

Committee(s): Finance Grants Sub-Committee	Date(s): 19 November 2013	Item no.
Subject: Display of Ship’s Bell, HMS London	Public	
Report of: Director of Culture, Heritage & Libraries	For Decision	
<u>Summary</u> An opportunity has arisen to take on loan from the Royal Naval Museum in Portsmouth a ship’s bell with particular historic association with the City. It can be displayed in the Guildhall ambulatory so as to help mark and celebrate the City’s connections with the armed forces. A grant of not more than £7500 is needed in order to cover the costs of displaying it safely and professionally. This can be met from the Finance Committee Grants Scheme insofar as it meets the criteria for supporting work in the areas of heritage and conservation, and that there is an evident connection with the City. The grant can be met from the City’s Cash element of the scheme. Recommendations That a grant of not more than £7,500 to cover the costs of displaying the bell, to be met from the City’s Cash Annual Grants Budget, be agreed.		

Main Report

Background

1. The ship's bell from the *HMS London*, presented to the ship by the City Corporation in 1905, is currently in storage at the Royal Naval Museum in Portsmouth and it has been offered to the City, for display, on long term loan. This ship was one of a series of vessels bearing that name and the bell is engraved with the City's coat of arms.
2. The bell is 43 cm high and 50 cm wide at the mouth, made of brass, and weighs approximately 76 kg. It is valued, on the Naval Museum inventory, at £1221.
3. The Chief Commoner, the Remembrancer, and the Director of Public Relations have been consulted and they are all in favour of housing the bell at Guildhall, as an additional way of marking the historic and ongoing relationship between the Corporation and the armed forces. It would, in that sense, join the regimental badges at the back of the Great Hall.

Options

4. Following consultation with the City Surveyor, a suitable place to display the bell has been identified, in the ambulatory towards the Basinghall Street end, in an area which is currently occupied by a table and chairs. These are rarely used and the area is felt to need enlivening. It is a space which is regularly walked past by visitors attending events in the Livery Hall and other function rooms towards that end of the complex, or using the cloakroom there. There is also a line of sight to the intended display space from further down the ambulatory, near the Great Hall entrances.
5. An estimate has been obtained of the cost of providing a glass case on a stand in which to house the bell, of suitable professional standard and incorporating lighting, labelling and installation costs, in the region of £5000-7500. The intention would be to have an interpretation panel alongside the case telling the story of the ship and the connection with the City.
6. The Naval Museum have kindly offered to help with transportation costs and a member of the Guildhall Art Gallery team can manage the sourcing of the case, liaising with the Museum and formulating the necessary agreements.

Proposals

7. The Finance Committee Grants Scheme Guidelines make specific mention that the Committee ‘will support work in the areas of heritage and conservation’, which is in line with this initiative. Furthermore, the Committee will observe that initiatives need to demonstrate a ‘sufficiently strong connection with the City’, which is evident in this case,
8. Because the proposed work would benefit the City Corporation directly, only monies from City’s Cash may be used in making the grant. Therefore, the Finance Grants Sub-Committee is asked to consider a grant of not more than £7,500, to cover the price of the exhibition case and associated set-up costs, to be met from the City’s Cash Annual Grants Budget.

Implications

9. The bell will be on loan to the City, not an outright gift, but on the understanding that this is a long-term arrangement. A formal agreement, clarifying responsibilities, will underpin the loan. It will need to be included on the insurance schedule for the Guildhall complex but the cost will be minimal.

Conclusion

10. The bell will be an appropriate addition to the artefacts on display in and around the Great Hall, which help to tell the story of the City and its role in national and international affairs.

Appendices

Images of the bell

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