

<b>Committee(s)</b>	<b>Dated:</b>
Policy & Resources Committee – For Decision	16/02/2017
<b>Subject:</b> Bid to support restoration of St Paul's Cathedral bells	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Peter Lisley, Assistant Town Clerk and Cultural Hub Director	<b>For Decision</b>
<b>Report author:</b> Nick Bodger, Head of Cultural and Visitor Development	

### Summary

The City Corporation has been approached by St Paul's Cathedral with a bid to support the restoration of its bells. First installed in 1878, 11 of the 12 bells were a gift of a City livery company, with the heaviest (known as the tenor) donated by the City Corporation. After nearly 140 years of constant use, there is a risk that on-going deterioration will result in the bells falling silent and, more drastically, that one of the bells could fall from its bearings, causing serious damage to itself and the installation.

An appeal has been established to raise the requisite funds to cover the restoration. The total cost of the work is £360,000 (£30,000 per bell). As part of this, the livery companies and the City Corporation, which gave the bells in the first place, are being asked to assist by sponsoring a bell. To date, the Cathedral has received firm commitments totalling £268,000 (including Gift Aid where applicable). The request to the City is for a total contribution of £30,000 to restore its tenor bell.

Recognition of this support will be given through the original inscriptions already showing on each bell, with the names of all donors recorded on a new donor board to be installed in the ringing room alongside the original board, which dates back to 1878.

Your Director of Communications and Remembrancer have been consulted with regards this bid and both are supportive, citing the positive PR benefits and the role the bells play in national occasions in which the City Civic element is prominent, as justification for support.

### Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Approve sponsorship of £30,000 to St Paul's Cathedral for the restoration of the City Corporation's tenor bell, to be paid for from your 2017/18 Policy & Resources Committee Contingency Fund which, at the time of this meeting, has an uncommitted balance of £230,000.

## **Main Report**

### **Background**

1. The ring of 12 bells at St Paul's was installed in 1878. Eleven of the bells were a gift of a City livery company, with the heaviest bell (known as the tenor) donated by the City Corporation. At the time, the St Paul's bells comprised the heaviest set of 12 ringing bells in the world. Even today they are exceeded in total weight only by the ring at Liverpool Cathedral, which dates from the 1930s. They are also the oldest complete ring of 12 bells still in their original location.
2. Over the years, the bells have rung out every Sunday, except during the war years, for special services and for national occasions, including the death of the Queen Mother, the Golden and Diamond Jubilees, the births of Prince George and Princess Charlotte and, most recently, the 90th birthday of HM The Queen.
3. Although the bells and their fittings have been properly maintained throughout their life, and are, barring accident, good for another few hundred years, a programme of restoration work is needed to keep them ringing and sounding their best.

### **Current Position**

4. St Paul's Cathedral has launched an appeal to raise the requisite funds to restore the bells to their original condition. This work includes the lightest 8 of the set being re-hung on modern metal headstocks, replacing the wooden ones currently in use, and the bells being removed to the place of their founding in Loughborough and cleaned. A detailed plan for the necessary work has been prepared by the Cathedral Surveyor.
5. Whilst this work is taking place, opportunity will be taken to clean up the ringing room, install modern lighting and carry out restoration work on the historic peal records which are, very unusually, written on the walls.
6. If the essential work to the bells and fittings is not carried out there is a risk that the deterioration which has been seen in recent years will continue and that before too long the bells may fall silent. More drastically, there is a risk that one of the bells could fall from its bearings, causing serious damage to itself and the installation.
7. The total cost of the work is £360,000. To meet these costs, the livery companies and the City Corporation, which gave the bells in the first place, are being asked to assist by sponsoring a bell. To date, the Cathedral has received firm commitments totalling £268,000 (including Gift Aid where applicable).

### **Proposals**

8. The request to the City is for a total contribution of £30,000 to restore its tenor bell. Members are recommended to support this request for one-off sponsorship

awarded from your Committee's 2017/18 Policy & Resources Contingency Fund which, at the time of this meeting, has an uncommitted balance of £230,000.

9. Recognition of the City Corporation's support will be given through the original inscriptions already showing on each bell with the names of all donors recorded on a donor board to be installed in the ringing room alongside the original board, which dates back to 1878. The board will initially be on display within one of the public spaces of the Cathedral before being placed in room with a digital version permanently shown on the Cathedral's website.
10. The City Corporation will be invited to the rededication of the bells service at an appropriate moment after the bells have returned in 2018.

### **Corporate & Strategic Implications**

11. Your Director of Communications and the Remembrancer have been consulted and both are supportive, citing the positive PR benefits sponsorship may generate and the role the bells play in national occasions in which the City Civic element is prominent, as justification for support.
12. St Paul's Cathedral is an iconic symbol of the City's skyline, and plays a pivotal role in positioning the City as a strategically important location within London and the UK. Its bells are integral to this positioning; without them, the City's standing as a place of celebration and commemoration, and as a world city with international resonance, may be diminished.
13. Furthermore, a decision not to sponsor may result in negative perceptions about the City Corporation and its support of national life and identity.

### **Implications**

14. The requested sponsorship sum of £30,000 cannot be met by departmental local risk budgets on a number of counts, most specifically because this is an external bid for maintenance of an asset outside of the City's Corporation's property portfolio. As such, the bid does not align with local business plan objectives and so support would inevitably have a negative impact on the programmes and activities developed to realise these.
15. This is a one-off bid to the City Corporation. No further request for support of this project is anticipated from St Paul's Cathedral, noting £268,000 of the total £360,000 target has already been committed (75%) which, with a City Corporation contribution of £30,000, rises to 87%. With positive discussions with a number of uncommitted livery companies underway, the shortfall is expected to be made up in good time for the reinstallation of the bells in November 2018.

### **Conclusion**

16. The City Corporation was an original contributor to the ring at St Paul's, alongside a number of livery companies. This investment has, for 140 years, delivered a significant legacy for the City and the City Corporation, with the St Paul's bells

playing a pivotal role in the City's prominence as a place of celebration and commemoration, and in promoting the City Corporation as a supporter of national life and identity.

17. The request of £30,000 towards the restoration of these bells is considered justified by your officers who have cited the positive PR sponsorship may generate and the traditional role of the bells in national occasions in which the City Civic element is prominent.
18. To decline this request may result in negative perceptions about the City Corporation and its support of such a loved and iconic landmark. Members are therefore recommended to support the application.

### **Appendices**

- None

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