstone

Membership:

Councillors Mrs Blackmore, Greer, McLoughlin and Perry (Chairman)

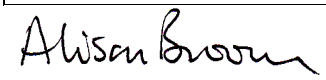
Page No.

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Notification of Visiting Members
3. Disclosures by Members and Officers
4. Disclosures of Lobbying
5. To consider whether any items should be taken in private because of the possible disclosure of exempt information.
6. Minutes of the meeting held on 9 July 2014 1 - 3

Continued Over/:

Issued on 25 September 2014

The reports included in Part I of this agenda can be made available in **alternative formats**. For further information about this service, or to arrange for special facilities to be provided at the meeting, **please contact DEBBIE SNOOK on 01622 602030**. To find out more about the work of the Committee, please visit www.maidstone.gov.uk



Alison Broom, Chief Executive, Maidstone Borough Council, Maidstone House, King Street, Maidstone, Kent ME15 6JQ

7.	Report of the Head of Finance and Resources - Cobtree Manor Estate - Financial Position 2014/15	4 - 7
8.	Report of the Head of Finance and Resources - Accounts 2013/14	8 - 30
9.	Report of the Cobtree Officer - Cobtree Estate Progress Report	31 - 37
10.	Report of the Cobtree Officer - Cobtree Manor Park Visitor Centre	38 - 46

PART II

To move that the public be excluded for the item set out in Part II of the Agenda because of the likely disclosure of exempt information for the reason specified having applied the Public Interest Test.

		Head of Schedule 12A and Brief Description	
11.	Exempt Appendix to the Report of the Cobtree Officer - Cobtree Manor Park Visitor Centre	3 – Financial/Business Affairs	47 - 54

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

COBTREE MANOR ESTATE CHARITY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 9 JULY 2014

Present: **Councillor Perry (Chairman) and Councillor Greer**

Also Present: **Councillor Mrs Ring**

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

It was noted that apologies for absence had been received from Councillor McLoughlin and Mr Richard Corben, the Chairman of the Cobtree Charity Trust Limited.

2. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

Councillor Mrs Ring attended the meeting as an observer.

3. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED: That Councillor Perry be elected as Chairman of the Committee for the Municipal Year 2014/15.

4. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED: That Councillor Greer be elected as Vice-Chairman of the Committee for the Municipal Year 2014/15.

5. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

6. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

7. EXEMPT ITEMS

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

8. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 14 APRIL 2014

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 14 April 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed.

9. CHARITY KNOWN AS THE COBTREE MANOR ESTATE - FINANCIAL POSITION 2014/15

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Finance and Resources setting out details of the financial position in respect of the Golf Course and the Manor Park as at 31 May 2014. The report also included details of capital expenditure and total investments held. It was noted that:

- The 2013/14 outturn position, set out in Appendix A to the report, showed the net operational surplus for the Estate was £9,252. This was lower than previous years due to a combination of increased running costs at the Manor Park and some one-off costs incurred in respect of the Kent Life attraction. The draft accounts for 2013/14 would be reported to the meeting of the Committee scheduled to be held in September.

- The Golf Course was projected to continue to produce a healthy net surplus for 2014/15, but the projected deficit on the Manor Park meant that only a small overall net surplus was forecast. Costs would be monitored closely to ensure that the activities of the Estate at least break even for the year. There would also be some additional costs incurred in respect of the Kent Life attraction, but it was anticipated that there would be sufficient income to cover them. With the ongoing implementation of the Master Plan, there was an opportunity to develop additional income streams to cover these extra costs.

- The budget for the implementation of the Master Plan had been set at £1.065m. To date there had been expenditure of £678,068 on Phase 1 works in respect of the play area, car park and other associated works, and funding to the value of £506,000 had been drawn down from the endowment fund to cover the expenditure, with the balance being funded from previous operational surpluses generated from the Estate activities.

In response to a question by a Member, the Senior Accountant confirmed that regular updates would be provided to assure the Committee that costs were being monitored closely.

RESOLVED: That the financial position in respect of the Golf Course and the Manor Park be noted.

10. COBTREE ESTATE UPDATE REPORT

The Committee considered the report of the Cobtree Officer setting out details of work undertaken across the Cobtree Estate during the period November 2013 to June 2014. It was noted that:

- Visitor figures to date showed that the popularity of the Manor Park continued to improve, with visitor numbers up 55% on the previous year.

- Work on the tender package for the operation and management of the Golf Course was progressing, but it was likely that an extension to the existing lease would be required to enable the exercise to be completed.

- Tenders had been invited for the construction of the new Visitor Centre/Cafe, and it was anticipated that a recommendation would be made to the September meeting of the Committee regarding the appointment of a contractor.

- Quotes for the replacement of the two refurbished huts at the rear of the Kent Life site, which were burnt down in a suspected arson attack in June 2014, would be reported to a future meeting of the Committee. In the meantime, action had been taken to improve security at the site.

Members reiterated the need to ensure that the new Visitor Centre/Cafe was delivered on time and within budget.

RESOLVED: That the progress report on the works undertaken across the Cobtree Estate during the period November 2013 to June 2014, attached as Appendix A to the report of the Cobtree Officer, be noted.

11. COBTREE MANOR ESTATE RISK MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REVIEW 2014

DECISION MADE:

That the Risk Assessment documents attached as Appendices A and B to the report of the Cobtree Officer be endorsed.

For further information regarding this decision, please follow this link:

http://services.maidstone.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?AIId=18322

12. DURATION OF MEETING

5.50 p.m. to 6.05 p.m.

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

COBTREE MANOR ESTATE COMMITTEE

3RD OCTOBER 2014

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF FINANCE & RESOURCES

Report prepared by: Paul Holland (Senior Accountant)

1 **FINANCIAL POSITION 2014/15**

1.1 Issue for Decision

1.1.1 To consider the current financial position of the Golf Course and Manor Park as at 31st August 2014.

1.2 Recommendation of the Head of Finance & Resources

1.2.1 That the current financial position as at 31st August 2014 is noted.

1.3 Reasons for Recommendation

1.3.1 Attached at **APPENDIX A** is the current financial position, including the projected outturn as at 31st August 2014. If any significant financial issues arise during September these will be reported verbally to the meeting.

1.3.2 The report also includes details of capital expenditure and total investments held.

1.4 Current Financial Position

1.4.1 The Golf Course was projected to continue to produce a healthy net surplus for 2014/15; however the projected deficit on the Manor Park means that only a small overall net surplus was forecast. There will also be some additional costs incurred in respect of the Kent Life attraction, but it is anticipated that there will be sufficient income to cover these costs.

1.4.2 As shown at **Appendix A** the Golf Course is currently performing on budget; however the Manor Park is showing an adverse variance against the budgeted figures. This is a consequence of additional grounds maintenance costs and staffing costs that are being incurred due to the high usage of the Park and the consequential need for increased resources to maintain it to a desirable level.

1.4.3 Officers will investigate ways of controlling costs to ensure the situation is managed as much as possible, however it is likely that there will be a small net deficit on the operations of the Estate at the end of the financial

year. There are sufficient resources from previously accumulated surpluses to cover a deficit, so there will not be any implications for on-going operations or the Master Plan.

1.4.4 As outlined at the last meeting of the Committee with the on-going implementation of the master plan the opportunity exists for developing additional income streams to cover these extra costs, particularly around the new Visitor Centre and Café and charging for car parking. The Golf Course contract is also due for renewal in January 2015, and officers are in discussions with the current contractors over an extension whilst a full procurement exercise is undertaken.

1.5 Investments

1.5.1 The market value of the investments held with Charifund has continued to rise following the dip in value in the recent past. Total withdrawals of £506,000 to fund the master plan have now been made, which is reflected in the values shown below. The current value is shown in the table below.

	£
Total investments made up to 31st March 2014	784,000
Balance Sheet (Market) Value 31st March 2014	1,163,867
Market Value as at 16th September 2014	1,174,548

1.6 Capital Expenditure

1.6.1 The budget for the Master Plan was agreed at £1.065m, to be funded by drawing down from the endowment funds invested with Charifund. However additional funding of £0.3m from Cobtree Charity Trust Ltd for the visitor centre has now been agreed, which will reduce the need to withdraw funds from Charifund.

1.6.2 To date there has been expenditure of £678,618 on Phase 1 works in respect of the play area, car park and other associated works, and funding to the value of £506,000 has been drawn down from the endowment fund to cover the expenditure, with the balance being funded from previous operational surpluses generated from the Estate activities. Expenditure to date on the Visitor Centre is £15,156.

1.7 Alternative Actions and Why Not Recommended

1.7.1 The Committee could choose not to receive updates during the year on the financial position, but this would not be consistent with good financial management.

1.8 Impact on the Charity's Objectives

1.8.1 The net surplus on the activities of the Golf Course and the Manor Park are to be used to further the long term aims and objectives of the Trust, particularly the agreed Master Plan for the development of the Manor

Park.

1.9 Risk Management

1.9.1 Good financial management allows more informed decisions to be made regarding the ongoing activities of the Trust.

1.10 Other Implications

Financial	**X**
Staffing	
Legal	
Social Inclusion	
Environmental/Sustainable Development	
Community Safety	
Human Rights Act	
Procurement	
Asset Management	

1.11 Financial Implications

Financial Implications are detailed in the report above.

NO REPORT WILL BE ACCEPTED WITHOUT THIS BOX BEING COMPLETED

Is this a Key Decision? Yes [ ] No [X]

If yes, when did it appear in the Forward Plan? _____

Is this an Urgent Key Decision? Yes [ ] No [X]

Reason for Urgency

Not applicable

APPENDIX A - COBTREE GOLF COURSE & MANOR PARK
CURRENT FINANCIAL POSITION

April - August 2014 **Golf Course**

Category	2013/14 Actual (£)	2014/15 Actual to end of August (£)	Estimate to Date (£)	Full Year Estimate (£)
Premises Costs	32,545	7,366	18,590	39,060
Recharges	35,351	15,894	15,860	38,070
Income	-283,286	-120,348	-130,140	-239,950
TOTAL OPERATIONAL SURPLUS	**-215,390**	**-97,088**	**-95,690**	**-162,820**

Cobtree Operational Surplus	-167,296	-	-	-127,670
MBC Share	-48,094	-	-	-35,150
	-215,390	-	-	**-162,820**

April - August 2014 **Manor Park**

Category	2013/14 Actual (£)	2014/15 Actual to end of August (£)	Estimate to Date (£)	Full Year Estimate (£)
Employee Costs	37,830	12,970	14,310	34,360
Premises Costs	128,167	60,432	35,370	81,910
Transport	63	77	250	600
Supplies & Services	38,835	5,831	9,270	28,060
Recharges	37,710	19,079	19,050	45,720
Income	-85,455	-10,383	-6,250	-66,100
TOTAL OPERATIONAL DEFICIT	**157,150**	**88,006**	**72,000**	**124,550**

Net Operational Surplus	**-10,146**	**-**	**-**	**-3,120**

This is the actual expenditure to date compared
against the projected estimate up to the end of August 2014.

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

COBTREE MANOR ESTATE COMMITTEE

3RD OCTOBER 2014

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF FINANCE & RESOURCES

Report prepared by: Paul Holland (Senior Accountant)

1 **ACCOUNTS 2013/14**

1.1 Issue for Decision

1.1.1 To consider the un-audited Report and Financial Statement for the financial year 2013/14.

1.2 Recommendation of the Head of Finance & Customer Services

1.2.1 That the Committee notes the draft Report and Financial Statement for the financial year 2013/14.

1.3 Reasons for Recommendation

1.3.1 Attached at **APPENDIX A** are the draft Report and Financial Statements for the financial year 2013/14.

1.3.2 The draft Report and Financial Statements have been produced in accordance with the Charity Accounting Statement of Recommended Practice.

1.3.3 Members have previously agreed to appoint King & Taylor as external auditors for 2013/14.

1.4 Financial Statements 2013/14

1.4.1 There was a net increase in the funds of the Trust of £167,458. However this figure includes the capital expenditure and funding of the Manor Park Master Plan and investment income. Excluding these items the operation of the golf course and the park made a net surplus of £10,146, compared to a net surplus of £53,538 in 2012/13. The reason for the decrease in the level of the surplus is the increase in running costs at the park. Usage of the park has increased dramatically since the new play area was opened (as can be seen in the report section of **Appendix A**), and this has led to increases in staffing and maintenance costs. It should be noted that these figures are provisional as the accounts are still subject to external audit.

1.4.2 The capital expenditure has been funded by withdrawals totalling £506,000 from the investment of the permanent endowment in Charifund, as agreed by the Charity Commission. Previously accumulated operational surpluses of £150,000 have also been utilised to fund the project, and a

donation of £300,000 from Cobtree Charity Trust Ltd towards the cost of the visitor centre and café has also been secured. This will reduce the level of funding needed from the permanent endowment.

1.4.3 In November 2013 following a series of legal agreements the Trust assumed responsibility for the Kent Life attraction. Whilst the management of the attraction is being undertaken by Continuum Ltd the assets are now shown on the Balance Sheet of the Trust. They were valued by Harrison's Chartered Surveyors, along with the remainder of the Trust's fixed assets. The Kent Life assets were valued at £725,000, and the remainder of the assets increased in value by £353,163.

1.4.4 As previously mentioned a number of withdrawals have been made from the permanent endowment fund held with Charifund. The market value of these at 31st March 2014 was £1,163,867, compared to £1,526,936 as 31st March 2013. This is a decrease in value of £363,069, but total withdrawals were £506,000, so the underlying position is that the investments have increased in value over the course of the year.

1.4.5 The audit of the accounts is currently in progress, and if any significant issues have arisen by the time this report is presented they will be verbally reported at the meeting.

1.4.6 Once the audit is completed the Report and Annual Accounts will be presented to the Committee for formal approval in time to meet the statutory deadline for submission to the Charity Commission of 31st January 2015.

1.5 Alternative Actions and Why Not Recommended

1.5.1 None

1.6 Impact on the Charity's Objectives

1.6.1 The net surplus from the operations of the Golf Course and Manor Park will enable the Trust to move forward with their proposals to improve facilities on the Cobtree Manor Estate.

1.7 Risk Management

1.7.1 The reporting of the final position for 2013/14 assists in the on-going financial management of the Trust.

1.8 Other Implications

Financial	**X**
Staffing	
Legal	
Social Inclusion	
Environmental/Sustainable Development	
Community Safety	

Human Rights Act	
Procurement	
Asset Management	

1.9 Financial Implications

1.9.1 The Accounts are a factual statement of the financial affairs of the Trust for 2013/14.

NO REPORT WILL BE ACCEPTED WITHOUT THIS BOX BEING COMPLETED

Is this a Key Decision? Yes [ ] No [X]

If yes, when did it appear in the Forward Plan? _____

Is this an Urgent Key Decision? Yes [ ] No [X]

Reason for Urgency

Not applicable

APPENDIX A

Initial Draft

Charity No. 283617

THE CHARITY KNOWN AS "COBTREE MANOR ESTATE"

Corporate Trustee Report and Financial Statement

for the Year Ended 31 March 2014

APPENDIX A

Trust Information

Corporate Trustee	Maidstone Borough Council
Trustees	There are no individual Trustees. All elected Members of the Maidstone Borough Council perform the duties of Trustees, but are not trustees in their own right. A full list of Members is available on request.
Charity Number	283617
Principal Office	Maidstone Borough Council Maidstone House King Street Maidstone, Kent. ME15 6JQ
Auditors	King & Taylor 10 – 12 Wrotham Road Gravesend, Kent. DA11 0PE
Bankers	All funds are managed by Maidstone Borough Council at: National Westminster Bank Plc 3 High Street Maidstone, Kent. ME14
Solicitors	Head of Corporate Law and Legal Services Maidstone Borough Council Maidstone House King Street Maidstone, Kent. ME15 6JQ

APPENDIX A

Contents

	Page
Trustees' Report	
Auditors' Report	
Statement of Financial Activities	
Balance Sheet	
Notes forming part of the financial statements	

Trustees Report

The Maidstone Borough Council acting as Corporate Trustee to the registered Charity known as "Cobtree Manor Estate" presents its annual report in relation to the financial year ending 31st March 2014.

Trustees

The trustee who served during the year is shown on the information page.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

Governing Object

The governing object of the Charity remains that defined in the lease of the Cobtree Estate dated 13 July 1971 between the Cobtree Charity Trust Limited (the lessor) and the Maidstone Borough Council (the lessee). The governing object is stated as:

"To hold Cobtree Manor and Cobtree Manor Estate for the benefit of the inhabitants of Maidstone and other members of the general public in one or other or all of the following ways:

i) By maintaining the Cobtree Manor Estate as an open space as defined by the Open Spaces Act 1906 and if the lessees think fit providing thereat facilities for organised games and other sports".

ii) With the consent of …[the Cobtree Charity Trust Limited and the Kent County Council]… in such other way for the benefit of the inhabitants of Maidstone and other members of the general public as the Council shall from time to time think appropriate."

Object of the Charity

The late Sir Garrard Tyrwhitt-Drake bequeathed his former estate to the Cobtree Charity Trust Limited and set down in the codicils to his Will requirements for its future use. In seeking to interpret these, sometimes conflicting, codicils the Maidstone Borough Council and Cobtree Charity Trust Limited agreed that the Estate in its entirety, and the intended charitable objects, should be leased to and governed by, the Maidstone Borough Council.

The Maidstone Borough Council, as Corporate Trustee to the Charity, has determined and regularly reviews a series of policies to guide the actions of its Members and employees in fulfilling the governing object of the Charity.

Members of the Cobtree Manor Estate Charity Committee manage all aspects of the Charity on behalf of the Council. Informal liaison continues with the Trustees to the Cobtree Charity Trust Limited, particularly with regard to considering potential developments. Members of the Cobtree Charity Trust Limited are invited to attend the meetings of the Cobtree Manor Estate Charity Committee.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

Changes since the last Report

The Cobtree Charity Committee continues to comprise of four Members of the Cabinet. The Members of the Committee during the reporting year were Councillors John A Wilson (Chairman), Christopher Garland, Brian Moss, and Malcolm Greer. In common with the operation of all Cabinet decisions, those of the Charity Committee were subject to the scrutiny of other Council Members. No decisions of the Committee relating to the Cobtree Estate were called in for scrutiny.

Organisation of the Charity

The Trustee to the Registered Charity known as the Cobtree Manor Estate remains the Corporate Body of the Maidstone Borough Council. How the functions of the Corporate Trustee are implemented is reiterated in the section above.

All individual elected Members to the Maidstone Borough Council are instructed to perform any duties and responsibilities they have in relation to the charity as though they were acting as individual trustees; albeit that they are not individual trustees in Charity Law. All elected Members and Officers of the Council are reminded of the Council's obligations to the Charity and how these need to be considered quite separately from the normal duties of the Council acting as the Local Authority. An A to Z "aid memoir" is made available to all Members and Officers via the Council's internal intranet site.

Under the terms of the lease upon which the Charity holds the Cobtree Manor Estate, and in the specified circumstances, the Council continues to liaise with both the freehold owner of the Estate, the Cobtree Charity Trust Limited, and the Kent County Council.

Advice to Trustees

The advice for trustees published by the Charity Commission is given to new members of the charity committee and new guidance is notified and made available to them as it is received from the Commission. Committee members have free access to all members of staff to ensure that they can be fully aware of the special considerations, activities and implications of, and for, the charity.

Activities

The following paragraphs are included to demonstrate how the Charity is meeting its obligation to provide a public benefit. The primary activities of the Charity are to manage and maintain three facilities to which the general public have access:

- the Cobtree Manor Park – which is a parkland environment with woodland and meadows containing a wide variety of trees and shrubs and which is freely accessible to the general public, and

- the Cobtree Manor Park Golf Course - which is a pay and play facility accessible to all, and

- Kent Life – a farm heritage attraction, including a collection of historic artefacts, which is open to the public either on a pay on entry or through an annual membership fee.

Cobtree Golf Course

The following activities and works were completed on the Cobtree Manor Park Golf Course during the reporting year to enhance the attractiveness of the facility and to ensure its availability to the general public:

Year	Rounds Played	No. of Registrations
2008/2009	**40,187**	**875**
2009/2010	**43,913**	**952**
2010/2011	**41,784**	**597**
2011/2012	**43,516**	**498**
2012/2013	**36,006**	**422**
2013/2014	**36,923**	**574**

Number of Registrations is 574 (please note this is covered fully under the Privilege Card).

The Privilege Card costs £40 and allows holders to get reduced green fee rates and wider scope for bookings at any of Mytime Active run courses, as well as other special offers on food and in the pro shop throughout the year.

The golf course had a better year predominantly due to improved weather conditions with rounds played and number of registrations an improvement on 2012/2013.

As in past years, improvements to the golf course continue to remain a priority for the Charity. Future investment will continue to be in partnership with the contract operator; the objective is to ensure that the quality of the course remains protected and thus ensure that the course remains successful and accessible to the people of Maidstone and the surrounding area.

The contract payment to the Council continued to fund the maintenance of the Estate and was be used to contribute towards the proposed improvements programme for the Cobtree Manor Park.

Cobtree Manor Park

The following works and activities were carried out to enhance the appeal of Cobtree Manor Park to attract a greater numbers of visitors.

Volunteers continue to contribute man-days of effort to help with both practical and research tasks. Members of the general public contributed a total of 138 hours of voluntary effort; this was down slightly on the year before.

The events programme included 28 events (mostly themed guided walks) and these were attended by 486 people, up by about 40 on the previous year.

Two work placement students from Hadlow College worked one day a week during term time (voluntary work, hours included above).

Three thousand free information leaflets advertising the events programme for the coming year were designed, printed and distributed.

The following works relating to the park were carried out:

Completion of phase 2 of the Master plan Project including;

- installation of new park furniture
- completion of the new path network
- installation of the sculpture trail
- installation of the jogging circuit around the estate walk and horse ride
- opening of the new 'zoo' play area
- renovation of park shrubberies
- planting of new Arboretum trees
- painting of the Elephant House Mural

There were 2 crimes reported and 19 cases of vandalism noted. There were 11 accidents, a summary of these is set out below;

- Crimes (3) – one 'exposure' and two incidents of stealing property of the Café
- Vandalism (19) – mostly branches broken off shrubs and small trees (mainly around the picnic/play area) and the posts of the new running circuit being pulled out of the ground
- Accidents (11) – mostly trips and falls from play equipment before the additional safety measures were put in place (nets under the rope bridges etc); the others were bicycle falls and collisions, wasp stings and dog bites

The incidents of crime and vandalism were up slightly on the previous year. Accidents went up from no recorded incident the previous year to 11 in the year of this report. This is due to the large increase in visitor numbers and the opening of the main 'zoo' fort play area.

Footfall figures are shown in the table on the next page. The total for the year was 275,193. The previous year has incomplete figures due to the gate counter being installed in June, leaving one quarter uncounted. A comparison of the quarters for which there are figures, September, December and March shows figures for 2013/2014 of 201,950 compared to 156,445 for the same quarters in 2012/2013.

Cobtree Monthly and Quarterly footfall figures

	2012	Quarterly	2013	Quarterly	% on previous year	2014	Quarterly	% on previous year
Jan			14675			18133		
Feb			12092			17626		
Mar			12144	38911		24503	60262	54.87
Apr			19012					
May			26325					
Jun	10347		27906	73243				
Jul	18509		32277					
Aug	25461		38100					
Sep	20268	64238	23070	93447	45.47			
Oct	20745		18605					
Nov	19296		15869					
Dec	13255	53296	13767	48241	-9.48			
Total	127881	117534	253842	253842		60262	60262	

Kent Life

Following the folding of the leases and between Continuum, Kent Life, Kent County Council and the Museum of Kent Life Trust the Kent Life attraction came back under the direct management of the Cobtree Manor Estate Trust in November 2013. An interim management agreement has been agreed with Continuum Kent Life Limited to continue with the running of the site as a heritage farm park attraction.

Visitor numbers for 2013-14 were: 123,715 (previous year was 116,940).

The numbers have fluctuated a bit over the last few seasons, due to weather, competition and their pricing strategy. A good example of this is that back in 2011-12 they had 136,000 visitors, but ran at a loss.

Overall, bottom line is the key, 2012-13 was the first year showing a small profit and this was much improved in 2013-14.

Property

The following figures were spent on maintenance:

Planned maintenance = £6,526.78
Reactive maintenance = £10,462.97

The largest costs were for the following:

Replacement water heater for the Cobtree public conveniences
Works to the hot water system at 4 Stream Cottages
Rebuild brickwork and replace roofing felt at Garden Cottage
Weather sealing and re-pointing at 3 Stream Cottages

Additional Volunteer Help and Intangible Income

The volunteer help given on the estate is referred to above; in addition to this the Kent Wildlife Trust volunteers and the Friends of Kent Life and Cobtree Young Farmers continued to play an important role providing voluntary assistance to support activities across the estate.

Review of Public Benefit

The Trustee continues to consider and ensure that the Charity meets its requirement to comply with the test of public benefit. The Cobtree Manor Park remains freely accessible to the general public and the pay and play golf course is accessible to all those who wish to take advantage of it facilities at reasonable cost, whilst Kent Life provides a varied family day out for a reasonable fee.

Related Party Disclosure

The Maidstone Borough Council is the Corporate Trustee of the Charity. In addition the Council itself owns part of the land upon which the Cobtree Manor Park Golf Course is built. The accounting arrangements between the Council and the Charity are that the Council is responsible for all receipts and payments for both the golf course and the Cobtree Manor Park. At the end of each financial year the total net operating surplus or deficit of the Manor Park is transferred to the Charity accounts. For the golf course 7/9ths of the total net operating surplus or deficit is transferred to the Charity accounts, reflecting the split of land ownership. The remaining 2/9ths are shown in the accounts of the Council.

The Council also employs a Park Ranger at the Manor Park and a Cobtree Officer. These posts exist solely for the benefit of the Charity and the cost for each is shown in the Charity accounts under the arrangements specified above. Other officers of the Council are engaged from time to time in duties specifically related to the operation and management of the Estate; their time and associated costs are apportioned accordingly to the Cobtree accounts. Additional labour for litter picking and managing the park out of hours at weekends and evenings during school holidays between Easter and the end of September has also been introduced due to the increase in visitor numbers.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

Financial Review and Investment Policy

The net surplus generated as per the Statement of Financial Accounts continued to be used to complete the repayment of debt due to the Maidstone Borough Council.

Interest due to the Charity in respect of the permanent endowment held on the Charity’s behalf by the Borough Council is included as part of the unrestricted income.

The Trustee has now determined its preferred future development option for the Cobtree Manor Park; it is now seeking to identify sources of funding to implement this option.

Reserves Policy

Restricted reserves are maintained in respect of the permanent endowment funds.

Risk Management

The Trustee continues to review the business and operational risks which the Charity faces, and identifies where appropriate steps to minimise the impact of any identified risks. All contractors working on the Estate are also required to undertake risk assessments appropriate to their activities.

PLANS FOR FUTURE PERIODS

The Trustee has now prepared a revised master plan for the Cobtree Manor Park and has obtained permission from the Charity Commission for the use of reserve funds for its implementation.

Trustees' responsibilities

The Trustee is responsible for preparing the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and the United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice.

Law applicable to charities in England and Wales requires the trustee to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the Charity's financial activities during the year and of its financial position at the end of the year. In preparing these statements the Trustee is required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and apply them consistently;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable accounting standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern unless it is inappropriate to presume that the Charity will continue in business.

The Trustee has overall responsibility for ensuring that the Charity has appropriate systems of controls, financial and otherwise. It is also responsible for keeping proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the Charity and to enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities Act 1993. It is also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the Charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

This report was approved by the Trustee on ……. And signed on its behalf by

Councillor
Chairman of the Cobtree Manor Estate Charity Committee

Cobtree Manor Estate
For the year ended 31 March 2014

Statement of Financial Activities and Summary Income and Expenditure Account	**Note**	Unrestricted £	Restricted £	Endowment £	**2014 Total £**	**2013 Total £**
INCOMING RESOURCES						
Incoming resources from generated funds:						
Investment income		64,299			64,299	**72,147**
Will Trust			59,868		59,868	**49,868**
Rental income		26,575			26,575	**18,901**
Incoming resources from charitable activities:						
Golf club revenue		197,010			197,010	**203,825**
Other incoming resources:						
Other income		463,145			463,145	**0**
Total Incoming Resources	**2**	751,028	59,868	0	**810,896**	**344,741**
RESOURCES EXPENDED						
Costs of charitable activities	**3**	580,304	38,638		618,942	**486,068**
Governance Costs	**3**	3,267	21,230		24,497	**20,370**
Total Resources Expended		583,570	59,868	0	**643,438**	**506,438**
Net Incoming/(Outgoing) resources before transfers		167,458	0	0	167,458	**(161,697)**
Transfers between funds					0	**0**
Net Incoming/(Outgoing) resources before revaluations		167,458	0	0	**167,458**	**(161,697)**
Gains and (losses) on revaluations of fixed assets for use in the charity				1,078,163	1,078,163	**0**
Gains and (losses) on investment assets				(363,069)	(363,069)	**198,770**
Net movement in funds		167,458	0	715,094	**882,552**	**37,073**
Fund balances brought forward		(62,280)	0	2,959,773	**2,897,493**	**2,864,187**
Fund balances carried forward	**10**	**105,178**	**0**	**3,674,867**	**3,780,045**	**2,901,260**

Cobtree Manor Estate
For the year ended 31 March 2014

Balance Sheet
as at 31 March 2014

	Notes	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Endowment Funds £	**Total 2014 £**	**Total 2013 £**
Fixed Assets						
Cobtree Manor Golf Course				*1,151,000*	***1,151,000***	***1,044,836***
Kent Life Attraction				*725,000*	***725,000***	***0***
Garden Lodge				*210,000*	***210,000***	***97,273***
2 Stream Cottages				*145,000*	***145,000***	***98,980***
3 Stream Cottages				*145,000*	***145,000***	***100,872***
4 Stream Cottages				*135,000*	***135,000***	***94,180***
Tangible assets	**6**			2,511,000	**2,511,000**	**1,436,141**
Investments	**7**			1,163,867	**1,163,867**	**1,526,936**
		0	0	3,674,867	**3,674,867**	**2,963,077**
Current Assets						
Cash and bank in hand		309,532			**309,532**	**154,053**
Debtors		10,146			**10,146**	**85,555**
		319,678	0	0	**319,678**	**239,608**
Auditor Fees		*(4,500)*			***(4,500)***	***(5,000)***
Cash Balances Due to MBC		*(210,000)*			***(210,000)***	***(296,746)***
Investment in Charifund					***0***	***0***
Creditors:Amounts falling due within one year	**8**	(214,500)	0	0	**(214,500)**	**(301,746)**
Net current assets(liabilities)		105,178	0	0	**105,178**	**(62,138)**
Total assets less current liabilities		105,178	0	3,674,867	**3,780,045**	**2,901,439**
Creditors:Amounts falling due in more than one year	**9**	0	0	0	**0**	**0**
Net assets		**105,178**	**0**	**3,674,867**	**3,780,045**	**2,901,439**
Reserves						
Charity's Funds	**10**	**105,178**	**0**	**3,674,867**	**3,780,045**	**2,901,439**

Cobtree Manor Estate

Notes to the financial statements
for the year ended 31 March 2014

1. Accounting Policies

1.1. Accounting Convention

The financial statements are prepared under the historical cost convention modified to include the revaluation of certain fixed assets and in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard for Smaller Entities (effective January 2005) and the Charities Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) and applicable accounting standards.

1.2 Fund Accounting

General funds are unrestricted funds which are available for use at the discretion of the trustees in furtherance of the general objectives of the charity and which have not been designated for other purposes.

Restricted funds are those funds held for a specific purpose upon which restrictions have been imposed by the donor.

The endowment fund represents those assets that must be held permanently by the charity.

1.3 Incoming Resources

All incoming resources are included within the SOFA when the charity is legally entitled to the income and the amount can be reasonably quantified.

All grants and voluntary income are accounted for gross when receivable as long as they are capable of financial measurement.

1.4 Resources Expended

All expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and has been classified under headings that aggregate all costs related to that category. Where costs relate to more than one functional cost category, they have been split on an appropriate estimated basis.

Governance Costs are those associated with the governance arrangements which relate to the general running of the charity.

Support costs (those which do not produce or constitute the output of the charity) are allocated directly to the relevant charitable activity.

1.5 Tangible Fixed Assets and Depreciation

Depreciation is provided at rates calculated to write off the cost or valuation less residual value of each asset over its expected useful life, as follows:

- Land - Nil
- Leasehold properties - Nil

Cobtree Manor Estate

Notes to the financial statements
for the year ended 31 March 2014

Land and buildings are re-valued on a five yearly cycle. No depreciation has been provided on the buildings as this is considered immaterial due to the estimated useful life and the level of residual value.

Impairment would be provided if necessary. Impairment reviews will be carried out when there are any indicators of impairment.

1.6 Investments
Fixed asset investments are stated at market value. Provision is made for any permanent diminution in value.

2. Resources Arising
The total incoming resources of the charity for the year have been derived from its principal activity wholly undertaken in the UK.

3. Analysis of Resources Expended

Resources expended include the following: -

	2014 £	2013 £
Auditors' Remuneration – audit services	4,500	4,500

a) Costs of activities in furtherance of charity's objective

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2014 £	Total 2013 £
Staff Costs (see note 5)	20,705	4,829	25,534	25,327
Grounds Maintenance	93,202	20,565	113,767	86,442
Capital Expenditure	370,135		370,135	296,746
Utilities	57,478	13,244	70,722	45,480
Property Repairs	38,784		38,784	32,073
	580,304	**38,638**	**618,942**	**486,068**

Cobtree Manor Estate

Notes to the financial statements
for the year ended 31 March 2014

b) Support costs included within the cost of activities

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2014 £	Total 2013 £
Staff Costs	20,705	4,829	25,534	25,327
Grounds Maintenance	93,202	20,565	113,767	13,996
Utilities	57,478	13,244	70,722	45,480
	171,385	**38,638**	**210,023**	**84,803**

c) Governance Costs

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2014 £	Total 2013 £
Human Resources	0	1,030	1,030	998
Legal Costs	1,660	10,530	12,190	7,956
Financial Advice	1,607	5,170	6,777	6,916
Audit & Accountancy	0	4,500	4,500	4,500
	3,267	**21,230**	**24,497**	**20,370**

4. Trustees' Remuneration

No Trustee received either remuneration or out of pocket expenses during the year.

There were no employees of the Charity.

5. Staff Costs

Number of Employees
The average number of employees during the year was:

	2014	2013
Manor Park Grounds Maintenance	2	1
Park Ranger	1	1
	3	2

There were no higher paid employees.

Cobtree Manor Estate

Notes to the financial statements
for the year ended 31 March 2014

The above staff are employed by Maidstone Borough Council, the corporate trustee of the Charity (see note 11).

6. Tangible Fixed Assets

	Long Leasehold Land & Buildings £	Total £
Cost or Valuation		
At 1st April 2013	1,436,141	1,436,141
Additions	725,000	725,000
Revaluations	349,859	349,859
At 31st March 2014	**2,511,000**	**2,511,000**
Net Book Values		
At 31st March 2014	2,511,000	2,511,000
At 31st March 2013	1,436,141	1,436,141

The closing net book value includes assets used for:

	2014 £	2013 £
Direct Charitable Purposes	2,511,000	1,436,141

The property is held under a 999 year lease which is due to expire in 2970.

The fixed assets are used solely for direct charitable purposes and form part of the permanent endowment of the Charity.

The golf course is revalued by Harrison's Chartered Surveyors on a five yearly cycle based on market value with the remaining properties being revalued by Harrison's Chartered Surveyors on a five year cycle based on market value subject to existing tenancies. The next valuation is due in April 2018.

During 2013/14 the Trust acquired the assets of the Kent Life attraction, which were valued at £725,000 and have been included on the Balance Sheet.

The most recent valuations included in the accounts are as set out below: -

- Cobtree Manor Golf Course (Including clubhouse, messroom/garage) April 2013
- Garden Lodge/Garden Cottage April 2013

Cobtree Manor Estate

Notes to the financial statements
for the year ended 31 March 2014

- 2 Stream Cottages April 2013
- 3 Stream Cottages April 2013
- 4 Stream Cottages April 2013

Historical Cost Information

	2014 £	2013 £
Leasehold Land & Buildings	1,665,688	940,688

7. Fixed Asset Investments

	Listed Investments £	Total £
Market Value at 1st April 2013	1,526,936	1,526,936
Additions	0	0
Withdrawals	(506,000)	(506,000)
Revaluations	142,931	142,931
Market Value at 31st March 2014	1,163,867	1,163,867

Net Book Values

At 31st March 2014	1,163,867	1,163,867
At 31st March 2013	1,526,936	1,526,936

Fixed Asset Investments	**2014**	**2013**
Market Valuation of Listed Investments	1,163,867	1,526,936

Breakdown of historical cost information:

	2014 £	2013 £
Endowment funds	784,000	1,290,000
	784,000	1,290,000

Cobtree Manor Estate

Notes to the financial statements
for the year ended 31 March 2014

8. Debtors

	2014	2013
	£	£
Other Debtors	10,146	85,555
	10,146	85,555

Creditors: Amounts Falling Due Within One Year

	Unrestricted Funds	Endowment Funds	2014 Total	2013 Total
	£	£	£	£
Other Creditors - Maidstone BC	210,000	0	210,000	296,746
Accruals & Deferred Income	4,500	0	4,500	4,500
	214,500	**0**	**214,500**	**301,246**

9. Reserves

	Restricted Funds	Unrestricted Funds	Revaluation Reserve	Permanent Endowment	Total
	£	£	£	£	£
At 1st April 2013		(58,513)	495,453	2,464,320	2,901,260
Revaluation of Property			1,078,163		1,078,163
Net Incoming Resources		163,691			163,691
Increase/(Decrease) in value of investments				(363,069)	(363,069)
At 31st March 2014	**0**	**105,178**	**1,573,616**	**2,101,251**	**3,780,045**

Unrestricted Funds

These comprise of funds that the trustees are free to use in accordance with the charitable objects.

Restricted Funds

These are funds that have been given for particular purposes and projects. The restricted fund relates to:

- The Will Trust Fund, the income from which is used to maintain the rural park. The assets of this fund are held by Cobtree Charity Trust Limited, a separate entity.

Revaluation Reserve
The revaluation reserve represents the amounts set aside on revaluation of the land and buildings that are held on trust to be retained for the benefit of the Charity as a capital fund.

Permanent Endowment
The endowment fund represents those assets that must be held permanently by the Charity. Income arising on the endowment fund can be used in accordance with the objects of the Charity and is included as unrestricted income. Any capital gains and losses arising on the investments form part of the fund. The assets of the fund are set out below:

Permanent Endowment Assets

	2014 £	2013 £
Long Leasehold Land & Buildings	1,786,000	1,436,141
Investments at Market Value (Note 6)	1,163,867	1,526,936
	2,949,867	2,764,307

10. Capital Commitments

Details of capital commitments at the accounting date are as follows:

	2014 £	2013 £
Authorised, but not contracted as at 31st March 2014	397,500	768,254

The Charity has approved a Master Plan for the enhancement of the Cobtree Manor Park. The works will be carried out in three phases, with the first two phases now complete. It is anticipated that the final phase will be completed by Spring 2015.

- Phase 1: Play Area
- Phase 2: Parks works
- Phase 3: Visitor Centre/Cafe works

The Capital Commitment will be financed by the release of £1,065,000 from the endowment fund, which was secured on 17th May 2012, by Order of the Charity Commission. The Trust has also received a donation of £300,000 from Cobtree Charity Trust Ltd towards the cost of the Visitor Centre.

Cobtree Manor Estate

Notes to the financial statements
for the year ended 31 March 2014

The Commission directs the Trustee to replace the sum withdrawn by setting aside for 30 years thirtieth part of the sum spent.

11. Related Party Transactions

During the year, transactions with related parties are as follows: -

	£
Receipts	
The Cobtree Charity Trust Limited	59,868
Payments	
Maidstone Borough Council – Governance & Support Costs	£78,033

The Maidstone Borough Council is the Corporate Trustee of the Charity. In addition the Council itself owns part of the land upon which the golf course is built. The accounting arrangements between the Council and the Trust are that the Council is responsible for all receipts and payments for both the golf course and the Manor Park. At the end of each financial year the total net operating surplus or deficit of the Manor Park is transferred to the Trust accounts. For the golf course 7/9ths of the total net operating surplus or deficit is transferred to the Trust accounts, reflecting the split of land ownership. The remaining 2/9ths are shown in the accounts of the Council.

The Council employs the Park Ranger at the Manor Park and a Cobtree Officer (within the Governance & Support costs balance above - see note 5). The posts exist solely for the benefit of the Charity and the cost of their employment is shown in the Charity accounts under the arrangements specified above.

12. Controlling Interest

The Charity is under the control of the Corporate Trustee Maidstone Borough Council.

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

COBTREE MANOR ESTATE COMMITTEE

3 OCTOBER 2014

REPORT OF THE COBTREE OFFICER

Report prepared by Joanna Joyce

1. Cobtree Estate Progress Report

1.1 Issue for Decision

1.1.1 To consider the work being undertaken across the Cobtree Estate as set out in the attached progress report.

1.1.2 To consider the potential re-let of Garden Cottage.

1.2 Recommendation of the Cobtree Officer

It is recommended that the Committee:

1.2.1 Note the contents of the report attached at **Appendix A**.

1.2.2 Authorise the Head of Legal Services to re-let Garden Cottage on a long term tenancy at market rent (and on such other terms as may be agreed by the Cobtree Officer), once the existing tenant gives notice.

1.3 Reasons for Recommendation

1.3.1 The Committee previously resolved to receive a progress report on the work across the estate at each meeting. Attached at **Appendix A** is the report for the most recent period.

1.3.2 The tenant of Garden Cottage has expressed a desire to seek alternative sheltered accommodation and is waiting for a suitable place to become available. It is recommended that as with 4 Stream Cottages the cottage is re-let on a long term let at the appropriate market rate. It is important that the re-letting occurs as quickly as possible to ensure a continuity of income from the property. Currently the rent is £5682.88 per annum, it is thought that when re-let it could achieve at least £9000 per annum.

1.4 Alternative Action and why not Recommended

1.4.1 The alternative course of action is to reject the request for the endorsement of ongoing works across the estate; however the Committee have previously resolved to have an update at each meeting.

1.4.2 The Committee could choose to wait to make a decision on the re-letting of the property once it is vacant. This is not recommended as income would be lost in the period between it becoming vacant and the next meeting.

1.4.3 The Committee could choose to sell the property. This is not recommended as although there would be a short term capital gain, the revenue from the tenancy would be lost. Ongoing revenue for operations is tight due to increased use from higher visitor numbers and maintenance costs for the play area, following the success of the Cobtree Manor Park project. As such it would not be in the best interest of the charity to reduce the annual income generated through letting the property.

1.5 Impact on Charity Objectives

1.5.1 The work of the Estate and the master plan directly supports the achievement of the charity's object. The governing object is stated as:

"To hold Cobtree Manor and Cobtree Manor Estate for the benefit of the inhabitants of Maidstone and other members of the general public in one or other or all of the following ways:

i) By maintaining the Cobtree Manor Estate as an open space as defined by the Open Spaces Act 1906 and if the lessees think fit providing thereat facilities for organised games and other sports".

ii) With the consent of …[the Cobtree Charity Trust Limited and the Kent County Council]… in such other way for the benefit of the inhabitants of Maidstone and other members of the general public as the Council shall from time to time think appropriate."

1.6 Risk Management

1.6.1 There are no additional risks arising from this report.

1.7 Other Implications

1.7.1

1.	Financial	X
2.	Staffing	
3.	Legal	
4.	Equality Impact Needs Assessment	
5.	Environmental/Sustainable Development	
6.	Community Safety	
7.	Human Rights Act	
8.	Procurement	
9.	Asset Management	

1.7.2 There are potential financial implications if Garden cottage is not re-let quickly once it becomes vacant. Any additional rental income from letting the property at market rates will be used for the benefit of Cobtree Manor Park.

1.8 Relevant Documents

1.8.1 Appendices

IS THIS A KEY DECISION REPORT?

Yes [ ] No [X]

If yes, when did it first appear in the Forward Plan?

……..

This is a Key Decision because: ……..

……..

Wards/Parishes affected: ……..

……..

Appendix A Cobtree Estate Progress Update

1.8.2 Background Documents

Cobtree Manor Estate Master Plan

Appendix A

Cobtree Estate Progress Report

Introduction

This report sets out the work on the estate and covers the period from July to October 2014.

Cobtree Manor Park

Maintenance of this period covered the summer months and as such was taken up predominantly by routine maintenance tasks.

The park achieved Green Flag status at the first attempt gaining an overall band score of 75-79%, which is very good and in the second to top banding. As a result of this it will be mystery shopped rather than judged next year.

The Elephant House mural has been completed by artist Suzue Dafforn.

Work on the final sculpture continues. Progress on this can be followed on the blog written by sculptor Jason Mulligan

http://thecobtreesculpture.blogspot.co.uk

Cobtree footfall continues to be good. We now have two complete years worth of figures from the footfall counter at Cobtree. In the last quarter we had 78,716 recorded visits between April and June, this is a 7.47% increase on the same time last year.

Taking into account both years figures there were 229,688 recorded visits between July 12 to June 13, verses 280,666 recorded visits between July 13 to June 14. This is an increase of 22.19%.

Cobtree Monthly and Quarterly footfall figures

	2012	Quarterly	2013	Quarterly	% on previous year	2014	Quarterly	% on previous year
Jan			14,675			18,133		
Feb			12,092			17,626		
Mar			12,144	38,911		24,503	60,262	54.87
Apr			19,012			28,012		
May			26,325			24,733		
Jun	10,347		27,906	73,243		25,971	78,716	7.47
Jul	18,509		32,277					
Aug	25,461		38,100					
Sep	20,268	64,238	23,070	93,447	45.47			
Oct	20,745		18,605					
Nov	19,296		15,869					
Dec	13,255	53,296	13,767	48,241	-9.48			
Total	127,881	117,534	253,842	253,842		138,978	138,978	

Cobtree Visitor Centre

The details of the visitor centre are in a separate report. The build is due to begin in October provided the required consents from the Committee are in place.

A meeting has been arranged with the Cobtree Trust to begin the design of the interpretation for the new Visitor Centre.

Cobtree Golf Course

Discussions are ongoing with MyTime regarding an extension to the existing contract. This will enable a full procurement process to take place. Recommendations will be brought to Committee as part of this process.

Mytime have introduced Foot-golf at the weekends after 2pm, this is claimed to be the fastest growing sport in the UK.

Estate properties

The tenant at Garden Cottage has expressed an interest in moving in the near future, when suitable accommodation becomes available. It is recommended that consent is sought from the committee to re-let the cottage on a long term let at the market rate. Currently the rent is £5682.88 per annum, and it is estimated the revised rental could be at least £9000 per annum. Once it becomes vacant the property section will assess whether any work is required

prior to re-letting. Any works over the threshold of £5000 will be brought before the Committee for prior approval.

Kent Life

Dilapidations works, including improvements to the car park have been completed.

The current year is progressing well with visitor numbers up 9% and income up 20% on last year. This should result in a profit share to CMET of £60,000 (based on current forecast accounts). Continuum are currently planning developments and safety improvements to site which this could go towards, including pathways, fences and other basic infrastructure to ensure compliance with latest regulations.

In August there was a food hygiene inspection and the attraction was awarded the maximum 5 star rating.

This Autumn, a number of events are being hosted including the Apple Fayre, Bonfire Night and the re-enactment weekend 'Christmas on the Home Front'. The recent event 'Hops n Harvest' was a great success, with the Oast house being fired up (it is the last coal fired Oast in the country).

Kent Life will also be welcoming over 8,000 school children to their award winning workshops. Continuum has plans underway to improve the guest offer even further next season to help sustain the current growth.

Meetings have been held with the Young Farmers and the Friends to improve ways of working on site. As part of this, plans to move the Young Farmers to one area are being progressed. They are looking for an agreement to be on site as part of this move. The terms of the agreement will be brought before the Committee for approval prior to being finalised.

Discussions are underway to consider the future of the site and the best way forward at the end of the current lease in November 2015. It is vital if the success of the attraction is to be built on that these discussions are finalised quickly so that a recommendation can be brought to the Committee.

Summary

Work continues across the estate with improvements over the period of the report to Cobtree Manor Park, Cobtree Manor Park Golf Course and Kent Life.

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

COBTREE MANOR ESTATE COMMITTEE

3rd October 2014

REPORT OF THE COBTREE OFFICER

Report prepared by Joanna Joyce

1. Cobtree Manor Estate Visitor Centre

1.1 Issue for Decision

1.1.1 To consider the design of the visitor centre as set out in **Appendix A.**

1.1.2 To consider the appointment of the contractor to build the new visitor centre as set out in exempt **Appendix B**.

1.1.3 To consider the final cost for phase 3 of the project.

1.1.4 To consider the additional costs for fixtures, fittings and equipment, the fitting of the kitchen and the cost of interpretation shown in **Appendix A**.

1.2 Recommendation of the Cobtree Officer

It is the recommendation of the Cobtree Officer;

1.2.1 That the final design of the visitor centre as set out in **Appendix A** is approved.

1.2.2 That the recommendation of G.A. Harpers Ltd. (Harpers) as the winning tenderer, under the tendering process conducted by the Council as set out in exempt **Appendix B,** is appointed to build the Visitor Centre. That the Head of Legal Services is authorized to complete an agreement with Harpers to this effect, and that the Cobtree Officer is given the authority to agree further details of the contract if needed, in consultation with the Chairman of the Cobtree Manor Estate Committee.

1.2.3 That the Committee approves phase 3 (i.e. the Visitor Centre) of the Cobtree Master Plan Project to begin and agrees for the final amount of money £371,226 to be released for this purpose. It

should be noted that of this sum £300,000 is grant money received from the Cobtree Charity Trust Ltd. (CCTL). The £300,000 originally identified by council officers from the permanent endowment for the Master Plan project for the Visitor Centre will not be drawn down consequent on this grant from CCTL, amounts subject to paragraph 1.2.4.

1.2.4 That the Committee approve the following money from this original visitor centre budget of £300,000 to be allocated to this the final phase of the project as additional items of expenditure:

a) £25,125 as a 7.5% contingency against the contract sum;
b) £12,000 to be spent on furniture for the café including new tables for inside and outside;
c) £22,000 for the kitchen fit out;
d) £10,000 for high quality interpretation, including new signage, with the design of the interpretation being developed in consultation with CCTL;
e) £10,000 for additional security including new CCTV;
f) £15,000 for surfacing to extend the car park within Cobtree Manor Park to accommodate 60 extra spaces.

1.3 Reasons for Recommendation

1.3.1 The final design is a detailed and costed plan for the visitor centre and following on from the concept design already approved by the Committee. Approval of this detailed design is consistent with decisions already taken by the Committee.

1.3.2 Harpers have been recommended as the main contractor following the tender process which was overseen by Stephen Trigg, Procurement Manager and Simon Logan, Procurement Officer. The assessment criteria were to ensure that both price and quality were considered. The top two contractors were interviewed to confirm that they were happy with their bids and answer any questions, the prices and scoring was then finalised resulting in the final recommendation. A full tender process was followed. Details of this process and the scoring can be found in exempt **Appendix B**.

1.3.3 It is recommended that some of the money remaining from the original project budget prior to the offer from CCTL to fund the visitor centre, be allocated to the project in order to enable the project to be completed to a high standard.

1.3.4 The budget figures show that the building can be built on budget. The £4774 difference between the budget remaining and the current commitments will be found as part of the value engineering

exercise that will happen once the contractor is appointed. The budget does not however leave room for a contingency. It is requested that money for a contingency is allocated to the project to ensure there are sufficient funds for any minor changes to the project or cost of items.

1.3.5 It is requested that money is spent on furniture for the Visitor Centre. By purchasing these a level of continuity of style and design will be able to be followed through both the interior and the exterior matching with the styles already used in the park. Any items that would need to be replaced over time such as tables and chairs could be recharged over time to the successful contractor for the management of the Visitor Centre.

1.3.6 It is recommended that funding is set aside for the kitchen design and fit. This will enable a greater return to be charged for the lease of the facility than if it were let empty and the successful contractor was required to bring in equipment. This is particularly important given the uncertainty of income in the future from the golf course.

1.3.7 The provision of good quality interpretation will be important for ensuring that the public understand the history of the site and the role of Sir Garrard and subsequently CCTL in the history of Cobtree Manor Park. It was one of the requests of CCTL which is now funding the Visitor Centre that good quality interpretation be installed.

1.3.8 It is recommended that funding is allocated for CCTV to ensure the security of the Visitor Centre. Given recent problems elsewhere on the estate it is considered important to provide as much protection as possible for the new Visitor Centre.

1.3.9 The car park extension on grass areas within the park has worked well over the summer. It is important that this area is made suitable for use in all weathers as the park is also now popular through the winter. The addition of indoor seating in the Visitor Centre is also likely to increase winter use meaning the car parking requirement when the ground is wet is likely to be greater than it is at present.

1.4 <u>Alternative Action and why not Recommended</u>

1.4.1 The alternative would be to reject the final design or to request changes to it. This is not recommended as the design meets the concept design previously approved by the Committee. Redesign would be very costly and would lead to a building different to that

already approved which would then have to go through the planning process again.

1.4.2 The Committee could choose to award the contract to another contractor from the list, however the scoring process has been carefully followed to ensure both a fair process and that the successful contractor has both the capability and availability to complete the work to a high standard at a fair price.

1.4.3 The Committee could choose not to take additional funding from the original budget for a contingency fund. This would result in the building having to be re-designed to ensure a contingency was included, reducing the quality of the build.

1.4.4 The Committee could choose not to provide furniture for the Visitor Centre or to fit the kitchen; however this would mean the facility would be let for a considerably lower rate. Given the current uncertainty of income due to the golf course re-letting, it is considered prudent to maximise income from the facility wherever possible.

1.4.5 It has already been decided to partner with CCTL in providing interpretation for the Visitor Centre outlining the history of the park. For this to be of a high quality it will be important to provide sufficient funding. The Committee could choose not to fund this from the original budget however this would result in savings having to be found from the main building and a subsequent reduction in the quality of it.

1.4.6 CCTV is recommended to improve the security of the site surrounding the Visitor Centre. The Committee could choose not to install it however this would leave the site very vulnerable to vandalism and other more expensive deterrents would be required.

1.4.7 The alternative to providing funding for car park surfacing improvements is to leave the existing car parks as they are. This would cause problems in the winter as cars would not be able to use grass parking areas and would end up having to use the road. The opening of the visitor centre will make it more likely that the park is used in poor weather increasing the need for all weather parking.

1.5 <u>Impact on Charity Objectives</u>

1.5.1 The governing object is stated as:

"To hold Cobtree Manor and Cobtree Manor Estate for the benefit of the inhabitants of Maidstone and other members of the general public in one or other or all of the following ways:

By maintaining the Cobtree Manor Estate as an open space as defined by the Open Spaces Act 1906 and if the lessees think fit providing thereat facilities for organised games and other sports".

With the consent of …[the Cobtree Charity Trust Limited and the Kent County Council]… in such other way for the benefit of the inhabitants of Maidstone and other members of the general public as the Council shall from time to time think appropriate."

1.5.1 The building of the Visitor Centre and the associated works as set out in this report will directly support the objects of the charity by maintaining visitor numbers and adding to the attraction of the park to the general public.

1.6 Risk Management

1.6.1 There are no additional risks arising from this report as the Committee has already taken the decision to build the Visitor Centre.

1.7 Other Implications

1.7.1

1.	Financial	X
2.	Staffing	X
3.	Legal	
4.	Equality Impact Needs Assessment	
5.	Environmental/Sustainable Development	
6.	Community Safety	
7.	Human Rights Act	
8.	Procurement	
9.	Asset Management	x

1.7.2 The financial implications of the capital project are set out in Appendix A. The new Visitor Centre will potentially have staffing and financial implications. These will be dealt with in a future report into the running of the centre. The financial implications should be positive and the new facility should provide an income to cover its running costs, including staff with any surplus being spent in the park.

1.7.3 Asset management implications will be minimal as there is already a facility (the kiosk and the toilets) to manage. Although the Visitor Centre will be larger because it will be newer there should be fewer repairs required.

1.8 Relevant Documents

1.8.1 Appendices

Appendix A The visitor centre final design and budget position.
Exempt Appendix B The results from the tender process.

1.8.2 Background Documents

Cobtree Manor Park Master Plan

IS THIS A KEY DECISION REPORT?

Yes [x] No [ ]

If yes, when did it first appear in the Forward Plan?

……3/9/2014……..

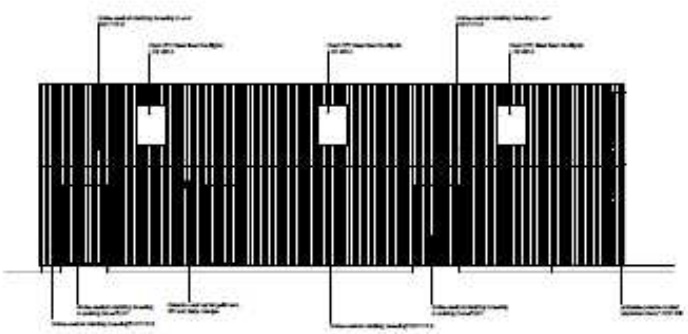
This is a Key Decision because: ……It involves a spend greater £250,000……..

…….

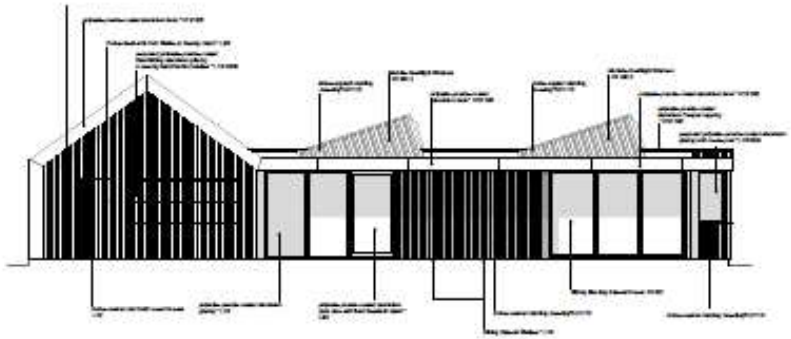
Wards/Parishes affected: ……Boxley, ……..

……..

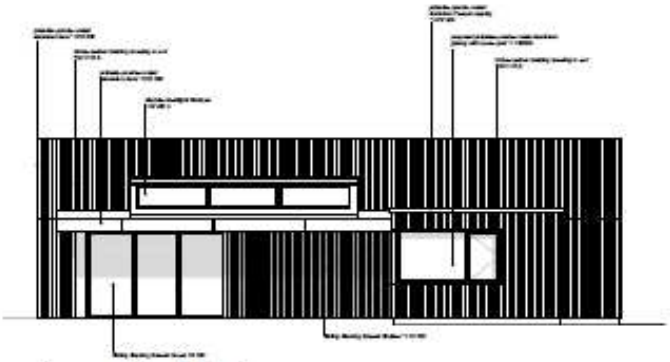
Appendix A Cobtree Manor Park Visitor Centre final design - elevation



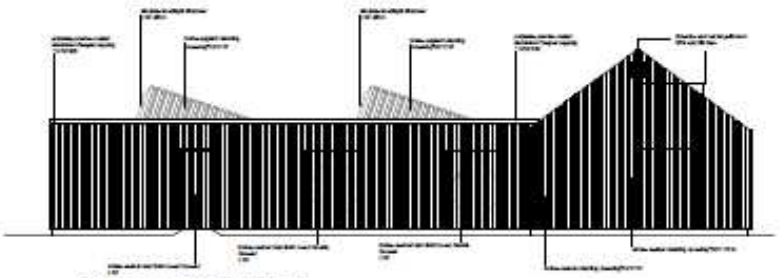
Proposed North Elevation



Proposed West Elevation

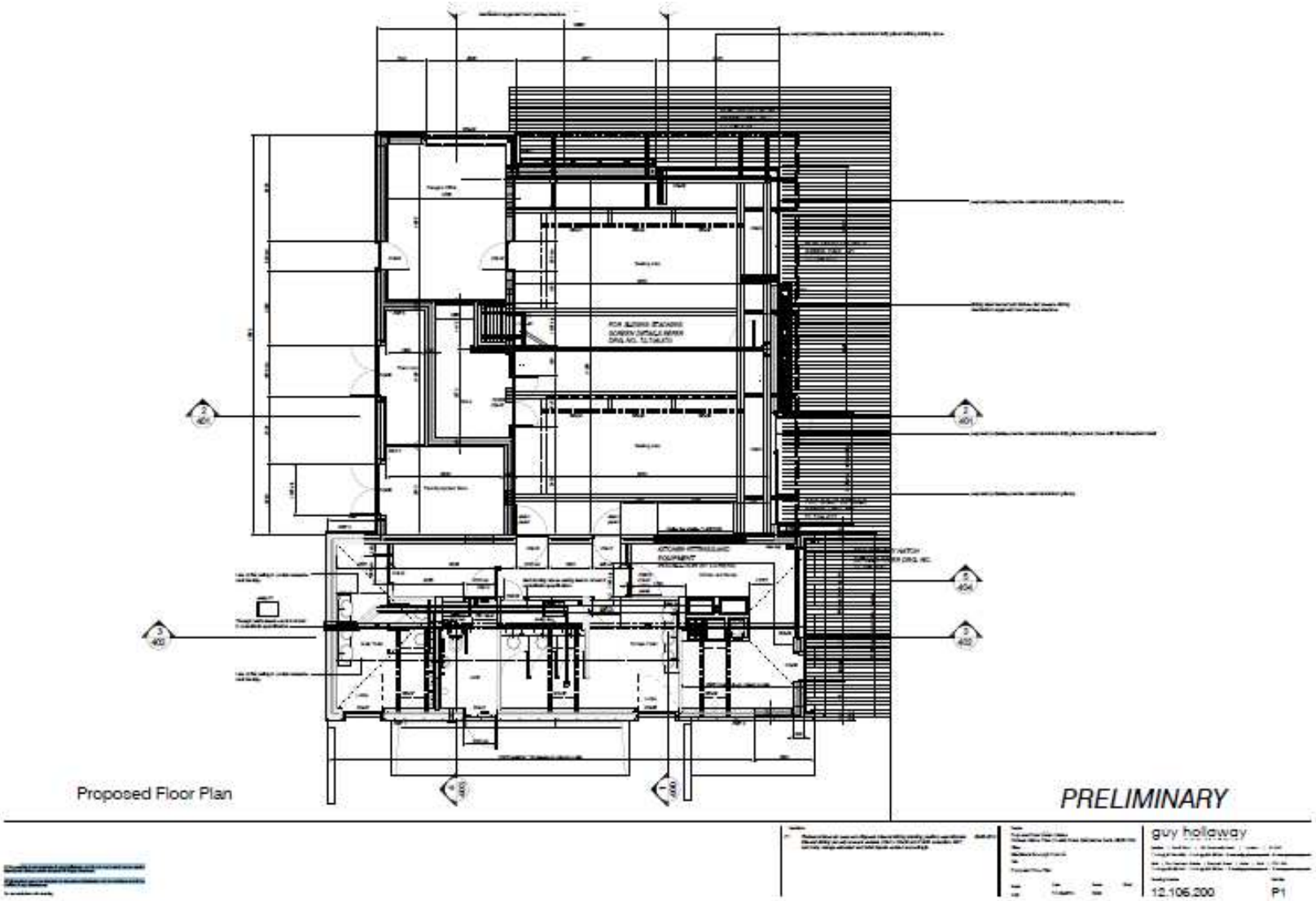


Proposed South Elevation



Proposed East Elevation

Appendix A Cobtree Manor Park Final design – plan



Appendix A Cobtree Visitor Centre Budget Position

Cobtree Master Plan Costs to date as at 12th September 2014

	Budget	Spend to Date	Variance
	£	£	£
Phase 1 & 2	652,500	678,618	-26,118
Phase 3	384,500	15,156	369,344
Additional Costs	28,000	0	28,000
	1,065,000	**693,774**	**371,226**

Budget remaining	**£371,226**

Budget Commitments

Architects Fees	£12,000
Contract Administrator / CDM / QS	£26,000
Mulligan final payment	£3,000
Main Contractor	£335,000
Current projected spend	**£376,000**

The new building will be value engineered to ensure the projected spend meets the remaining budget. This saving of £4774 should be easy to attain by searching for different suppliers for some of the internal fittings.

The generous donation of £300,000 from the Cobtree Charity Trust Limited for the Visitor Centre means the £300,000 from the Cobtree Manor Estate Trust endowment no longer needs to go towards the build stage of the visitor centre. The following is requested from this to ensure the quality of the project, to improve security and to help accommodate the additional visitors.

Budget Requests against £300,000

7.5% contingency against contract sum	£25,125
Furniture items for café, including new tables for inside and outside	£12,000
Kitchen fit out	£22,000
High Quality Interpretation, including new entrance signage	£10,000
Additional type 1 parking area to Cobtree Park to accommodate 60No. Spaces	£15,000
Additional security provisions budget to the building including new CCTV provisions	£10,000
Total requested	**£94,125**

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted