

**Cobtree Estate Update**

<b>Timetable</b>	
<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
Cobtree Manor Estate Charity Committee	26 October 2022

<b>Will this be a Key Decision?</b>	No
<b>Urgency</b>	Not Applicable
<b>Final Decision-Maker</b>	Cobtree Manor Estate Charity Committee
<b>Lead Head of Service</b>	Mark Green, Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement
<b>Lead Officer and Report Author</b>	Mike Evans, Leisure Manager
<b>Classification</b>	Public
<b>Wards affected</b>	Boxley

**Executive Summary**

An update report on the Cobtree Estate and its constituent venues and facilities.

**Purpose of Report**

Noting

**This report asks the Committee to consider the following recommendation:**

1. That the contents of the report are noted.

# Cobtree Estate Update

## 1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
<b>Impact on Corporate Priorities</b>	The work of the charity links directly to its charitable objectives and the Strategic Plan objectives for the council.	Leisure Manager
<b>Cross Cutting Objectives</b>	The work of the charity links directly to its charitable objectives and the cross-cutting objectives of the council.	Leisure Manager
<b>Risk Management</b>	There are no risk management implications in this report.	Leisure Manager
<b>Financial</b>	Financial implications from this update are managed day-to-day in line with council procedures and policies.	Senior Finance Manger (Client)
<b>Staffing</b>	Staffing implications are managed day-to-day in line with council procedures and policies.	Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement
<b>Legal</b>	There are no specific legal implications at present as this report is presented for noting only.	Team Leader, Contracts and Commissioning MKLS
<b>Information Governance</b>	The recommendations do not impact personal information (as defined in UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018) the Council Processes.	Information Governance Team
<b>Equalities</b>	The report is for noting and contains no recommendations that would propose a change in service, therefore no equalities impact assessment will be required.	Equalities & Communities Officer
<b>Public Health</b>	The Cobtree Estate works towards improving the health of our community and residents through its day-to-day operations.	Public Health Officer
<b>Crime and Disorder</b>	Crime and disorder implications are managed day-to-day in line with council procedures and policies	Leisure Manager

<b>Procurement</b>	Procurement implications are managed day-to-day in line with council procedures and policies.	Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement
<b>Biodiversity and Climate Change</b>	The implications of this report on biodiversity and climate change have been considered and align well with the actions of the biodiversity and climate change action plan. Maintenance of trees, engagement through educational days for children and four volunteer activity projects, and encouragement and support to Kent Life with rain water harvesting, recycling, and renewable energy generation are all positives inline with the intentions of MBC action plan.	Biodiversity and Climate Change Manager

## 2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

2.1 In the last six months facilities using the Cobtree Estate have continued their recovery from the pandemic and many have demonstrated positive customer performance against their most recent pre-pandemic levels (2019).

### **Cobtree Manor Park**

- 2.2 For the seventh consecutive year Cobtree Manor Park was awarded a Green Flag.
- 2.3 Based on car park usage data there have been 31,174 vehicle visits to the Manor Park between 1 April 2022 and 18 September 2022. For the same, full period last year there were 40,418 and pre-pandemic (2019) there were 36,329 visits.
- 2.4 General improvements beyond the daily maintenance regimes have continued to be made at the park to enhance the visitor experience. Improved drainage has been installed around the toilet entrances and plans are formulating to improve footpaths and the areas around the café building.
- 2.5 In September the park staged two performances of Robin Hood, delivered as part of the Hazlitt Theatre's outreach programme across four outdoor sites in the borough. There were a total of eight shows with 800 people attending, 261 of these were at Cobtree Manor Park making it one of the more popular venues.
- 2.6 Following a successful event last time, the GLOW light festival will be returning to the park in December.

- 2.7 A new link with Medway Valley Countryside Partnership will deliver four educational days for children and four volunteer activity projects in the park in 2022 and 2023.

### **Cobtree Golf Course**

- 2.8 The Golf Course continues to attract visitors and receives consistent positive feedback on social media from those who play there. Membership grew in August by 45 (a typical month might see 10-12 new members) and there have been 68 Golf Day bookings since April.
- 2.9 A total of 20,399 rounds were played in the period 1 April 2022 to 21 September 2022, which compares favourably with pre-pandemic (2019) levels for the same period of 18,611.
- 2.10 The venue has been used for parties and events as well as by several regular users who hold business meetings there.
- 2.11 Course improvements continue with a programme of tree and drainage works, as well as ditch renovations. The course conditions survey shows consistent improvement month-on-month.
- 2.12 There has been a recent spate of anti-social behaviour affecting the course, with two golf buggies being stolen and found burnt out locally. Some minor course damage has been repaired but the two buggies were written-off.

### **Kent Life**

- 2.13 The venue has recently employed a new operations manager with experience in managing large public leisure venues. He is also keen to explore further recycling opportunities and other actions to support action on climate change, including rainwater harvesting and opportunities to generate on-site power.
- 2.14 Overall admission numbers are above those budgeted for by the operator with 94,555 visitors attending the venue between 1 April 2022 and 21 September 2022. During the summer holidays daily visitor numbers reached 800 on many occasions. School visit numbers are especially encouraging, mainly due to the promotion of the venue through links to the curriculum.
- 2.15 New attractions have been added like the hands-on mud kitchen, a new pony enclosure and updated habitat for guinea pigs and rabbits. Kent Life has recently acquired some rare breed sheep and will be looking to breed pigs on site.
- 2.16 The venue has hosted a number of events including 19 weddings, 101 children's parties, corporate events, the Hops n Harvest festival and advance planning is in place for upcoming events like Halloween, Fireworks and Winter Wonderland.

- 2.17 The operator has applied for planning permission to create a new restaurant area. For this a Deed of Variation will be signed to extend the agreement by the available five years. The new expiry date will be December 2030.
- 2.18 Agreement has been reached with the Young Farmers for them to install a power connection to Forstal Field. Once their trustees have signed the agreement it will come back to the Committee for sign-off.
- 2.19 The Council has included Kent Life as a possible location for the siting of a changing place toilet in an external funding bid. At the time of writing the outcome of this bid is now yet known.

### **Cobtree Café**

- 2.20 The current café operator's lease expires on midnight 16 April 2023 and consideration is underway to seek a new operator. End of agreement plans are in place to ensure a smooth handover back to MBC and that all obligations on the tenant are met.
- 2.21 The operator has recently complied with requests to repair items in the toilet area.
- 2.22 Café business has been positive with the operator reporting turnover for Quarter 1 as 32% higher than the pre-pandemic period (Q1 2019).
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## **3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS**

- 3.1 The Committee can note the information in this report.
- 3.2 The Committee can choose not to note the information in this report, however previous iterations of this committee requested regular updates on the operations of the Estate so knock on impacts and decisions can be foreknown.
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## **4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 It is recommended that the information in this report is noted.
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## **5. RISK**

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

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## **8. REPORT APPENDICES**

- None
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## **9. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- None