

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

COBTREE MANOR ESTATE CHARITY COMMITTEE

MINUTES (PART I) OF THE MEETING HELD ON 14 APRIL 2022

Present: Councillor Garten (Chairman) and
Councillors Cox, Hinder, Kimmance and Springett

77. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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

78. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was noted that Councillor Hinder was substituting for Councillor Perry.

79. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

80. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

There were no Visiting Members.

81. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

82. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

83. EXEMPT ITEMS

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

84. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 10 MARCH 2022

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 10 March 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed.

85. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

86. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from members of the public.

87. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO THE CHAIRMAN

There were no questions from Members to the Chairman.

88. COBTREE ESTATE UPDATE

The Leisure Manager introduced his report providing an update on activities at the Cobtree Manor Estate since the meeting of the Committee in January 2022. It was noted that:

Cobtree Manor Park

- Latest car park usage data showed more than £110,000 net income for the financial year 2021/22, which was a positive variance of £5,000 against the revised budget.

Golf Course

- There had been good course usage despite mixed conditions due to some extreme weather. During the period January to mid-March 2022, there had been a similar number of rounds (4,451) as in the same whole quarter in 2019 (4,591). The golf course improvement works were ongoing.

Kent Life

- Planning Solutions had introduced a new pricing structure with a standard entry fee for everyone. A new online ticketing system had been implemented.
- Severe weather conditions in February 2022 had impacted on half-term customer numbers and, for a time, it had been necessary to close the lower car park due to flooding.
- The Environment Agency was still using part of the car park as their works were over-running. There had been discussions between the operator and the contractors about compensation for their extended use of the area, and an outcome was awaited.
- Leaks in the artefact store had been resolved by roof maintenance and some remedial works had been undertaken to reduce cellar flooding. Further investigations were planned, and an insurance claim was being investigated.

Cobtree Café

- The operator had been required to carry out and had completed some emergency plumbing works in the toilets. The operator was also

required to resolve some maintenance issues there too, and these would be completed this month. The Council had completed some minor drainage improvements at the toilet entrance thresholds.

- The operator had reported a Quarter 3 performance 34% better than the same period in 2019, but, during the pandemic in 2020, business was 26% better than this year.

During the discussion, Members thanked the Officers for a very positive report.

RESOLVED: That the update on activities at the Cobtree Manor Estate since the meeting of the Committee in January 2022 be noted.

89. QUEEN'S JUBILEE PROJECT

The Leisure Manager introduced his report setting out details of a proposal to install an interactive sundial at Cobtree Manor Park to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. It was noted that:

- The proposal had been developed in discussion with Members and Officers. The sundial would be made from a series of stones sunk into the ground following a set pattern and decorated with a rose bed. People would be able to use their own shadows to tell the time. It was anticipated that the installation would attract new visitors to the Cobtree Manor Park.
- Some of the operational surplus generated during the 2021/22 financial year could be used to meet the cost of the installation.

Wishing to discuss the funding required to deliver the project in private so as not to prejudice the Council's position in the procurement process, the Committee:

RESOLVED: That the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item 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

Queen's Jubilee Project – Funding 3 – Financial /Business Affairs

Having discussed this matter in private, the Committee agreed that the funding identified in the Minutes (Part II) be allocated for the installation of an interactive sundial at the Cobtree Manor Park to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. The Committee then agreed that the public be re-admitted to the meeting.

During the ensuing discussion, reference was made to the connection between Sir Garrard Tyrwhitt-Drake, the former owner of the Cobtree Manor Estate and founder of the Cobtree Charity Trust, and the Carriage

Museum (the Tyrwhitt-Drake Museum of Carriages) which contains vehicles on loan from the Royal Household, and it was agreed to ask the Economic Regeneration and Leisure Committee to consider opening the Carriage Museum over the Queen's Platinum Jubilee bank holiday weekend and publicising the special opening arrangements. It was also agreed to ask the Member of the Executive responsible for the Carriage Museum under the new governance arrangements going forward to review the opening hours of the Museum to ensure that it is accessible to the public.

RESOLVED:

1. That delegated authority be given to the Leisure Manager and the Mote Park and Cobtree Manor Park Manager to complete the installation of an interactive sundial to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.
2. That the funding identified in the Minutes (Part II) be allocated for the completion of this project.
3. That the Economic Regeneration and Leisure Committee be asked to consider opening the Carriage Museum over the Queen's Platinum Jubilee bank holiday weekend and publicising the special opening arrangements.
4. That the Member of the Executive responsible for the Carriage Museum under the new governance arrangements going forward be asked to review the opening hours of the Museum to ensure that it is accessible to the public.

90. DURATION OF MEETING

2.00 p.m. to 2.40 p.m.