

Mount Edgcumbe Joint Committee

Friday 23 July 2010

PRESENT:

Councillor Reynolds, Co Chair in the Chair.

Councillors Austin, Delbridge, Flashman, German, Martin Leaves, McDonald, Pearn, Preston, Smith and Vincent.

Co-opted Representatives: Cdr Crocker and Mr T Savery.

Apologies for absence: Councillors Holley and G Trubody Sir Richard Carew Pole Bt, Mr D L Richards and Mrs Spring.

Also in attendance: Simon Arthurs (Finance Client Manager), Geraldine Baker (Finance Officer), Ian Berry (Park Manager), Nick Butcher (Head Gardener/Ranger), James Coulton (Assistant Director for Culture, Sports and Leisure), Charlie David (Operations Manager East) and Louise Goad (Group Accountant).

The meeting started at 10.45 am and finished at 12.20 pm.

Note: At a future meeting, the committee will consider the accuracy of these draft minutes, so they may be subject to change. Please check the minutes of that meeting to confirm whether these minutes have been amended.

16. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made by Members in accordance with the code of conduct.

17. MINUTES

Agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on 25 June 2010 are confirmed as a correct record subject to the following amendments –

- (1) Councillor Martin Leaves is included under apologies;
- (2) the terms of reference are amended to reflect the amendment to B5 'the Director for Environment, Planning and Economy in Cornwall in consultation with the Director for Community Services in Plymouth'.

18. CHAIR'S URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of Chair's urgent business.

19. **BUSINESS AND FINANCE**

Louise Goad and Simon Arthurs Finance submitted an update report on 2010/11 monitoring, which outlined the following main points –

- (a) a deficit of £246,000 was forecast for 2010/11;
- (b) proposed savings had been identified and included within the action plan; if the following proposals were implemented, then a saving of £71,000 would be achieved –
 - winter closure including the Barrow Complex with effect from 3 October and Cremyll Shop/Orangery with effect from 31 October;
 - amendment of winter weekend staffing arrangements;
 - reduction of 100 hours overtime per month;
 - closure of plant sales on Fridays (already implemented);
 - ten per cent price increase (actual impact 5 – 8 per cent);
- (c) whilst it was acknowledged that these immediate savings were achievable there would remain a large deficit which would need to be addressed by significant changes in the future operation of the park;
- (d) no assumptions had been made in addressing the additional £100,000 funding requirement for 2009/10;
- (e) work was continuing to investigate further savings options, which included –
 - closure of the Barrow shop, with the most popular and profitable stock lines transferred to the Cremyll shop; the space could be used to generate revenue income through catering or chargeable meeting space;
 - introduction of refreshment sales around the park (bicycle sales);
 - introduction of increased car parking charges and the implementation of car park charges at Barrow Park (plant sales);
 - additional management information which would assist in driving down the cost of sales;

- (f) any capital receipts generated could be used to repay the current borrowing costs which would save a maximum of £30,000 per annum for 10 years, and set aside a capital reserve for future invest to save projects within the estate, with the revenue savings being used to replenish reserves;
- (g) at the previous meeting held on 25 June 2010, the Joint Committee raised concerns relating to the annual governance statement; as a result of the delay, the statement of accounts and the annual governance statement had not been submitted by the deadline of 30 June 2010;
- (h) a letter had been received from the Audit Commission on 13 July 2010 advising that an additional fee would be charged if the return was not received within 10 working days;
- (i) it was hoped that the additional information provided would address the concerns and permit the Joint Committee to approve the annual statement.

The following responses were provided to questions raised by the Joint Committee –

- (j) assurances were given that the process relating to the annual statement of accounts and governance statement had been improved which would prevent a similar situation arising in future years;
- (k) if targets had not been achieved within the action plan, then an explanation would be provided detailing the reasons for this;
- (l) a response would be provided to the next Joint Committee on whether any penalties had been incurred in previous years, for the late submission of accounts;
- (m) under the Countryside Act, 1968 admission fees to the park were not permitted;
- (n) an informal challenge had been made following the re-evaluation of the business rates; it was considered that a formal appeal against the significant increase would not be successful;
- (o) the new Cremyll ferry contract had commenced on 19 July 2010 with a revised timetable which included a late ferry at 9.45 pm; the ferry operator had indicated that they were willing to work with the park in relation to evening events providing that there was a guarantee of least 100 passengers;

- (p) admission charges to the house would be the subject of a report to the Joint Committee in November 2010;
- (q) a premises licence had been applied for which incorporated the house and the formal gardens; by holding the licence this would enable the park to undertake a wider range of activities;
- (r) a report on the proposed increases to car parking charges to the Joint Committee in November; the report would also include the proposal to obtain an off street parking order for Barrow Park and reflect VAT increases;
- (s) in previous years a licence had been granted for the sale of ice cream at Rame Head and Maker but the returns had been insufficient;
- (t) work to review the park's assets was being undertaken, in particular the possibility of selling the lease hold on Captain Blake's Hut;
- (u) work would be undertaken to ascertain the feasibility of requesting schools to make a donation for the use of the park;
- (v) assurances were given that the officers' working group were investigating all options to maximise income for the park.

Agreed that –

- (1) the Joint Committee approves the implementation of the saving options which forecast a saving of £71,000;
- (2) the Joint Committee notes the Internal Audit report and approves the Annual Governance Statement;
- (3) in consultation with the Co-Chairs and officers an additional meeting is arranged in September 2010.

20. **EXEMPT BUSINESS**

Agreed that under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act, 1972, the press and public are excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule of the Act, as amended by the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

21. **HOUSE ADMISSIONS 2011**

Ian Berry, Park Manager advised the Joint Committee that this report had been withdrawn and would be submitted to the November 2010 meeting.