

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

COBTREE MANOR ESTATE CHARITY COMMITTEE

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 3 AUGUST
2016**

Present: **Councillor McLoughlin (Chairman), and
Councillors Mrs Gooch, Harvey, Perry and Mrs Wilson**

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

It was noted that apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Cox.

2. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was noted that Councillor Harvey was substituting for Councillor Cox.

3. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

There were no Visiting Members.

4. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED: That Councillor McLoughlin be elected Chairman of the committee for the municipal year 2016-17.

5. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED: That Councillor Cox be elected Vice-Chairman of the committee for the municipal year 2016-17.

6. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

7. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

8. TO CONSIDER WHETHER ANY ITEMS SHOULD BE TAKEN IN PRIVATE
BECAUSE OF THE POSSIBLE DISCLOSURE OF EXEMPT INFORMATION.

RESOLVED: That the items on part II of the agenda be taken in private as proposed.

9. MINUTES (PART I) OF THE MEETING HELD ON 23 MARCH 2016

With regard to minute 148. Report of Commercial and Economic Development – Cobtree Manor Golf Course, Members noted that recommendation 7 should make reference to 'Cobtree Manor Estate Trust'.

RESOLVED: That the minutes (part I) of the meeting held on 23 March 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed.

10. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Minute 145. Report of the Cobtree Officer – Cobtree Manor Estate Update Report

It was noted that Members had requested a report back to Members outside of the meeting on the Tree Replacement Policy, but this had not been circulated. The Cobtree Officer confirmed that this would be circulated in advance of the next meeting.

11. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF LEGAL PARTNERSHIP - ADVICE ON THE STATUS OF MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

The Deputy Head of the Legal Partnership presented the report which clarified that individual Members of the committee were not individual trustees of the charity and had no liability. The Council as the corporate trustee was liable.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

12. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF COMMERCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT - COBTREE MANOR ESTATE UPDATE REPORT

The Cobtree Officer presented the report updating committee on the operation of the estate. Members were advised that the park had enjoyed good Green Flag results, and that the Men in Sheds group was successful and had attracted new members.

In response to questions regarding the Cobtree café it was explained that:

- There was a single point of sale in the café due to spatial constraints, and this could lead to queues. A new initiative would create a better takeaway service featuring ready prepared items which was expected to reduce queues, and two additional serving points for ice cream had been established, but it was recognised that a second till point was also required.
- Due to visitor numbers to the café the presentation standards declined throughout the day. Focus was required on restocking during busy times to ensure a consistent offer.
- MBC procedures were used except where these had become prohibitive to the function of Cobtree business. In these instances work had been undertaken to simplify procedures.

- Toys such as bats and balls were sold at the café till point due to customer demand. These were considered an upsell on food and drink purchases rather than a primary offer.
- Staff at the café were employed on a mixture of zero hour and 6 month contracts, and all received rota hours each week.

During discussion it was raised that:

- The CCTV installed in the car park had not been operating, and would require relocation due to trees blocking the camera. Had the CCTV been functional it would not have recorded the theft of the zip wire equipment.
- Options for further sustainability such as increased parking charges would be considered after the first year review.

RESOLVED:

1. That the report be noted.
2. That the recommended actions from the initial café business review be implemented subject to the points raised by Members, and a further full review of the café operate be undertaken once these have been implemented, with the results and action plan brought to the next meeting of the committee.
3. That an update on the financial performance of the café be presented to each meeting of the committee.

13. **REPORT OF THE HEAD OF COMMERCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT - COBTREE CYCLE PATH AND CROSSING**

The Cobtree Officer introduced Colin Finch, KCC Senior Projects Officer Public Rights of Way, who had provided information for the report.

The Cobtree Officer explained that KCC and MBC were working jointly on a scheme to widen the River Medway towpath and develop a sustainable route along the river. One of the options included a Toucan road crossing to facilitate pedestrian and cyclist access to Cobtree County Park.

It response to questions the Committee was advised that:

- The proposed Toucan crossing would be sited near to the entrance of the park, which would necessitate the removal of a currently situated bus stop. It was stated that a bus stop in the vicinity of the park was important for visitor access by public transport.
- KCC was seeking a match funding contribution of £30,000 towards the proposed highways works and improvements to the riverside

towpath on Kent Life land. The Cobtree Manor Estate Charity did not have the required funds due to the change in golf course income. The funding would therefore need to be sought from other grant awarding bodies. If the match funding was not achieved then the pedestrian crossing works could not be progressed.

RESOLVED:

1. That approval be given to the proposed Towpath changes detailed in the drawings appended to the report;
2. That approval be given to the proposed Toucan Crossing design dependent upon the retention of a bus stop;
3. That Officers seek additional funding to contribute towards this scheme and bring a further report back to committee in the event that there is a short fall in funding.

14. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF COMMERCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT - COBTREE MANOR PARK VISITOR CENTRE CLOSURE REPORT

The Parks and Leisure Manager presented a closure report detailing the implementation of the Sir Garrard Tyrwhitt-Drake Visitor Centre in Cobtree Manor Park.

It was highlighted that the project came in on budget utilising the 10% contingency, and it was stated that a closure report for the whole project would be presented to a future meeting of the committee.

In response to a question it was confirmed that maintenance of the facility was undertaken in house by MBC.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

15. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC FROM THE MEETING

RESOLVED: That the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business because of the likely disclosure of exempt information for the reason specified having applied the Public Interest Test:

	Head of Schedule 12A and Brief Description
Item 14. Minutes (Part II) of the meeting held on 23 March 2016	3 – Financial/Business Affairs
Item 15. Exempt Report of the Head of Commercial and Economic Development – Cobtree Manor Estate Financial Position	3 – Financial/Business Affairs

Item 16. Exempt Report of the Head of Commercial and Economic Development – Cobtree Manor Park Golf Course Tender Update Report

3 – Financial/Business Affairs

16. MINUTES (PART II) OF THE MEETING HELD ON 23 MARCH 2016

RESOLVED: That the Minutes (Part II) of the meeting held on 23 March 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed.

17. CHANGE TO THE ORDER OF BUSINESS

RESOLVED: That item 16 – Cobtree Manor Park Golf Course Tender Update Report be taken in advance of item 15 due to Mike Marsh of MMA Limited being in attendance to speak to the item.

18. EXEMPT REPORT OF THE HEAD OF COMMERCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT - COBTREE MANOR PARK GOLF COURSE TENDER UPDATE REPORT

The Parks and Leisure Manager presented the report updating committee on the progress of the Cobtree Manor Golf Course Tender. Mike Marsh of MMA Limited (MMA) was in attendance to speak to the item as MMA was managing the procurement exercise on behalf of CMET.

RESOLVED:

1. That the report be noted;
2. That the Director of Finance and Business Improvement be given delegated authority to award the contract to the successful bidder;
3. That the Head of Mid Kent Legal Services be given delegated authority to enter into a lease and a management agreement with the successful bidder;
4. That the Invitation to Tender document be circulated to Members outside of the meeting;
5. That the appointed contractor be invited to meet the committee at a suitable date.

19. EXEMPT REPORT OF THE HEAD OF COMMERCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT - COBTREE MANOR ESTATE FINANCIAL POSITION

The Senior Finance Manager presented the report summarising the current financial position of the Estate as of 30 June 2016, including the activities at the golf course, Kent Life, the Manor Park and the Café/Visitor Centre.

RESOLVED:

1. That the report be noted;
2. That, at the conclusion of the golf tender process, Officers be requested to commence the work to present options for a new operational model of the Cobtree Manor Estate Trust;
3. That a report proposing aspirations to build up to a minimum contingency fund be presented to committee in the report at year end.

20. VOTE OF THANKS

The Committee noted that it would be Cobtree Officer Joanna Joyce's last meeting of the Committee before leaving the Council later in the year.

The Chairman thanked Ms Joyce for all her hard work and wished her well for the future. This was agreed by the Committee.

21. DURATION OF MEETING

2.00 p.m. to 4.55 p.m.