

## Agenda item: 13

<b>Committee</b>	Assets & Services Committee
<b>Month</b>	September 2023
<b>Report Title</b>	St Mary's Church Clock
<b>Report Author</b>	David Broomfield - Responsible Finance Officer Terry Frostick- Operations Manager
<b>Attachments</b>	None



### Purpose

At the June 2023 A&S meeting, committee noted due to a lightning strike the church clock chiming mechanism cause the chimes to stop working. It was resolved to carry out the works required to fix the mechanism.

The purpose of this report is to detail the history of the clock and the SWTC responsibility currently and going forward.

### Summary

The clock was installed in 1823 at a cost of £240 "to include fixing" (£23,406 in today's money). The Westminster chimes were added in 1875. In 1989 a mechanism was installed to prevent chiming at night.

The clock was installed by the Church Vestry paid for by public donations (the employers wanted their staff to turn up to work on time). Certain responsibilities for the maintenance of the Church clock by the Church Vestries were transferred to Saffron Walden Corporation in 1835 and in 1894 to the Borough Council. In 1974 these responsibilities were transferred to the newly formed Saffron Walden Town Council.

The clock is maintained by the Town Council under Sections 2 and 6 of the Parish Councils Act 1957. A contract was entered in to with A James Jewellers in 1935 to wind the clock (at a cost of £10 a year). This was renewed in 1948 (at a cost of £30 a year, £893 in today's money). This will cost the Council £1,650 for 2023-24. This increases every year.

Maintenance does not imply ownership. The clock does not belong to the Town Council. It is the property of the Church.

### To note

That the ownership of the clock mechanism is vested in the Parochial Church Council as noted in the 1865 Council Minutes (held at the Records office) and confirmed by legal advice from Heckford Norton in 1989.

To note that Saffron Walden Town Council has historically maintained and wound the clock since 1974 as the successor authority.

To note SWTC owns the mechanism that prevents night chiming.

To note that Saffron Walden Town Council has no insurable asset in the clock.

### **Options**

- a) That the Church authorities confirm the clock is insured by them.
- b) That the Council asks the PCC to investigate their lightning conductor which has been passed through the night chiming system (when lightning struck the Church tower it earthed through the chiming system which caused the chiming mechanism to stop working).
- c) To request the rectification of this matter to prevent a recurrence. Failure to do so would result in the PCC recompensing the Council for any future costs resulting from lightning strikes or power surges.
- d) That the Council continues to cover the cost of winding the clock only.
- e) To renegotiate a new contract for the winding of the clock only.
- f) That the Council resolves to ask the PCC to take full responsibility for repairing maintaining the clock and mechanisms from the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024.

### **Recommendation**

Committee is asked to consider the above options (a-f) and resolve how officers proceed going forward.