

**Cobtree Manor Estate Charity
Committee**

18 March 2020

Cobtree Manor Estate Update

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

Executive Summary

An update report on the estate's day-to-day work and the work and achievements of the different sites that make up the estate.

Purpose of Report

For the Committee to note the work of the estate since its last meeting in January 2020.

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. That the contents of the report are noted

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Cobtree Manor Estate Charity Committee	18 March 2020

Cobtree Manor Estate Update

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	The work of the charity links directly to its charitable objectives and the corporate priorities for the council.	Leisure Manager
Cross Cutting Objectives	The work of the charity links directly to its charitable objectives and the cross cutting objectives of the council.	Leisure Manager
Risk Management	There are no risk management implications in this report.	Leisure Manager
Financial	Financial implications from this update are managed day-to-day in line with council procedures and policies.	Senior Finance Manager
Staffing	Staffing implications are managed day-to-day in line with council procedures and policies.	Head of Regeneration & Economic Development
Legal	Under the Council's Constitution the Committee as Corporate Trustee is responsible for all matters relating to the Charity with the exception of daily management which will be undertaken by the Director of Finance and Business Improvement. There are no specific legal implications at present as this report is presented for noting only.	Team Leader (Corporate Governance), MKLS
Privacy and Data Protection	There are no new implications as a result of this update report and recommendation.	Equalities and Corporate Policy Officer
Equalities	No impact identified as a result of this update report and recommendation.	Equalities and Corporate Policy Officer
Public Health	The Cobtree Estate works towards improving the health of residents through its day-to-day operations	Senior Public Health Officer

Crime and Disorder	Crime and disorder implications are managed day-to-day in line with council procedures and policies	Leisure Manager
Procurement	Procurement implications are managed day-to-day in line with council procedures and policies	Head of Regeneration and Economic Development and [Section 151 Officer]

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

2.1 This report covers the period 1 January 2020 to 29 February 2020

Cobtree Manor Park

- 2.2 The new Cobtree Park Manager has made a really good start in the role, getting to know the park rangers and understanding the day-to-day challenges and opportunities. He has submitted the park's Green Flag application and we look forward to our Green Flag inspection visit at some point in 2020.
- 2.3 The wet weather experienced across the borough has impacted on the park's visitor numbers and parking income over the last two months, but the February half-term holiday was a busy week and numbers have been increasing in late February. Car park income analysis shows that there were 10,750 paid vehicle visits in January and February 2019. The same period in 2020 had 8,346 visits. For the year to date there have been 56,541 paid vehicle visits. The same 48-week period in 2018/19 had 65,801 vehicle visits. These figures do not include season ticket visits.
- 2.4 The park rangers' container suffered a break in during the half term week and unfortunately some key items of equipment were stolen. Insurance claim works are progressing to replace these items. This claim is for approximately £3,500. The container building is no longer ideal for park staff so the Leisure Manager and Cobtree Park Manager are working on alternative solutions. Capital spending of £30,000 for new containers and associated compound works is in the current capital programme. A future report on this subject will be brought to this committee. The Cobtree Park rangers have temporarily relocated to the Elephant House building.
- 2.5 The park's 2020–2030 management plan is in the final draft stage. The Leisure Manager will distribute it to committee members and bring the final version to this committee with a report for formal sign off. The new plan enables the park to focus more closely on sustainability, climate change and biodiversity.
- 2.6 The overflow car park area has not been opened this year because of the weather. Investigations of the area have also identified significant root

damage to the trees, caused by continued car parking. This area is being rested for the time being while a plan is developed that will balance the protection of trees with the needs of park users.

- 2.7 Quotations have been sought for electronic park gates, which will give greater flexibility to the park team and make savings in future years. Initial conversations include solar powered and mains powered solutions. Capital expenditure of £20,000 for security is in the current capital programme and initial quotations indicate the gates can be delivered within this budget. The 2020/2021 budget also includes £11,000 revenue for park security, so budgetary savings can be realised as early as the 2020/2021 financial year.

Cobtree Young Farmers at Forstal Field

- 2.8 A separate report is also on the agenda for this project. The Cobtree team continue to work with Kent County Council, Old Chalk New Down project representatives and the Cobtree Young Farmers to deliver conservation grazing on Forstal Field as per committee's decision from the 6 November 2019 meeting.

Cobtree Manor Park Golf Course

- 2.9 The wet weather has proved problematic at the golf course as well. Numbers of rounds are down on 2019 and the course had to be closed for one week in January, which is believed to be the longest closure period in the course's history. Offers and pricing is being used to combat this and pay and play income from visitors is helping to reduce the impact of the closure.
- 2.10 At the time of writing archaeological works are being completed in preparation for the course upgrade works. The planning conditions for the course works have now all been discharged. The planning application for the clubhouse building extension will be submitted in March 2020 to enable building works to commence at the end of the 2020 season.
- 2.11 The course will operate as an 18-hole course for the summer of 2020 and the landscaping works for the new course layout will begin in autumn 2020. This news has been well received by members and customers who are committing to Cobtree for the 2020 season. This will help achieve financial targets in 2020.

Kent Life

- 2.12 Kent Life have won a Red Rosette tourism award, formally known as the Visit Attraction Quality Assurance Service Award, for their customer experience and customer service.
- 2.13 The works to complete the play barn have been completed and came in significantly under the budget set aside in the 2019/2020 capital plan. As well as these works Kent Life have also completed their annual maintenance works in readiness for 2020. They have refurbished toilets and completed remedial works on some of the buildings.

- 2.14 New for 2020 are two ponies that have been rescued from the RSPCA. They are a welcomed addition to the cuddle corner aspect of Kent Life as well as being available for photographs for some birthday parties and weddings.

Cobtree Railway

- 2.15 At the time of writing, a meeting at Kent Life with Cobtree Charity Trust and Planning Solutions will explore the viability of the railway operation in greater detail. A verbal update on the railway will be given at this meeting.

Residential Properties

- 2.16 The leisure manager has been working with the senior finance manager and colleagues in housing to understand the rental cottages in more detail. Through those discussions it has been identified that one of the properties could become vacant in the near future. The leisure manager will investigate this further and bring an update to this committee's next meeting.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 Committee can note the information contained in this report
- 3.2 Committee can choose not to note the information in this report, however the committee has requested regular updates on the operations of the estate.

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 It is recommended that the information in this report is noted.

5. RISK

- 5.1 This report is presented for information only and has no risk management implications.

6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 6.1 No consultation has taken place since the last update report
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7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 7.1 Any comments from the Committee will be passed on to the relevant parties.
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8. REPORT APPENDICES

- None
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9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- None