
Subject: RIVER DOUR ENHANCEMENT WORK AND REPAIRS TO DOLPHIN HOUSE GARAGES

Meeting and Date: Cabinet – 4 December 2017

Report of: Roger Walton, Director of Environment and Corporate Assets

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Trevor Bartlett, Portfolio Holder for Property Management and Environmental Health

Decision Type: Key Decision

Classification: Unrestricted

Purpose of the report: To consider the business case to carry out riverside enhancement works and repairs to Dolphin House garages.

Recommendation: To approve the business case to carry out riverside enhancement works and repairs to Dolphin House garages.

1. Summary

- 1.1 The St James's retail and leisure development is due for completion in February 2018. At its westerly boundary the St James's development abuts a very unsightly stretch of the river Dour and the Council-owned Dolphin House garages which are in a very dilapidated condition.
- 1.2 This very unpleasant scene will be in full view to all those who use Flying Horse Lane to access the St James's development, which is one of the primary routes to and from the town centre into St James's.
- 1.3 This report provides the business case to carry out improvements to this stretch of the river Dour and also to carry out repairs to the Dolphin House garages.
- 1.4 It is anticipated that this work will cost £90,000.

2. Background

- 2.1 Dolphin House was purchased by Dover District Council on 2 August 2007 for regeneration purposes, including the possibility of enabling connections from the St James's development through to the Market Square. Constructed in the 1950s, the property consists of 6 commercial units leased by DDC as shops/cafe/terrace, residential apartments let either on long leases with 60 years remaining or those which have had their leases extended and have 150 years remaining, and 15 garages let on weekly tenancies.
- 2.2 The option to demolish or partially demolish the garages in order to create a direct link into the St James's development has proven to be cost prohibitive and is no longer being considered.
- 2.3 The river Dour runs immediately behind the Dolphin House garages and past Flying Horse Lane which will be one of the primary routes from the town into St James's.

- 2.4 It has been recognized over a number of years that the garages were in need of major repair but, because there was a possibility of the buildings being demolished to form access routes, this has not happened.
- 2.5 Historically the rear of Dolphin House has been a little frequented area with very little amenity value; over the past 40 years or so the multi-storey car park (now demolished) has dominated the streetscape. The development in St James's fundamentally changes the importance of this area.
- 2.6 The proposed enhancement work to improve the visual amenity of this area includes removing the overgrown vegetation from the river banks/garage walls and replacing the riverside railings with railings more aesthetically appropriate. The work will also entail smartening up the garages, for example, carrying out essential repairs such as providing a new roof covering, new fascia, new rainwater goods, repairs to windows and cleaning the brick walls.
- 2.7 It is anticipated that the cost of this work will be £90,000. This work cannot be recharged to either the residents or commercial tenants of Dolphin House as the garages are in a separate block which has always been the Landlord's (now Dover District Council's) responsibility to maintain.
- 2.8 Originally it was proposed to carry out a more ambitious scheme to enhance the visual amenity in this location. This included the construction of a tensile canopy over the existing flat roofed garages with it projecting over the river with down-lighters situated in the soffit. The budget set aside in the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for this is £230,000.
- 2.9 This scheme will no longer be carried out as, apart from the obvious cost saving, carrying out a more moderate scheme will give the Council flexibility as to the long term future of the garages.
- 2.10 Although the cost of the work referred to in this report will be approximately £90,000, it is recommended that the full £230,000 set aside in the MTFP should be released. This is necessary as, although the proposed works will have an immediate impact on improving the visual amenity of this area, it is likely that further enhancements will be necessary in the vicinity. This could be to improve the appearance of the rear elevation of Dolphin House and/or to improve public realm land on the peripheries of the St James's development such as the river Dour in Mill Lane which is only a few metres away from Dolphin House.

3. Identification of Options

- 3.1 Option 1. Is to do nothing. This is not recommended as the garages are in disrepair and delaying the work or not carrying out these repairs could lead to further deterioration. The remedial works to the garages and the riverbanks will inevitably have to be carried out anyway. If not changed for a new design the existing riverside railings will not be in keeping with the surrounding street furniture and adjacent new buildings.
- 3.2 Option 2. Undertaking the works would ensure that the garages remain watertight and will be seen to be well maintained and cared for. The proposed works will greatly improve the appearance of this area and will be seen by all those who use Flying Horse Lane to access St James's, and may even encourage people to venture from St James's into town.

4. **Resource Implications**

It is intended to fund the cost of the works from the £230,000 provision included in the current Medium-Term Financial Plan.

5. **Corporate Implications**

5.1 Comment from the Section 151 Officer: Accountancy has been consulted and has no further comment to add. (KW)

5.2 Comment from the Solicitor to the Council: The Solicitor to the Council has been consulted in the preparation of this report and has no further comments to make.

5.3 Comment from the Equalities Officer: 'This report does not specifically highlight any equalities implications, however in discharging their responsibilities members are required to comply with the public sector duty as set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uk/ukpga/2010/15> '

6. **Appendices**

Appendix 1 - Location Map and Photos

7. **Background Papers**

Property Services' files

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