

Mount Edgcumbe Joint Committee

Friday 17 July 2015

PRESENT:

Councillor Smith, Co-Chair in the Chair.

Councillors Austin, Candy, Duffin (Co-Chair), Ellison, Fletcher, Hobbs, Rennie (substitute for Councillor Vincent), Sparling and Trubody.

Co-opted Representatives: Cdr Crocker, Mr D L Richards and Mr T Savery.

Apologies for absence: Councillors Damarell, Frank, Fry, Mrs Pengelly and Vincent and Sir Richard Carew Pole Bt.

Also in attendance: Simon Arthurs (Lead Accountant PCC), Angela Bruce (Principal Technical Accountant PCC), (Nick Butcher (Head Gardener/Ranger PCC), David Marshall (Business Development Manager PCC), Pete Marsh (Head of Commissioning and Asset Management CC), Jerry Masters (Interim Park Manager PCC), Nicola Moyle (City Curator Museum and Archives PCC) and Helen Wright (Democratic Support Officer PCC).

The meeting started at 11.00 am and finished at 12.40 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. APPOINTMENT OF JOINT CHAIRS

The Joint Committee noted the appointment of Councillor Smith and Councillor Duffin as Joint Chairs for this municipal year 2015/16.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made by Members in accordance with the code of conduct relating to items on the agenda.

3. MINUTES

The Joint Committee agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on 28 November 2014 are confirmed as a correct record.

4. CHAIR'S URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of Chair' urgent business.

5. **BUDGET OUTTURN 2014/15**

The Strategic Director for Place submitted the budget outturn 2014/15 report which outlined the final outturn position of Mount Edgumbe for the financial year 2014/15. The report highlighted the following key areas –

- (a) the previous outturn position reported to the Joint Committee on 28 November 2014 detailed a forecast overspend of just under £40,000; since that date, other ways of increasing revenue had been explored, a review of expenditure had been undertaken and some expenditure had been capitalised (relating to the Higher Level Stewardship) which had resulted in an outturn position of £21,833 over budget;
- (b) the main areas of variations included -
 - Mount Edgumbe House outturn £28,090 (over budget);
 - Mount Edgumbe Park outturn £29,903 (savings);
 - Mount Edgumbe trading outturn £23,645 (over budget);
- (c) the budget for 2016/17 remained at £284,000 (£142,000 per statutory authority);
- (d) the Annual Small Bodies, annual return for the financial year ended 31 March 2015;
- (e) the capital outturn included capital schemes made up of the phase I initiatives and the capital element of the Higher Level Stewardship scheme.

The Joint Committee agreed –

- (1) that the accounting statements are recommended for approval for the Annual Small Bodies Return (as set out in Appendix B);
- (2) that the Annual Governance Statement is recommended for approval for the Annual Small Bodies Return (as set out Appendix B);
- (3) that the Internal Audit Report in supporting the sign off of the Annual Small Bodies Return (as set out in Appendix C).

The Joint Committee also noted the report.

6. **REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2015/16**

The Strategic Director for Place submitted a report on the revenue budget monitoring 2015/16 which provided an update on the current financial position. The report highlighted the following key areas –

- (a) the first monitoring report in 2015/16 forecast a balanced budget at the year-end;
- (b) an external adviser had been appointed to investigate options for the Park to improve current income streams and introduce new ones by using the capital receipt from the sale of Picklecombe Cottage, in order to fund the improvements needed to drive these new income streams;
- (c) there were regular reviews of outstanding orders, all expenditure and the maximisation of income through lettings and other opportunities.

In response to questions raised by the Joint Committee, it was reported that –

- (d) it was difficult to ascertain why there had been a reduction in the number of visits to the House, although the weather may be accountable; however, Members were assured that this situation would be closely monitored;
- (e) the proposed caravan facilities would be provided for casual visits and would be sensitive to the Park's environment;
- (f) the Park had benefited from a large increase in the number of school visits, an increase in traders and the Higher Level Stewardship scheme.

It was important to note that Cornwall Council had set a cost neutral budget for Mount Edgcumbe in 2018/19 and in order to achieve this position, it was vital to drive through the phase 2 initiatives such as the camping and holiday lets whilst remaining sensitive to the Park's environment.

The Joint Committee noted the report.

7. **MOUNT EDGCUMBE RISK REGISTER**

The Strategic Director for Place submitted a report on the risk register for the Park which formed a key document in recognising areas of weakness (either operational or strategic) and sought ways of addressing the matters which had been identified. The report highlighted the following key areas –

- (a) the risk register had been identified as a requirement by the external auditors (Grant Thornton) as part of the Small Bodies Return process; the register would also need to be updated on an annual basis;
- (b) part of the audit process was to assess whether the Joint Committee was reviewing all the high risk management issues and putting in place controls that would monitor, reduce or resolve the issues that had been identified;

- (c) in many cases, staff were currently managing the risks through inspections and undertaking maintenance on a daily basis however, in some cases the requirements were beyond the scope of the revenue maintenance budget;
- (d) capital funding and/or grant funding would be required to address some of the identified risks; it may be possible to gain funding through organisations such as the Heritage Lottery and the European Union.

The Joint Committee noted the report.

8. **MOUNT EDGCUMBE STORM REPAIRS PROGRESS REPORT**

The Strategic Director for Place submitted a progress report on the storm repairs which had affected a number of structures in the Park such as sea walls and quays. The report highlighted the following key areas –

- (a) the damage to the coastline had been extensive and had affected a number of structures; following the storms an initial assessment of the damage had been undertaken;
- (b) following the assessment of the coastal damage, the damage had been broken down into four distinct areas of work which included –
 - Cremyll Quay – structure had now collapsed and required rebuilding;
 - Cremyll slipway – void appeared under the upper part of the slipway, works had not commenced;
 - Lower Lodge entrance sea wall – rebuilding of sections of the sea wall were required;
 - Battery Beach sea wall – sections of the wall had been compromised and required rebuilding and voids backfilled;
- (c) the estimates provided for the works were in the region of £550,000; however, additional costs may be incurred to meet the requirements of the Marine Management Organisation and Natural England at an approximate total cost of £5,000;
- (d) an application had been made to the Environment Agency to try and secure funding towards the works at Cremyll Quay, Lower Lodge and Battery Beach; the works on the Cremyll slipway were outside of the scope of funding from the Environment Agency however, other funding streams were being investigated;
- (e) once confirmation of the level of funding from the Environment Agency had been received, work would be able to commence to secure the additional funding required; a programme of works had been drafted with a view to completing the works prior to winter.

In response to questions raised by the Joint Committee, it was reported that –

- (f) the Environment Agency were fully aware of the urgency of carrying out the repair works;
- (g) a delay in the commencement of the repair works would result in further erosion or storm damage;
- (h) the five options for the strengthening of the Cremyll Quay had been proposed by Cormac;
- (i) all the estimates for the repair works would be subject to stringent procurement processes; it was anticipated that this process would drive down costs;
- (j) following the successful securement of funding from the Environment Agency, it was anticipated that the various repair works would commence in September/October 2015;
- (k) officers undertook to contact the Ministry of Defence, regarding the tidal waves caused by the liberty boats using the estuary.

Cornwall Council had received significant funding from the Environment Agency for repair works following damage caused by the storms; some of these schemes had been brought in under budget; the remaining monies had been allocated to prioritised schemes within the County; however, there was the potential for this scheme to be included within this process.

The Joint Committee agreed that –

- (1) when the level of Environment Agency grant funding is known, the Park Manager prepares a business case for funding the residual cost through a capital scheme to be considered by Plymouth City Council's Cabinet for inclusion in the City Council's capital programme;
- (2) a similar business case is put to Cornwall Council for 50% match funding as its contribution.

The Joint Committee also noted the report.

9. **MOUNT EDGCUMBE PROGRESS REPORT**

The Strategic Director for Place submitted a progress report which outlined the works that had been undertaken in 2014/15, the events and current bookings. The report highlighted the following key areas –

- (a) Park matters including the High Level Stewardship -

- work had continued to replace the 4620m of fencing across the Park;
 - the High Level Stewardship Mount Edgcombe Parkland Plan was currently being finalised;
- (b) the use of Mount Edgcombe House and Country Park by schools and colleges -
- 3000 school children had used the lower park;
 - 450 children had enjoyed the bushcraft days which had been led by the Rangers;
- (c) building and Park infrastructure –
- repair works to the main water pipe had been undertaken which had included the replacement of the seized stopcock;
 - the sewerage system at the lower end of the Park had been pumped out following an effluent leak;
 - the Barrow Park holiday-let building work had been completed;
 - Alternative heating scheme for the House and the Barrow Centre were being explored with the Plymouth Energy Community (there was a possibility of gaining funding from the European Regional Development Fund);
- (d) walks, talks and workshops -
- 35 workshops and talks had taken place with a similar number planned for 2015/16;
- (e) conferences -
- there had been 17 conferences/meeting bookings with 10 bookings plus a two day international conference planned for 2015/16;
 - the Park was working in partnership with the Plymouth College of Art and the Craft Council to host their internationally renowned 'Making Futures' conference;
- (f) weddings –
- the wedding business continued to provide a consistent and strong income stream for the Park, 23 wedding ceremonies had taken place;
 - there were 24 wedding ceremonies booked for 2015/16;
- (g) events -

- the main red letter day events included the Classic Car Rally and Fayre, the King's Troop Royal Horse Artillery Summer Camp and the Christmas Fayre;
 - the Classic Car event had been very successful with an estimated 12,000 to 14,000 people attending;
- (h) promotion, press and publicity -
- in 2015, every event had been linked to the Edgcumbe 500 strapline which recognised the anniversary of Henry VIII's licence to empark;
 - the Mount Edgcumbe Facebook page had received over 20,000 visits in the week running up to the Green Man event;
- (i) occupation of rentable spaces -
- in 2014/15 12 new commercial tenants were introduced to the Park representing £62,000 of income through rents;
 - In 2015/16 occupancy would increase to 16 tenants, renting 21 commercial spaces which represented a potential annual rental income of £92,000.

Commander Crocker expressed his disappointment that the Friends of Mount Edgcumbe's contribution had not been included with the report. The Interim Park Manager apologised for the oversight and gave an assurance that this would be included in future reports.

In response to questions raised by the Joint Committee, it was reported that -

- (j) social media was an important part of promoting the Park particularly Facebook and developing a twitter account would be the next stage;
- (k) hot drinks were on sale at the firework event; a food outlet had proved to be unsuccessful at previous events;
- (l) whilst schools were able to use the Park for free, other activities were offered such as seashore walks which could be charged for and resulted in additional income for the Park;
- (m) an undertaking was given that the feasibility of holding events on the Park, such as a park run, horse events and swimming galas would be reported to the next meeting of the Joint Committee; an update on the water transport links to the Park would also be provided at the next Joint Committee meeting;
- (n) a traffic management plan has been put in place for the Classic Car event which would reduce the impact on the local community.

The Joint Committee noted the report.

10. MOUNT EDGCUMBE MEANS BUSINESS

The Strategic Director for Place submitted a report on Mount Edgcombe Means Business which outlined the progress to date in respect of the transformation change project. The report highlighted the following key areas –

- (a) in 2014 the Mount Edgcombe Means Business strategic vision and action plan had been adopted by the Joint Committee; the vision outlined a number of quick wins, together with longer term proposals which would steer the development of the Park towards a more sustainable future;
- (b) many of the projects in phase I, such as the allocation and let of commercial unit spaces, the development of the existing series of events and converting the Cremyll shop building into a holiday property (whilst retaining the gift shop at the front of the building) had been completed;
- (c) phase II of the transformation programme which included the longer term programmes included –
 - development of three glamping units;
 - development of camping and caravan pitches by the Dry Walk car park;
 - external electricity services for markets and fayres adjoining the House and the Barrow Centre;
- (d) both Plymouth City Council and Cornwall Council were currently in the process of confirming agreement on the proposed terms of sale for the land at Polhawn Fort; the proceeds from the sale would be shared between the tenant and the two councils; this would provide a capital income of £30,000;
- (e) an options appraisal had been undertaken on Captain's Blake Hut at Whitsand Bay, to ascertain its future use; one option would be to put the property on the market for a leasehold sale; early estimates suggested that the sale of the hut would raise approximately £80,000 to £100,000.

In response to questions raised by the Joint Committee, it was reported that –

- (f) following planning consent for the glamping site, a robust procurement exercise would be undertaken; it was anticipated that this would drive down the cost of this initiative;
- (g) it was proposed to install shepherd huts, although the initial investment was higher, the long term life of the huts would outweigh this;

- (h) the governance options for Mount Edgcumbe would be revisited;
- (i) the Park Manager position had been advertised with interviews scheduled to take place on 4 September 2015.

Commander Crocker (Chair of the Friends of Mount Edgcumbe) advised that the Friends of Mount Edgcumbe –

- (a) had over 515 members with 60 volunteers who worked in the Park;
- (b) had to date financially contributed nearly £250,000 towards funding various initiatives;
- (c) had commissioned two statues one of a stag and one of a doe to celebrate the 500th anniversary of Henry VIII's granting the 'licence to empark';
- (d) were keen to purchase a land train to transport visitors from the lower park to the top (two previous electric vehicles had been purchased but had been unable to manage the slope).

The Joint Committee took the opportunity to thank the Friends of Mount Edgcumbe for their continued support and invaluable contribution to Mount Edgcumbe.

The Joint Committee noted the report.

The Joint Committee agreed to recommend to the constituent authorities that any capital receipts from Polhawn Fort and Captain Blake's hut are ring-fenced for investment in to the Park, to generate further revenue savings.

11. **EXEMPT BUSINESS**

There were no items of exempt business.