

STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Date: Monday 16th March 2020
Title: Buttercross Clock
Contact Officer: Operations and Estates Officer – John Hickman

BACKGROUND

The purpose of this report is to update Councillors on the current position regarding the Buttercross Clock, following a report in mid-January that it had stopped working.

ACTION TAKEN

The clock has been checked to ensure that it was not a simple power issue however all was fine and there were no obvious issues. Steven Fletcher (The Clock Workshop) who maintains the clock was therefore contacted to look at the clock.

CURRENT POSITION

The clock mechanism is fine, it appears that the problem is with the receiver that keeps the clock at the correct time. The timing receiver was fitted approx. 20years ago, however recently the transmitter for this system was moved to a new location within the UK. When the transmitter was moved it caused issues with many clocks no longer receiving a signal, apparently the transmitted signal was increased in power however this created issues with clocks elsewhere, so the signal has been reduced again.

Mr Fletcher has advised that a new receiver needs to be fitted similar or the same as used on the Corn Exchange clock that receives its time signal from France and has no signal issues. A quote is attached for the necessary works to bring it back into operation.

The hands on the two faces of the clock have been placed in the 12 o'clock position as the clock is not operational until a new timing device is fitted.

Mr Fletcher has also advised that the mechanism that operates the hands is in need of a service, however in order to do this the clocks hands would need to be removed, and a scaffold would be required. Council are already aware that that the Cotswold stone roof will require works in the next 5 years to bring back into a good condition, it is suggested that the clock service should be carried out at the same time utilising the same scaffold. The Operations and Estates Officer would also advise that council should look at the clock

housing, clock external decoration etc. at the same time in order to make best possible use of scaffolding etc. when the roof is being looked at.

Mr Fletcher also informed the Operations and Estates Officer that what would be presumed as youths had managed to force the hasp staple and lock that secure the hatch into the Buttercross roof space. They have broken the replacement fluorescent tubes that are stored in the roof space for the clock face lights, unplugged all the clock connections and tampered with the clock mechanism and left lots of litter within the roof space. Mr Fletchers staff have reconnected the clock and mechanism, the works team have cleaned up the glass/litter etc. and fitted a new stronger Hasp Staple and Padlock to the hatch at a cost of £47.98 plus associated works team costs.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

Having declared a Climate Change Emergency at its Council meeting on 26 June 2019 – with this in mind Councillors should have due regard to the environmental impact of any decisions they make with regard to its facilities and services it operates.

RISK

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

A quotation from Steven Fletcher is attached detailing the necessary works required. The Buttercross is owned by the Witney Town Hall Charity and is included in the lease of the Town Hall and Town House which is a full repairing lease. The Town Clerk has however written to the Trustees to see if they would consider a grant towards the necessary works.

The associated costs to repair the locking system £47.98 and clear up the associated glass and litter on the works team 1 person 2 x hrs £50.

Members should also consider setting aside a sum for the future maintenance works on the clock tower and clock mechanism to be carried out when carrying out roof repairs as planned in approx. 4 years time.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Member are invited to note the report and consider the following:

- The purchase and installation of a new receiver timing mechanism for the Buttercross Clock.
- Putting provision aside for the servicing of the clock hands mechanism, lead and iron work, decoration and signage of clock tower at same time as roof repair works are carried out in approx. 2024.