

THE CHARITY KNOWN AS COBTREE MANOR ESTATE

COBTREE MANOR ESTATE CHARITY COMMITTEE

26 FEBRUARY 2010

REPORT OF THE COBTREE OFFICER

Report Prepared by: Brian Latimer – Cobtree Officer

1. COBTREE MANOR PARK - MASTER PLAN

1.1 Issue for Decision

1.1.1 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.

1.2 Recommendation of the Cobtree Officer

1.2.1 It is recommended that:

- (i) The draft master plan be agreed in principle for use in consultation with the general public and other interested parties; and
- (ii) That the proposed format for the public consultation be agreed as detailed in the report.

1.3 Reasons for Recommendation

1.3.1 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.

1.3.2 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.

- 1.3.3 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 attached information was received by the required date, and an early copy distributed to the Members of the Committee.
- 1.3.4 The draft master plan, design specification and estimated project costs are attached at **Appendix A**.
- 1.3.5 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.
- 1.4 Public Consultation
 - 1.4.1 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 is proposed that each should be staffed for one half day; for those members of the public wishing to seek further information.
 - 1.4.2 It is proposed that response "cards" 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.
 - 1.4.3 It is 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.
 - 1.4.4 A report on the results of the consultation will be collated and submitted to the proposed meeting in March 2010.
- 1.5 The Master Plan
 - 1.5.1 The comment of Members is invited on the draft master plan and accompanying information.

- 1.5.2 Members are 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.
- 1.5.3 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."
- 1.5.4 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.
- 1.6 Alternative Action and why not Recommended
- 1.6.1 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.
- 1.7 Impact on Charity Objects
- 1.7.1 The master plan is designed to increase the number of visitors to the Cobtree Manor Park and thus help better fulfil the objects of the Charity.
- 1.8 Risk Management
- 1.8.1 Further consideration will be given to the master plan following the proposed period of public consultation.

1.9 Other Implications

1.9.1

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|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Financial | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Staffing | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Legal | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Social Inclusion | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Considerations for Disabled Persons | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Environmental/Sustainable Development | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Community Safety | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Human Rights Act | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Procurement | <input type="checkbox"/> |

1.9.2 The consultant has been engaged on a fixed fee basis. However, the additional expense of engaging third party consultancies to provide further information will need to be borne by the Charity.

Background Documents

NO REPORT WILL BE ACCEPTED WITHOUT THIS BOX BEING COMPLETED

Is this a Key Decision? Yes No

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

Is this an Urgent Key Decision? Yes No

Reason for Urgency