

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

COBTREE MANOR ESTATE CHARITY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON FRIDAY 28 APRIL 2017

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

Also Present: Mr R Hext – Cobtree Charity Limited

53. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

54. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

There were no Substitute Members.

55. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

His Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor Butler was in attendance as a Visiting Member for Agenda Item 8 – Report of the Head of Regeneration and Economic Development – Cobtree Manor Park Café Easter Holiday Trials.

56. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

57. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

58. EXEMPT ITEMS

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

59. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 30 MARCH 2017

The Head of Regeneration and Economic Development advised the Committee that 'Resolution 4 - That agreement be given to the installation of a server hatch at the Cobtree Manor Park Café at a cost not exceeding £5,000' to the report of the Head of Regeneration and Economic Development – Cobtree Manor Park Visitor Centre/Café Update – March 2017 would not now be progressed.

By way of an update the Parks and Leisure Manager advised that he had contacted Kent Highways about the feasibility to build a tunnel under Forstal Road to join up Cobtree Manor Park and Kent Life. However, he

had still not had a response. The Committee requested that should a response not be received by the next meeting a letter be sent to the relevant Cabinet Member of KCC from the Chairman.

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 30 March 2017 be approved as a correct record and signed.

60. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF REGENERATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT - COBTREE MANOR PARK CAFE EASTER HOLIDAY TRIALS

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Regeneration and Economic Development which provided an update on the various activities that were trialled at Cobtree Manor Park Café during the Easter holidays in April 2017 to improve the operation and profitability of the café..

The Parks and Leisure Manager explained that the trial was carried out over the Easter holidays from 4th April to 21st April 2017.

It was noted that a survey was undertaken at the same time which assessed the satisfaction level of the customers of the café since the changes had been made to reduce the time spent waiting for food orders. A total of 42 responses had been received and they had been mainly positive.

The Committee was informed that:-

- The simplified 'Schools Out Menu' had enabled the kitchen staff to deal with orders more quickly and was therefore considered a success.
- A price increase of 15% had been introduced from 6th April and was considered comparable with other park cafes.
- The quality recyclable plastic cutlery and packaging introduced during busy periods had been well received by customers and had enabled the kitchen staff to work more efficiently.
- The queues experienced in the Café had been mainly due to people wanting to buy ice creams or drinks. This was resolved by utilising a second point of sale, opened up during busy times, selling just ice creams and drinks which had also proved successful.
- There had been problems with users of the car park parking inefficiently and blocking the entrance to the overflow car park. It was noted that there had been an occasion when the car park was full and visitors had parked out on the main Forstal Road. A report on this issue would come to a future meeting of the Committee.
- There was an issue of storage for stock and various initiatives were being looked at such as hiring a mobile cold store for the 6 weeks summer holiday period etc.

- There was a resource issue where there was very little resilience in the team, various initiatives would be looked at, including a duty manager role.
- There was also a need to clearly define the duties of all staff within the park, including the Park Ranger to ensure any issues that arose were dealt with by the most appropriate person..
- A dialogue had already taken place with the Manager of Mote Park Café to collaborate to have more buying power.

RESOLVED:

1. That the contents of the report on Cobtree Manor Park Café as set out in Appendix 1 be noted; and
2. That the trial arrangements be made permanent during school holidays, bank holidays and busy times.

61. DURATION OF MEETING

11 a.m. to 12.30 p.m.