

Mount Edgumbe Joint Committee

Friday 19 July 2019

PRESENT:

Councillor Vincent, Joint Chair in the Chair.

Councillor Trubody, Joint Chair.

Councillors Mrs Beer, Burden, Corvid, Foot, Kelly (substitute for Councillor Johnson), Lennox-Boyd, Mrs Pengelly and Rennie (substitute for Councillor Smith).

Co-opted Representatives: Mr D L Richards and Mr Neil Rugg.

Apologies for absence: Councillors James, Mavin and Pugh and Sir Richard Carew Pole Bt.

Also in attendance: Rob Andrew (Cornwall Council), Nick Butcher (Plymouth City Council), Chris Burton (Plymouth City Council), James Hatton (Cornwall Council), Sharon Heard (Plymouth City Council), Peter Marsh (Cornwall Council), David Marshall (Plymouth City Council), Nicola Moyle (Plymouth City Council), Helen Prendergast (Democratic Advisor) and James Reed (Plymouth City Council).

The meeting started at 10.00 am and finished at 12.02 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.

1. **To Note the Appointment of the Joint Chairs (Plymouth City Council and Cornwall Council)**

The Joint Committee noted the appointment of Councillor Vincent (Plymouth City Council) as Joint Chair and Councillor Trubody (Cornwall Council) as Joint Chair.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

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

3. **Minutes**

The Joint Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2018.

4. **Chair's Urgent Business**

Councillor Vincent (Joint Chair) advised that there had been issues with arranging for Plymouth City Council substitute members for this Committee, as the Mount Edgumbe Terms of Reference only permitted named substitutes (one per political Group).

The Joint Committee agreed to recommend to each constituent authority that the Terms of Reference for Mount Edgcombe be amended to allow any Member to be able to act as a substitute at the joint meeting.

Order of Business

With the permission of the Chair, the order of business was changed and is reflected in the minutes.

5. South East Cornwall Strategic Transport Update

James Hatton (Cornwall Council) and Rob Andrew (Cornwall Council) provided the presentation on the update on the South East Cornwall Strategic Transport which highlighted the following key points –

- (a) Transport Planning and Strategy Team;
- (b) issues and opportunities which included -
 - local constraints and seasonal pressure on the network (HGVs and coaches identified as a particular issue);
 - funding for infrastructure improvements were difficult to secure due to lack of significant housing and employment growth;
 - Community Network Highways budget could be utilised for minor local improvements;
 - opportunity to increase the offer at Mount Edgcombe;
 - wider projects the economic viability of water based services (Tamar River Links);
- (c) South East Cornwall cycle/walking trails network -
 - a network of new trails in South East Cornwall would improve connectivity, support more active life-styles and increase tourism/leisure offer;
 - three key routes – East Looe, West Looe and East Looe to Cremyll;
 - match funding of £3.5m from Economic Development to progress the design work and business case as well as for land negotiations and acquisition; the development phase was expected to be completed by the end of financial year;
 - an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty bid to the LEADER programme for

increased cycle parking and way marking at the Country Park, as part of the existing National Cycle Route Two scheme;

(d) Rame Peninsula transport management scheme -

- Rame Peninsula traffic management study 2014 – general review of the traffic conditions; this included investigating the potential of a circulatory traffic system around the peninsular and managing restrictions through the villages;
- phase two study focusing on Anthony junction and the circulatory traffic system;
- recommended option – Anthony junction design option 4 ‘orbital junction with restricted moves’ alongside the introduction of a circulatory system;
- the programme to progress this scheme was currently being agreed.

The main area of questioning from Members related to whether consideration had been given to re-opening of the old railway line from Wacker Quay to Tregantle Fort.

Councillor Trubody (Joint Chair) considered that the Joint Committee and both of the constituent authorities should support the proposed Torpoint passenger land jetty, as part of the wider water transport access scheme, as this would provide an opportunity to run a ferry service from Torpoint to Cremyll/Mount Edgcumbe.

6. **Revenue Outturn 2018/19 and Budget 2019/20**

James Reed (Technical Accounting Officer) presented which provided an update on the financial position of the Park and detailed the key variations to the budget.

The report highlighted –

(a) key variations to the budget -

- £63,000 reduced borrowing charges in 2018/19, reduction in salary overtime, salary savings, capitalised salaries and transfer from reserves;
- £46,000 increased vehicle repair work, refuse and cleaning costs;
- £27,000 less rental income than budgeted (funding for new unit conversions re-purposed affecting this financial year);
- £18,000 less holiday let income due to Captain Blake’s huts coming online later than budgeted;
- £19,000 additional parking income;

- £38,000 numerous items – net saving in gardens forecast due to receipt of 2017/18 income, more income from special events and miscellaneous activities;
- (b) the subsidy reduced from £112k in 2017/18 to £95k in 2018/19 (per constituent authority); future years were subject to ongoing reviews.

The main area of questioning related to whether there had been Ash die back in the Park.

The Joint Committee noted –

- (1) the financial position contained in the report along with the risks, issues and any mitigating actions;
- (2) the capital programme and proposals to be presented to Plymouth City Council.

7. **Wedding Business Analysis**

Chris Burton (Park Manager) and Sharon Heard (Commercial Business Analyst) presented the Mount Edgcumbe Wedding Commercials Review which highlighted the following key areas –

- (a) why do a commercial review -
 - to investigate why marquee books were declining and how this could be improved;
 - the review was an opportunity to look at options to increase bookings and income;
- (b) review context included -
 - cost and pricing;
 - customer and booking analysis;
 - customer survey;
 - service review of both positive and negatives of the wedding offer;
- (c) pricing analysis;
- (d) headline recommendations included -
 - update prices and create packages;
 - improve the flexibility of wedding viewings;
 - redesign the brochure;
 - creation of a profit and loss account.

The main areas of questioning from Members related to whether –

- (e) consideration had been given to seeking the views of Cornwall Council's Registration Service with regard the proposals from the review;
- (f) consideration had been given to providing echo wedding packages at the Park;
- (g) the limited amount of accommodation within the Park had an adverse effect on the bookings for weddings;
- (h) consideration had been given to holding a wedding fayre at the Park;
- (i) the lack of communication/publicity regarding the accommodation that was now available at the Park;
- (j) funding had been set aside for the replacement of the marquee.

The Joint Committee noted the issues raised from the presentation.

8. **Report on Park Activity (June 2019)**

Chris Burton (Park Manager) presented the Park activity report that highlighted the works and activities carried out in the Park which included the following –

- Park matters;
- building and Park infrastructure;
- events;
- business development;
- weddings.

The Park had received £95,000 from each of the constituent authorities in 2018/19 which was a reduction of £35,000 from previous years. Whilst the capital investment in revenue creating streams had started to generate income, there would need to be expenditure on infrastructures within the Park which would have an effect on the budget going forward.

The holiday let business continued to flourish. The profit margins would increase with the higher earning properties coming on line. Car park revenue and rents were performing well. However, weddings and conferences were areas for concern.

The Park had a record year for the number of events that it hosted. The Park through its entrepreneurial approach had managed to deliver more for its users whilst at the same time reduce spending. However the long term feasibility of reaching a zero budget depended largely on the successful conclusion of the Trennow chalets lease consultations which presented a unique opportunity for the Park to invest in its future.

The main areas of questioning from Councillors related to whether –

- (a) appointing Cornwall Council to undertake the grass cutting in the Park would reduce costs;
- (b) the events held in the Park were marketed;
- (c) the grazing of animals was currently taking place within the Park.

The Joint Committee noted the report.

9. **Friends of Mount Edgcumbe Country Park Update**

Neil Rugg, Chair of the Friends of Mount Edgcumbe Country Park provided an update on the key areas of work that the Friends undertook in supporting the Park which included financial and practical support and social events.

The report highlighted –

- (a) the current membership of the charity was 600; the members played a significant role in supporting the Park both financially and practically; the total level of financial support from the Friends, since 1985, was £830,000;
- (b) following the previous meeting of the Joint Committee, quarterly meetings had been established with Park management which would enable more formal dialogue to take place and result in the compilation of a list of priorities for the Park (which would comply with the charity's Constitution);
- (c) the Friends reiterated their concerns on the apparent shortfall between the Park budget and the requirement to maintain buildings and plant in a safe and useable condition; the charity would like to see the results of a comprehensive audit which would provide a realistic guide as to how fast the aim of reducing the budget to zero could be achieved;
- (d) the Friend's Lodge had now been completed, following planning permission in January 2019 and was not situated behind the Gardener's Lodge.

The Joint Committee was advised that the ambition of both constituent authorities remained the same to achieve a zero budget. In order to achieve this both authorities had undertaken a £1.3m capital programme of investment in the Park, to safeguard its future. The work and financial support (£830,000) of the Friends was recognised as vital for the Park.

On behalf of the Joint Committee, the Joint Chairs thanked the Friends for their continued and highly valued support.