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<b>Subject:</b>	<b>ENHANCEMENT WORKS TO RIVER DOUR AND DOLPHIN HOUSE GARAGES</b>
<b>Meeting and Date:</b>	<b>Cabinet – 5 March 2018</b>
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Roger Walton, Director of Environment and Corporate Assets</b>
<b>Portfolio Holder:</b>	<b>Councillor Trevor Bartlett, Property Management and Environmental Health</b>
<b>Decision Type:</b>	<b>Non-Key</b>
<b>Classification:</b>	<b>Unrestricted</b>

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**Purpose of the report:** To furnish Cabinet with details of the ownership and occupancy of the Dolphin House garages in line with Scrutiny (Policy & Performance) Minute No 108 and Cabinet decisions CAB 123 and CAB114, as amended and to seek a decision from Cabinet about whether to proceed with the garage refurbishment works.

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**Recommendation:** That Cabinet, having taken account of the usage of the Dolphin House garages and the options outlined in this report, endorses decision CAB 114 and the recommended option outlined in the Cabinet report of 4 December 2017.

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## 1. Summary

- 1.1 The Scrutiny (Policy & Performance) Committee, at its meeting held on 12 December 2017 (Minute No 108), recommended 'that the repairs to the Dolphin House garages not be undertaken in order for the usage (i.e. car parking, commercial storage etc) of the garages to be established'.
- 1.2 Apart from 1 garage which is retained by DDC and 1 garage which is let to the Dover Town Team on a peppercorn rent, all other garages are fully utilised and generate an income to the Council of £6525 per annum. This report also includes an evaluation of alternative proposals, which although mentioned in the background section of CAB 114 were not specifically evaluated.
- 1.3 This report recommends that cabinet ratify decision CAB114 and the proposals outlined in the cabinet presented on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2017.

## 2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 The cabinet report presented on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2017 did not provide details about the users of the garage and the uses to which the garages are put. Scrutiny (Policy & Performance) Committee at minute 108 recommended cabinet seek this information before deciding on whether the garage refurbishment should be authorised.
- 2.2 Of the 15 garage units 1 No. unit is retained by DDC, 7 No. units are let to residents of Dolphin House, 1No. is let to a resident of the adjacent Craighton House, 5No units are let to businesses located in Dolphin House and 1No is let on a peppercorn rent to the Dover Town Team. Information is not held in respect of whether or not the garages are actually used for their original purpose or whether they are being used as stores. However anecdotally at least 3 of the garages are used to park cars.

2.3 The cabinet report presented on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2017, although mentioning that officers had considered an option to demolish/partially demolish of the garages and/or construction of a feature roof and associated enhancements, the report did not elaborate about the reasons why these options were discarded. This further report therefore considers the three options in more depth.

### 3. Identification of Options

3.1 Option 1: repairs to Dolphin House garages, including recovering of roofs, replacement of gutters and downpipes, cleaning and repairing the rear (river Dour) elevation. (as described in report considered by cabinet on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2017

3.2 Option 2: demolition/partial demolition of garages to open up the riverside.

3.3 Option 3: repairs to Dolphin House garages and provision of feature pitched roof.

### 4. Evaluation of Options

#### 4.1 Option1: Recommended Option

(a) The philosophy of this option was to improve the appearance of the rear, River Dour, elevation of the garages and use the garages to screen off the service yard at the rear of Dolphin House. The elevational treatment would include removing unwanted vegetation, cleaning the brickwork, replacing the windows in the elevation and repairing brickwork. The materials used on elevation would be similar to those used on the new restaurant opposite and introduce a harmonious appearance.

(b) The condition of the garage roofs has deteriorated to the point where the fascia board will need to be repaired in order to provide sound material on which to secure replacement gutters. Simply omitting the gutters would lead to a premature deterioration of the appearance of the rear wall. The roof covering is in a very poor condition and patch repairs of the roof surface at the very least and costs associated with such repairs can quickly mount up to the point where it is more cost effective to renew the roof covering entirely.

(c) The restaurant on the other side of the river includes seating at first floor level. Recovering the roofs will indicate to observers that the garages are well cared for and the appearance will at least be more pleasing than the current roof covering.

(d) The cost of the works to the rear wall and the garage roofs are approximately £60,000

(e) This option releases £170k for wider enhancements to the public realm for projects such as enhanced sign posting of the 'Old Town' from the DTIZ development. The limited nature of the work minimizes abortive costs should redevelopment proposals for the area around Bench Street emerge and impact the rear of Dolphin House.

#### 4.2 Option 2:

(a) This option will involve the loss of some/all of the garages at Dolphin House. Although the licenses can be terminated at short notice in order to

facilitate development of the site it is likely that there would be strong objections from residents and commercial properties at Dolphin House. The Head of Assets & Building Control tentatively floated the idea of car ports and landscaping instead of garages in 2015 to a meeting of the Dolphin House Residents Association. The response was very negative and hence the idea was taken no further. The main advantage to the option is it gives the possibility of a riverside walk between Flying Horse Lane and the rear bridge. However this is a short distance and would only leave a maximum of 3 No. garages, to be distributed among the 8 No. residents of Dolphin House and Craighton House.

- (b) The garages rented by the businesses in Dolphin House, are in some cases used for essential storage to make the commercial units viable. Removing this storage facility could have a detrimental effect on these businesses and may even lead to early termination of the lease. Removing the garages currently used for storage by the commercial units may also limit future commercial lettings.
- (c) This option opens up the rear service view, both to those using any new riverside walk but also to those using the DTIZ. The backs of the shop units have a number of air conditioning units, which will be difficult to hide. Commercial wheeled refuse bins together with, on occasion, goods delivery trolleys will be in full view.
- (d) This option will make the rear wall of Dolphin House more visible and this elevation is arguably less attractive than the rear wall of the garages.
- (e) Indicative project costs would be:
  - (i) £115k
- (f) This option will sacrifice rental income of £6525 per annum if all the garages were to be removed and in the region of £5000 per annum if 3No. garages were to remain. There could also be rent lost from commercial units should they terminate their lease early due to losing the garages.
- (g) This option is not recommended

#### 4.3 Option 3:

- (a) This option involves providing a sculptural roof above the existing garage roof and has the advantage of screening the rear of Dolphin House to a height of 5-6m. It will also provide a significantly better outlook for those using the first floor restaurant on the opposite side of the river.
- (b) Although not fully costed indicative sums for this option are around £230k for the roof alone. Therefore this option would necessitate sacrificing the opportunity for wider public realm enhancements. Since the sculptural roof performs a purely aesthetic function the works to the roof, identified in option 1, would be required to make the garages water-tight.
- (c) This option is not recommended at this time.

5. **Resource Implications**

6. These have been addressed within cabinet report, considered on 4<sup>th</sup> December. Decision CAB114 agreed to the release of £230k from the MTFP for public realm enhancements for the area bordering DTIZ. This report simply seeks authorisation to expend money on a particular project. If option1 (recommended) or option 3 are adopted there are no further resource implications beyond those contained in decision CAB114. If option 2 is adopted there is an annual financial pressure amounting to £7k-£8.5k per annum.

7. **Corporate Implications**

- 7.1 Comment from the Section 151 Officer: Accountancy has been consulted and has no further comment to add.
- 7.2 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.
- 7.3 Comment from the Equalities Officer: 'This report does not specifically highlight any equalities implications, however in discharging their duties 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/ukpga/2010/15> '
- 7.4 Other Officers (as appropriate): none

8. **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Photos

9. **Background Papers**

CAB 114

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