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**Subject:** REFURBISHMENT OF CITIZENS' ADVICE BUREAU BUILDING, MAISON DIEU ROAD CAR PARK, DOVER

**Date:** 30 April 2021

**Decision to be taken by:** Mike Davis, Strategic Director (Corporate Resources)

**Report of:** Roger Walton, Strategic Director (Operations and Commercial)

**Portfolio Holder:** Councillor Oliver Richardson, Portfolio Holder for Community, Environment and Corporate Property

**Decision Type:** Executive Non-Key Decision

**Classification:** Unrestricted

**Delegated Authority:** Delegation C33 of Section 6 (Scheme of Officer Delegations) of Part 3 (Responsibility for Functions) of the Constitution: 'To authorise new projects up to £50,000 that can be funded within the overall resources of the approved Medium-Term Financial Plan.'

**Classification:** Unrestricted

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**Purpose of the report:** To seek approval for a project to refurbish the first floor of the Citizens' Advice Bureau (CAB) building (formerly occupied by CCTV) in Maison Dieu Road car park, Dover to allow the CAB to occupy it thereby allowing 27 Victoria Road, Deal to be released back to the Council.

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**Recommendation:** That a new project be approved to refurbish the first floor of the CAB building in Maison Dieu Road car park, Dover to allow the Citizens' Advice Bureau (CAB) to occupy it.

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## 1. Summary

- 1.1 The Council owns the Citizens' Advice Bureau (CAB) building situated in Maison Dieu Road car park in central Dover. Since June 2020, when the CCTV service moved to Dover District Council (DDC) offices Whitfield, it has only been occupied at ground floor level by the CAB. The CAB would like to centralise its main service (whilst maintaining a presence in Deal), letting the whole building to the CAB will allow them to do this, whilst ensuring that the whole building is in use.
- 1.2 This report seeks approval for a new project to use £30,000 from the Medium-Term Financial Plan to refurbish the first floor at the CAB building to ensure it is suitable for reoccupation.
- 1.3 In letting the whole of the CAB building to the CAB, the Council will recover one of its assets, 27 Victoria Road, Deal.

## 2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 The Council owns a building situated in the Maison Dieu Road car park in central Dover. For many years the ground floor of the building has been leased to the CAB, at a peppercorn rent, whilst the first floor accommodated the Council's CCTV control room. When the CCTV system was upgraded the Council moved the control room to its Whitfield offices. The first floor of the building became vacant in June 2020.
- 2.2 In early 2020 the Citizens Advice Bureau approached the Council explaining its desire to centralise its main operations to Dover, expressing an interest in leasing the whole Maison Dieu Road building. Discussions and negotiations between the CAB and the Council resulted in an agreement to lease the building at market rent with DDC funding the rent through an annual grant. The CAB are supportive of the proposal to move their main service functions to a central location in Dover, whilst continuing to serve the needs of their clients in Deal at a new location at the Deal Centre in a mutually agreed time frame.
- 2.3 Further agreement was reached, which requires DDC to undertake compliance checks and enabling works that allow the CAB to fit out the upper floor. The compliance works include items such as conducting an Asbestos Management Survey and electrical testing, which would be required regardless of what the future use of the upper floor was as it is currently not fit for purpose.
- 2.4 Similarly, the enabling works comprise normal landlord operations prior to the letting of any building. Works include removing redundant fixtures and fittings and general internal and external maintenance and repair. The enabling works will be carried out by a combination of specialist contractors in conjunction with the Council's in-house Asset Maintenance Team. This arrangement was chosen to minimise project costs, which allowed the budget to be reduced from £50k to £30k.
- 2.5 Relocation of the CAB operations to Dover means that 27 Victoria Road, Deal, owned by the Council becomes vacant. The building can then generate income for the Council in being relet, redeveloped or disposed of. The building has a value estimated to be in excess of £500k.

## 3. Identification of Options

- 3.1 **Option 1:** Approve the project to relocate the CAB to Maison Dieu Road car park building and undertake enabling works to the benefit of both the CAB and DDC.
- 3.2 **Option 2:** To do nothing and maintain the current arrangement.

## 4. Evaluation of Options

- 4.1 **Option 1:** Approving the project not only allows the CAB to continue its valuable work more effectively and efficiently from the location of its choosing but also releases a valuable DDC asset. Following the enabling works the CAB will invest money in the building, improving the interior of the first floor and thus adding value to the asset. **This is the recommended option.**
- 4.2 **Option 2:** Not proceeding with the project not only has an adverse impact on the CAB but removes the opportunity for DDC to reallocate 27 Victoria Road, Deal. The lack of access to the first floor of the Maison Dieu Road car park building for those

with disabilities also means that it would be difficult and costly to let the first floor separately and fulfil the obligations of the Equalities Act 2010. In all likelihood the first floor would otherwise remain unoccupied and simply be a maintenance pressure.

## 5. **Resource Implications**

- 5.1 It is proposed to use £30k provision from Special Revenue Project budget to carry out the improvement works. Management of the project in house will be covered from existing revenue budgets.
- 5.2 Approval of the project releases 27 Victoria Road, Deal as an asset that can be used to generate income for the Council. The decision is yet to be made on how to release the full potential of this asset.

## 6. **Climate Change Implications**

- 6.1 Due to the limited works of this project climate change measures are limited, however, windows will be draft proofed and new loft insulation will be installed in the roof to reduce heat losses from the building. Where possible (outside of the essential work) the budget will focus on the fabric of the building first.

## 7. **Corporate Implications**

- 7.1 Comment from the Section 151 Officer: Members are reminded that the Council's revenue and capital resources are under pressure and so they will wish to assure themselves that all proposals progress the Council's priorities, are the best option available and will deliver value for money. (DL)
- 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 equality implications, however in discharging their duties members are required to comply with the public sector equality duty as set out in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/149>
- 7.4 Other Officers (as appropriate):

## 8. **Appendices**

None.

## 9. **Background Papers**

None.

Contact Officer: David Parish (Principal Design Services Officer) x.2433