

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

COBTREE MANOR ESTATE CHARITY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 22 NOVEMBER 2023

Present:

Committee Members:	Councillor Burton (Chairman) and Councillors Cooper and Parfitt-Reid
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16. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Perry.

17. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

18. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

There were no Visiting Members, although Councillors Garten and Russell attended the meeting as observers.

19. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

20. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

21. EXEMPT ITEMS

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

22. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 26 JULY 2023

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 26 July 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed.

23. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

24. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from members of the public.

25. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO THE CHAIRMAN

There were no questions from Members to the Chairman.

26. COBTREE ESTATE UPDATE

The Leisure Contracts Manager introduced his report providing an update on activities at the Cobtree Manor Estate and highlighted trends in visitor numbers to the Manor Park (a decrease back to pre-pandemic levels) and Kent Life (an increase on 2022 despite poor weather in July), the progress being made by the new café operator with the internal refurbishment works, events taking place at Kent Life, and the position regarding the future use of the Elephant House.

The Leisure Contracts Manager advised the Committee that since publication of the agenda, the sad news had been received that Ed Richardson, the Chief Executive of Get Golfing, the new golf course operator, had died suddenly. The Chairman asked the Leisure Contracts Manager to convey the Committee's condolences to Mr Richardson's family and friends.

RESOLVED: That the update on activities at the Cobtree Manor Estate be noted.

27. COBTREE MANOR ESTATE FINANCIAL POSITION REPORT

The Senior Finance Manager (Client) introduced his report summarising the financial position of the Cobtree Manor Estate as at 31 October 2023. The report covered activities at the golf course, Kent Life, the Manor Park and the residential properties.

The Senior Finance Manager (Client) advised the Committee that:

The outturn position as at 31 October 2023 showed a surplus of £20,239 on operational activities, which was £10,496 more than budgeted for. There were no significant issues to report, but the following points should be noted:

- Golf course income was slightly down on the profiled budget, but the budget was set prior to the new contract being awarded, so the figure would be adjusted to reflect the new contract when the updated budgets were reported to the Committee in January 2024.
- Most of the gas and electricity costs for the café would be recharged to the operator, but the Estate would retain the charges for the toilets and the staff area. Once the exercise to calculate the recharges had been completed, invoices would be raised, and this should largely eliminate the overspend in this area.
- No invoices had been raised for toilet cleaning to date. Standards were under review and when they were more acceptable, invoices would be raised which would largely eliminate the underspend on this budget.
- The shortfall in car parking income reflected the reduction in visitor numbers compared to 2022. This budget would be reviewed to see if it should be reduced as it was set when visitor numbers were higher during the pandemic.
- The income budget for the café would also need to be reviewed as the contract had been re-let since the budgets were agreed.

In response to a question, the Senior Finance Manager (Client) confirmed that the shortfall in car parking income reflected the reduction in visitor numbers, but car parking income was still at a healthy level.

RESOLVED: That the financial position of the Cobtree Manor Estate as at 31 October 2023 be noted.

28. DURATION OF MEETING

12.30 p.m. to 12.39 p.m.