

Mount Edgcumbe Joint Committee

Friday 24 June 2011

PRESENT:

Councillor Mrs Beer, Co-Chair in the Chair.

Councillors Austin, Browne, Flashman, Mrs Foster, Holley, Penberthy, Riches (Substitute for Councillor Preston), Trubody (Co-Chair) and Vincent.

Co-opted Representatives: Cdr Crocker, Sir Richard Carew Pole Bt, Mr D L Richards and Mrs Spring.

Apologies for absence: Councillors Mrs Bragg, German, Pearn MBE, Preston, Peter Smith and Co-opted Representative Mr T Savery.

Also in attendance: Ian Berry (Park Manager), Nick Butcher (Head Gardener/Ranger), James Coulton (Assistant Director for Culture, Sport and Leisure PCC), Charlie David (Operations Manager East CC), Wendy Eldridge (Senior Accountant PCC), David Jenkin (Accountant CC), David Marshall (Business Development Mount Edgcumbe House and Country Park, Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery PCC) and Tony O'Connor-Smith (Senior Accountant PCC).

The meeting started at 10.45 am and finished at 11.55 am.

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.

1. APPOINTMENT OF THE JOINT CHAIRS

Agreed that Councillor Mrs Beer (Plymouth City Council) is appointed as the Co-Chair for the forthcoming municipal year 2011/12.

Agreed that Councillor Trubody (Cornwall Council) is appointed as the Co-Chair for the forthcoming municipal year 2011/12.

2. Welcome

Councillor Mrs Beer (Co-Chair), extended a warm welcome to the new members of the Joint Committee and offered Councillor Reynolds's thanks to the Joint Committee for its support during his term as Co-Chair.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In accordance with the code of conduct, the following declarations of interest were made –

Name	Subject	Reason	Interest
Councillor Trubody (Co-Chair)	Minute 6 (o)	Involved in Water Transport Strategy	Personal
Sir Richard Carew Pole Bt	Minute 6 (k)	Owner of chalets along the coast	Personal and Prejudicial

4. **MINUTES**

Agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on 18 February 2011 are confirmed as a correct record.

5. **CHAIR'S URGENT BUSINESS**

With the permission of the Chair, the Park Manager provided an update on the following issues –

- (a) as part of the business plan, a survey was being undertaken on 27 June 2011, to ascertain the suitability of the trees for the 'tree surfing' options;
- (b) the annual inspection would be undertaken at the next meeting of the Joint Committee scheduled for 22 July 2011; as part of this meeting it was proposed to visit the properties that had been identified for possible refurbishment within the Park; following the annual inspection a report on the options for these properties would be submitted to the Joint Committee for its consideration;
- (c) initial work had been undertaken to assess the suitability of installing photovoltaic cells on the House roof; this type of installation offered substantial benefits in reducing the Park's carbon footprint; the cells would not be intrusive as they would not be visible; further work needed to be undertaken in order to deliver this project;
- (d) a serious accident had occurred two weeks ago, whereby a ride-on mower had gone over a bank and rolled on top of an employee. He received several cracked vertebrae and had been hospitalised (he had since been released from hospital).

(In accordance with Section 100(B)(4)(b) of the Local Government Act, 1972, the Chair brought forward the above item for urgent consideration because of the need to inform Councillors).

6. **REVENUE OUTTURN 2010/11 INCORPORATING STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2010/11**

The Director for Community Services, the Director for Corporate Support and the Head of Environment and Heritage Services submitted a report on the revenue outturn 2010/11 incorporating the Statement of Accounts 2010/11, which highlighted the following main issues –

- (a) a forecast deficit of £308k had been reported to the February 2011 Joint Committee meeting, however there had been a favourable variance of £5k which had resulted in an overall deficit of £303k for 2010/11;
- (b) variations on the revenue outturn 2010/11 were attributed to the following main areas –
 - House and Park
 - the Stables
 - Barrow Shop
 - plant sales
- (c) there had been a significant change in the 'value of fixed assets' through the reclassification of assets and revaluations of the outbuilding complex, relating to the Statement of Accounts;
- (d) in the opinion of internal audit the overall financial regulations were of a good standard; points had been raised regarding the need for appropriate action to increase the Joint Committee's level of reserves and review the risks.

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

- (e) the first nine weeks of trading had been strong particularly in the Cremyll shop;
- (f) both the staffing costs (£23,000) and the cost of sales (£23,000) for the Cremyll shop were correct;
- (g) the Barrow Park shop operation was continually under review (it was currently closed on a Friday and Saturday); however, future options for the shop would be considered (eg an extension to the catering operation in the Stables);
- (h) although there had been a reported deficit for the Cremyll shop, it was important that the shop remained open; by employing one member of staff in the shop over the weekend this provided a point of contact for members of the public and negated the need to employ other members of staff (which would result in overtime rates being paid) thus saving money;

- (i) it would be difficult to employ voluntary staff to work in the Cremyll shop, as there would be no guarantee that it could be fully staffed at the required times;
- (j) the business plan included options to bring additional activities into the Park without impacting on its historical importance; a report would be submitted to the July 2011 meeting of the Joint Committee regarding property options and the installation photovoltaic cells;
- (k) the Park received a fixed income from the rent of its chalets; a ground rent review was due in September 2011; a bench marking exercise had been undertaken which compared the ground rent of chalets on private land in the area;
- (l) open discussions had been held with the National Trust where various options had been considered; currently the Trust was not interested in the Park (the Trust was undertaking a national review of its business plan relating to its properties and their future operation); however, the Trust had not ruled out future consideration of this matter;
- (m) it was unlikely that additional funding for the Park would be available from Cornwall Council, as in previous years;
- (n) a significant amount of work had been carried out on the business plan; the key aim of the plan was to achieve future sustainability for the Park, in order to reduce any future contributions from each constituent authority;
- (o) work was being undertaken by Cornwall Council on a water transport strategy for the Tamar; the key aims of the strategy was to increase the footfall within the Park and link the settlements along the Tamar.

(Sir Richard Carew Pole Bt declared a personal and prejudicial interest in item (k) and left the room for this item).

(Councillor Trubody (Co-Chair) declared a personal interest in item (o) above).

The Joint Committee agreed –

- (1) to note the report;
- (2) to note that the constituent authority accounts have reflected the financial support required for 2010/11 to address the revenue shortfall
- (3) that the Statement of Accounts is recommended for approval;

(4) that the Annual Governance Statement is recommended for approval.

7. **FORMAL OPENING OF THE NEW RELIC GARDEN**

The Park Manager advised that the Co-Chairs together with the Chairman of the Friends of Mount Edgcumbe Country Park would formally open the new Relic Garden.

8. **EXEMPT BUSINESS**

There were no items of exempt business.