

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

COBTREE MANOR ESTATE CHARITY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 26 OCTOBER 2022

Present:

Committee Members:	Councillor Burton (Chairman) and Councillors Cooper, Parfitt-Reid and S Webb
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1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

2. **ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

RESOLVED: That Councillor Burton be elected as Chairman of the Committee for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2022/23.

3. **ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN**

RESOLVED: That Councillor Cooper be elected as Vice-Chairman of the Committee for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2022/23.

4. **URGENT ITEMS**

There were no urgent items.

5. **NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS**

There were no Visiting Members.

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. **EXEMPT ITEMS**

RESOLVED: That the item on Part II of the agenda be taken in public but the information contained therein should remain private.

9. **MINUTES (PARTS I AND II) OF THE MEETING HELD ON 14 APRIL 2022**

RESOLVED: That the Minutes (Parts I and II) of the meeting held on 14 April 2022 when the Council was operating a Committee system of governance be noted.

10. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

11. ANY QUESTIONS ON NOTICE FROM LOCAL RESIDENTS

There were no questions from local residents.

12. ANY QUESTIONS ON NOTICE FROM MEMBERS

There were no questions from Members to the Chairman.

13. 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 August 2022. The report covered the Golf Course, Kent Life, the Manor Park and the residential properties. The report also included an updated cashflow projection for the Estate.

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

- The position at 31 August 2022 was a small overspend of £2,842 against the profiled budget. There were no significant issues to report, but the following points should be noted:

Mytime, the operator of the Golf Course, would be invoiced for £80,000 for rental payments due, with an initial £21,736 for performance based on trading in the early part of the financial year. Given the positive trading position so far this year, it was hoped that another significant performance-based sum could be realised.

The spend of £6,610 against Golf Course professional services was for advice from consultants in respect of the clubhouse.

- The updated cashflow projection covered the next ten years and was based on currently approved budgets with adjustments for inflation (5%) and contract uplifts. For the Golf Course contract, a figure of £100,000 per annum had been used as this was the sum needed to ensure a break-even position for operational activities at the Estate.
- The main challenge going forward was funding future capital expenditure, the most significant item being the replacement of the existing play area which was likely to cost more than £350,000. Works would also be needed to the Llama House and the concrete hardstanding outside the Café building. At this stage, no costings had been included in the projection for these works as funding had yet to be identified. The proposed new staff welfare and storage facility could be funded from existing resources, but it would be necessary to identify funding for other works. One option was to increase car parking charges to raise additional income to fund capital works within the Manor Park, but the projection currently assumed that the charges would stay as they are at present.
- Risks associated with the figures in the projection included inflation rising above the projected 5% and it not being possible to identify funding for the

major capital works needed, particularly the play area, which was a key attraction for visitors to the Park.

RESOLVED:

1. That the financial position of the Cobtree Manor Estate as at 31 August 2022 be noted.
2. That the updated cashflow projection be noted.

14. **COBTREE ESTATE UPDATE**

The Leisure Manager introduced his report providing an update on activities at the Cobtree Manor Estate. It was noted that:

Cobtree Manor Park

- For the seventh consecutive year, Cobtree Manor Park had been awarded a Green Flag.
- The Hazlitt Theatre had staged two performances of Robin Hood in September 2022 and the GLOW light festival would return to the Park in December 2022.

Cobtree Golf Course

- Golf Course membership continued to increase, and the number of rounds played during the period 1 April 2022 to 21 September 2022 (20,399) compared favourably with pre-pandemic (2019) levels for the same period (18,611).

Kent Life

- Kent Life was performing above budget and improvements to the farmyard area were enhancing the customer experience.

Cobtree Café

- Café business had been positive with the operator reporting turnover above pre-pandemic levels.

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

15. **COBTREE CAFÉ LETTING**

RESOLVED:

1. That the leased and retained areas of the café premises be reviewed to achieve optimum financial returns and operational suitability at Cobtree Manor Park.
2. That agents be appointed to act on behalf of the Charity, engage the market, source prospective tenants and assist in selecting the most suitable tenant for the Park and their quotation of £9,500 payable on successful completion be approved.

3. That the lease of Cobtree Manor Park Café be placed on the market and offers be invited from prospective tenant operators.
4. That delegated authority be given to the Director of Finance, Resources and Business Improvement to agree Heads of Terms with the preferred new tenant to achieve the optimum annual financial return and operational situation for Cobtree Manor Park Café.

See Record of Decision:

[Your Councillors - Maidstone Borough Council](#)

16. COBTREE STAFF WELFARE FACILITIES

RESOLVED: That the Officers proceed with seeking estimates and proposals for a stand-alone staff welfare and storage facility at Cobtree Manor Park.

See Record of Decision:

[Your Councillors - Maidstone Borough Council](#)

17. DURATION OF MEETING

5.00 p.m. to 5.25 p.m.