

REPORT TO ASSETS WORKING GROUP CEMETERY CHAPEL WEATHERVANE AND BELL

Report Reference A-21-05
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Agenda Item 6
Prepared by Town Clerk



1.0 BACKGROUND

The Cemetery Chapel bell was installed in November 1935 to replace an original bell following complaints about its tone. The bell was removed at some stage in the past and is held in storage by the Town Council. The Cemetery working group is keen to see the bell reinstalled.

Whilst works were undertaken to the chapel, the remains of the original weathervane were found in the tower. The weathervane is in a poor condition, rusted and with missing/damaged directional. Early photographs of the chapel show the weathervane featured a cockerel which is not present.

2.0 REINSTALLATION OF BELL

Quotes have been sought from companies specialising in the refurbishment and rehangng of bells. Two companies have inspected the bell and visited the chapel to inspect the tower.

The tower used to house a single bell attached to a steel C-channel headstock via two bell bolts. The C-channel was then bolted to the top of two timber beams of the tower. The timber beams and tower are in excellent condition and will easily take the weight of the bell should it be reinstated. The bell was originally fitted with a swinging clapper attached via a centre bolt through both bell and headstock. This was operated via a chime rope which passed through a pulley just below the bell and both floors of the tower and hung in the entrance area at ground level. The pulley is still in place but seized solid and the timber where the pulley is mounted is rotten and would need replacing if this was the preferred method of ringing the bell once restored. The bell is in a good condition with very little wear to the soundbow. The original clapper could not be located and both the bell bolts and headstock are corroded and require replacing.

The favoured contractor, Taylor Bells, was the original maker of the bell. The company provided two both of which include refurbishment of the bell:

- a) To reinstate the bell on new fittings with a trigger clapper and chime rope - £5,733
- b) To reinstate the bell on new fittings with an electromagnetic hammer and electronic tolling unit - £4,851
- c) As per (B) with a different tolling unit to allow clock chimes - £5,637

For options (b) and (c) there would be additional costs for the provision of the required electricity supply to the bell and tolling unit. A provisional sum of £500 has been allocated for this but will be quoted for should the working group wish this to progress.

An electric tolling unit is recommended. This would allow the bell to be tolled without the need for a

bellringer to manual pull a rope within the entrance to the chapel which could otherwise be in the way of funerals/weddings entering/leaving the chapel (and particularly could be in the way of photographs for the latter). It also allows programmable patterns to be stored and triggered externally such that they can be easy triggered by attending officers or funeral directors/celebrants without the need for a bellringer.

Option (C) is a more advanced tolling unit which would allow the bell to be programmed to chime at certain times i.e. 3 chimes for 3pm, no chimes overnight and chimes on the half hour etc.

3.0 REPAIR AND REINSTALLATION OF WEATHERVANE

Quotes are being sought from blacksmiths for the repair of the weathervane. To date only one quote has been received and this does not include installation; the cost of the repair would be £3,340. Further quotes are being obtained and the installation method and cost is being explored.

4.0 PLANNING AND PERMISSIONS

4.1 LISTED BUILDING CONSENT

The proposed works are likely to require listed building consent. Advice from the Conservation Officer at Cheshire East Council has been sought and is awaited. There is no cost for a listed building consent application, but cost may be incurred if Cheshire East Council requires diagrams/plans showing the installation to be prepared.

4.2 BAT PROTECTION

During the renovation works it was noted that bats likely roost within the spire (evidence was provided of a bat emerging). The Town Clerk has discussed the proposal to reinstall the bell and weathervane with Cheshire Ecological Services, the consultancy arm of Cheshire Wildlife Trust, who oversaw works as part of the renovations.

It is possible that there is a roost under the spirelet / in the lead flashings. The installation of the weathervane in particular could damage a roost if present and the vibration of works to the spire could disturb roosts. Both works would therefore be licensable activities and subject to permission from Natural England.

In order to obtain a licence, Natural England will require information on the type of roost, species and number which is obtained through a survey. The cost of the required surveys including a report and mitigation strategy would be in the region of £2,500. The surveys need to be undertaken between Mid-May and the end of August (peak roosting season).

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

A summary of the current known/anticipated costs is as follows:

- Bat Surveys - £2,500
- Reinstatement of Bell - £6,140
- Repair of Weathervane - £3,340

This totals £11,980. There will be additional cost for the installation of the weathervane which will vary depending on installation (e.g. by cherry picker or scaffolding). The total cost could be closer to £13,500. The Assets and Operations Committee does not have a budget for these costs however Full Council could release funds from the capital receipts reserve for the works, nothing other potential requirements for this funding.

6.0 DIRECTION REQUIRED

Members should review the costs and provide direction on the two projects.

A recommendation could be made to Full Council on making funds available for the works.