

Cobtree Manor Estate Charity Committee

25th January 2018

Cobtree Manor Park Car Park Improvements and Charging

Final Decision-Maker	Cobtree Manor Estate Charity Committee
Lead Head of Service/Lead Director	Dawn Hudd - Head of Regeneration and Economic Development
Lead Officer and Report Author	Jason Taylor – Leisure Manager
Classification	Public with exempt Appendix
Wards affected	Boxley

Executive Summary

This reports details proposed improvements to the car park at Cobtree Manor Park. Currently the car park is very wet during the winter and dusty in the summer, and result in an increasing number of complaints from visitors.

The report also compares the current parking charges with other comparable parks and recommends increases following the car park improvement works.

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. To agree for the Car Park Improvement works to proceed at a cost of £214,500, including £10,000 to carry out the extra works to the bottom car park, and £10,000 to appoint a project manager to oversee the works.
2. To delegate authority to the Director of Finance and Business Improvement to award the contract to the successful contractor shown in Exempt Appendix 3, the winner of the tender process.
3. To delegate authority to the Head of Mid Kent Legal Services to enter in the necessary contracts with the contractor.
4. To increase the daily Car Parking charge from £1.50 to £2, and the annual residents season ticket price from £40 to £45 upon the completion of the car park improvement works.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Cobtree Manor Estate Charity Committee	25th January 2018

Cobtree Manor Park Car Park Improvements and Charging

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Car Park Refurbishment

- 1.1 As part of the Cobtree Manor Park Master Plan Improvement works the car park was increased in size to accommodate the extra visitors expected to the park. The increased capacity of the car park has worked well on the whole, but there has always been a problem with the car park being very wet in the winter months and very dusty in the summer. The capacity of the car park is also reduced because it is not possible to mark bays properly on the current surface, which means that visitors leave large gaps between vehicles. Photos of the current car park can be seen in Appendix 1. The cost to hard surface the car park in 2013 was prohibitive, particularly as it was unclear how many visitors would come to the park.
- 1.2 At the July 2017 Committee meeting designs showing the proposed improvements to the car park and surfacing were presented. The committee requested that the plans for the car park resurfacing were progressed. These plans have been moved on and the latest design including surfacing can be seen in Appendix 2. These are the same designs that the committee had previously seen but with further detail added.
- 1.3 The main roadway around the car park will be tarmacked in the same way as current entrance road, the parking bays will then be constructed from compacted clean stone.
- 1.4 It should be noted that the lower car park has not been included in these designs at this stage, as it will need to incorporate access to the storage for the new café operator and as yet these requirements have not been finalised. A small provisional sum has been included for these works but it is recommended that an additional £10,000 is allowed for these works.
- 1.5 When more detailed designs had been updated to include drainage, kerb lines, car parking spaces and surface materials, all information was ready to go out to tender to get prices for the work.
- 1.6 The MBC Procurement Team led the tender exercise and an invitation to tender was posted on the Kent Business Portal website on the 5th October 2017. This included all details of the work required including plans, specifications for material to be used and onsite requirements.
- 1.7 12 tenders were returned by the 9th November 2017 deadline. The qualitative assessment included a plan marked up by tenderers, identifying how they would phase the work while keeping the park operational, as well as a program outlining timescales.
- 1.8 An evaluation panel was formed consisting of Lewis Small, Jason Taylor and Elizabeth Buckingham to assess the tender quality responses and score

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them against pre-defined criteria. All submissions were scored for price and quality and weighted 75% and 25% respectively.

1.9 The scores from all of the contractors can be seen below:

Company name	Price Submission	Price score	Quality score	Total score
Successful Contractor	£194,500.68	71.48	21.00	92.48
Contractor a	£192,001.00	72.41	16.67	89.08
Contractor b	£217,508.68	63.92	17.33	81.26
Contractor c	£215,283.45	56.69	11.33	68.02
Contractor d	£245,257.48	56.69	12.33	69.02
Contractor e	£185,382.00	75.00	16.67	91.67
Contractor f	£218,279.94	63.70	8.67	72.36
Contractor g	£189,476.48	73.38	13.33	86.71
Contractor h	£207,389.64	67.04	6.67	73.71
Contractor j	£188,378.00	73.81	16.00	89.81
Contractor k	£230,199.71	60.40	15.67	76.06

1.10 The highest scorer based on Price and Quality is shown is Exempt Appendix 3. References are currently being sought for the company.

1.11 It is recommended that if these works go ahead, that works are started after the February half term and are completed in time for Easter. This will avoid the times when the park is busiest.

1.12 Paul Holland, Senior Finance Manager confirmed that CMET currently have around £200k in the bank account. Given that the café has been performing better, the estate activities should show a surplus of around £50k by year end, so the Trust should be able to afford to do the car parks works this year.

1.13 It would however leave cash reserves a little low, so the committee do need to consider if there are likely to be any other urgent works needed during 2018/19. These urgent works could include items such as security improvements to the Cobtree Visitor Centre, upgrading the electricity supply to Cobtree Manor Park or investing in the narrow gauge railway. The estate should start to generate a healthy surplus from next year, which will increase available resources, and officers will re-evaluate the financial projection and programme of capital works previously reported to the Committee.

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1.14 A sum of £10,000 has been allowed to appoint a project manager to oversee the car park works. It is important that someone with experience of this type of work is appointed.

Car Park Charging

1.15 The committee has suggested that it would consider increasing the car park charges for visitors following the completion of the car park improvement works. The table below shows how the current Cobtree Manor Park Car Parking charges compare to other similar parks in the surrounding area:

Park	Owner	Weekday Charge	Weekend Charge	Season Ticket (12 Months)
Cobtree Manor Park	CMET	£1.50	£1.50	£40
Teston Country Park	Kent County Council	£1.30	£2	£50*
Shorne Country Park	Kent County Council	£2	£3	£50*
Trosley Country Park	Kent County Council	£1.50	£2.50	£50*
Manor Park West Malling	Kent County Council	£1.30	£2	£50*
White Horse Country Park	Kent County Council	£1	£1.50	£50*
Lullingstone Country park	Kent County Council	£1.50	£2.50	£50*
Pegwell Bay Country Park	Kent County Council	£1.30	£2	£50*
Brockhill Country Park	Kent County Council	£1.50	£2.50	£50*
Grove Ferry Picnic Site	Kent County Council	£1.30	£2	£50*
Dunorlan	Tunbridge Wells BC	FREE	FREE	
Mote Park	Maidstone Borough Council	£2 for up to 6 hours £12 for over 6 hours	£2 for up to 6 hours £12 for over 6 hours	£40
Leybourne Lakes	Tonbridge and Malling BC	Up to 4 hours £1 over 4 hours £4	Up to 4 hours £1 over 4 hours £4	£30
Bewl Water	Independent	£2	£2	
Bedgebury Pinetum	Forestry Commission	£10	£12	£72
National Trust Ightham Mote	National Trust	£2	Free for members	
Swanley Park	Swanley Town Council	£3		FOC to Swanley residents.

January 2018 *KCC Season Ticket includes 9 KCC parks

1.16 As can be seen from the above table the prices at Cobtree Manor Park are lower than most parks in the surrounding area.

1.17 We know from our visitors that Cobtree Manor Park is a day out for visiting families. The table below shows the current cost of daily and yearly car parking at Cobtree Manor Park, which gives free access to the park and all of its facilities, compared to the entry charges to other local family attractions.

Attraction	Family Charge (2+2)	Family Season Ticket (12 Months)
Cobtree Manor Park	£1.50	£40.00

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Leeds Castle	£80	Ticket valued all year
Kent Life Farm Attraction	£19.95#	£95.00
Historic Dockyard, Chatham	£63.00	Ticket valued all year

January 2018 #off Peak

1.18 Based on the current income from car parking if the daily car parking charge was increased from £1.50 to £2.00 and the annual parking permit increased from £40 to £45 then this should generate an increase in the region of £25,000 per year which would contribute to the costs of car park improvements.

2. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

2.1 The options available to the committee with regard to the Car Park Refurbishments are as follows:

2.1.1 To agree to go ahead with the car park improvement works and award the contract to the successful contractor shown in Exemp Appendix 3, and to appoint a project manager to oversee the works.

2.1.2 To delay the works to the car park until a later time when the committee is content that CMET's finances are in a stronger position.

2.2 The options available to the committee with regard to increasing Car Park Charges at Cobtree Manor Park are as follows:

2.2.1 To not increase the car parking charges.

2.2.2 To increase the car parking charges prior to the improvements being made to the car park. This could be an option if the committee decides to delay the implementation of the improvement works.

2.2.3 To increase the car parking charges more than the recommended level.

2.2.4 To increase the daily car parking charge from £1.50 to £2.00 and the car parking season ticket from £40 to £45, following the implementation of the car park improvement works.

3. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 To accept the winning tender price of £194,500 from the procurement process carried out and appoint the successful contractor shown in Exempt Appendix 3 to carry out the work as agreed. This will improve the quality of parking for visitors and allow for the car park to be used more efficiently.

3.2 Allow an additional £10,000 to allow for the bottom car park to be designed and included in the works. The bottom car park could not be included in the tender process as it was not clear what the requirement for

the area would be until the new café tender had been let. If this area was not completed at the same time as the rest of the car park it would look untidy compared to the rest of the car parking. It would also be more expensive to bring back the car parking equipment to carry out this work in the future.

- 3.3 Allow £10,000 to appoint a project manager to oversee the car park improvement works. This is important to ensure that the work is carried out as per the specification, and avoid any problems in the future.
- 3.4 Increase the daily car parking charge from £1.50 to £2.00 and the car parking season ticket from £40 to £45, following the implementation of the car park improvement works.
The car parking charge is currently lower than surrounding parks including Mote Park which is £2 per day. Increasing the charge would allow for the costs of park improvements and maintenance including the car park improvements.
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4. RISK

- 4.1 The risks associated with this proposal, including the risks if the Council does not act as recommended, have been considered in line with the Council's Risk Management Framework. We are satisfied that the risks associated are within the Council's risk appetite and will be managed as per the Policy.
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5. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 5.1 No formal consultation has taken place regarding the refurbishment of the car park, however direct feedback from customers coupled with comments on social media confirm that it is the most regular complaint received about the park.
- 5.2 No consultation has taken place with visitors about increasing the charging for car parking. Research has been done to compare the current charges with other parks and attractions in the area.
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6. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 6.1 If the car park improvement works are agreed by committee, the successful contractor will be contacted, contracts awarded and arrangements made for the work to start. A Project Manager will be appointed to oversee the works, which would be carried out between February half term and Easter which is at the end of March.
- 6.2 It is not recommended that the increase in parking charges is introduced until after the car park works have been completed. This would probably mean that the charges would go up just before Easter 2018. Before any

increase notices will be put on to the car park machines and in the visitor centre to let people know to bring the correct change.

7. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	<p>This decision will have an impact on the following Corporate Priorities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all - • Ensuring that there are good leisure and culture facilities 	Head of Regeneration and Economic Development.
Risk Management	The risk as detailed elsewhere in this report is low.	Head of Regeneration and Economic Development.
Financial	Resources are available for this project, although it will leave cash reserves low for a short period. However the increase in the car parking charge will have a positive impact on available resources going forward.	Paul Holland, Senior Finance Manager (Client)
Staffing	This will have no impact on staffing.	Head of Regeneration and Economic Development.
Legal	<p>A contract will need to be prepared and exchanged with the successful contractor. Any contract entered into must be in accordance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and should be in a form approved by the Head of Legal Partnership.</p> <p>Any implications regarding</p>	Keith Trowell, Interim Team Leader (Corporate Governance)

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	increasing the car parking charges were dealt with, when charges were originally introduced.	
Privacy and Data Protection	No additional data will be held.	Keith Trowell, Interim Team Leader (Corporate Governance)
Equalities	This will have no equality implications.	Head of Regeneration and Economic Development.
Crime and Disorder	This will have no impact on Crime and Disorder	Head of Regeneration and Economic Development.
Procurement	The necessary procurement exercise has already been carried out to secure a contractor to for this work.	Head of Regeneration and Economic Development.

8. REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix 1: Photos showing the current condition of Cobtree Manor Park Car Park.
- Appendix 2: Proposed car park layout showing surfacing.
- Exempt Appendix 3: The name and details of the successful contractor.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None