Rochdale Parish Church of St Chad

Notes of Bells Meeting – Wednesday 13th April 2016

**In Attendance**

Peter Arkle, Rod Asten, Paul Bollington, Angela Collins, Revd. Mark Coleman, Dr Christian Hanson.

The meeting opened with a Prayer

**Context**

Mark explained that this sub group had been established by the Parochial Church Council to examine what can be achieved. He outlined that the PCC exists to support the Vicar in the Pastoral, Social, Ecumenical and Evangelical work of the Parish and that any refurbishment of the bells needs to help us achieve that mission. .

Mark explained that St Chad’s is fragile with a low congregation and two thirds over pensionable age. The Church does not pay its Parish Share in full and day to day finances are an ongoing challenge. Any project of this nature will need to be carefully thought through so as ongoing Church finances are not unduly affected.

The sub group was in place to utilise the skills of its members in reviewing the details of the work so that PCC meetings do not get entangled in technical detail. A representative of the bell ringing team would be co-opted onto the PCC (Angela) to report back on ongoing progress.

**Bells – The Current Situation**

Copies of technical information and quotes on the state of the bells had been previously circulated and made available at the meeting.

It was stated that the Bells did not ring well; they were currently difficult to ring. Bells 1 and 2 and the tenor bell in particular do not feel right when you ring them – compared to other ringing chambers elsewhere.

No significant work had been done on the bells for over 100 years. Whipples described the staple and headstock soon unfit to ring. The ringers who visit the tower from elsewhere describe the bells as not easy top ring.

It was felt the key issue, apart from the age of the bells and frame; was the ringers being too far below the bells they were ringing. Perhaps the bells should be nearer the centre of inertia in the tower.

What was needed was a new frame for the bells and to use this opportunity to increase the bell number from 8-10 allowing more range and ringing opportunities.

It would be necessary to take out the existing wooden bell frame and perhaps replace it with a frame which is lower to the centre of gravity in the tower.

More technical information would be required on perhaps raising the floor to achieve the desired affect and the advantage of replacement in steel frame as opposed to wood?

The volume of the bells with a new frame and/or a different height ringing chamber would need to be considered.

The weather proofing and bird invasion to the existing bells floor was poor and had been an issue for the PCC for some time. Perhaps this could be picked up with any proposed works?

The bells would all need to be removed and sent away to be repaired and tuned; the fittings would need to be replaced. It may be possible to melt down bells 2 and 8 and recast them?

It was stated that Taylors were currently carrying out a re-install at Healey and the introduction of 2 extra bells would be fairly insignificant in light of the costs of the work.

There was a discussion about how the bells would be lowered in the tower utilising the existing trap door and the advantages of a steel frame as opposed to a wooden frame. More study would be needed on the structure of the Tower and the effect on load with an additional 2 bells. Nicholson’s had produced a bell hanging diagram.

**Finance**

The quotes for the work were in the region of £160,000

It would cost some £25,000 for 2 new bells and this could be met by private donation. One of the Sunday Ringers had already pledged £10,000 towards the work.

It was possible that Lancashire Association of Ringers would contribute 15% of the cost of the work.

An application could be made to the Heritage Lottery Fund which may bear a considerable contribution towards the work.

It was felt a campaign might involve a local primary school which a pledge to establish a ringing school for students. Other applications could be made to the retail and commercial sector, business and commerce.

It was stated that we would not wish the ongoing fundraising for church ongoing expenditure to be unduly affected by this campaign although some £120,000 was raised from a myriad of different sources to finance the re-building of our historic pipe organ.

It was stated that the existence of a campaign to invest in renewing the bells and upgrade the chamber would have a beneficial effect on the future of St Chads? Perhaps it gives the impression to the wider church community that our Parish was investing in the building fabric plus considering the education and training of young people whilst planning for the long term!

**Next Steps**

It was agreed to look further into possible sources of finance.

Full detailed quotes would be requested.

A specification for a new frame would be sought.

An order of priority of the individual work steps would be established.

The plans would be explained to the next PCC.

**Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the sub group was scheduled for Monday, 20 June 2016 at 7.30pm at Rochdale Parish Church of St. Chad.