

ANGUS COUNCIL

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

4 September 2001

REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF PROPERTY SERVICES

No 1024/01

MONTROSE STEEPLE BELLS**Abstract**

This report considers complaints received regarding the steeple clock chiming throughout the night and seeks a decision from the committee on the option to switch the bells off during the night or retain the status quo.

RECOMMENDATION

The committee is recommended to note the contents of this report and instruct the Director of Property Services as to which option it wishes to adopt.

1 BACKGROUND

The Director of Environmental Health and Consumer Protection received complaints from two residents living in the vicinity of the Montrose Steeple that the clock bells continue to chime during the night. The complainant also advised that he was aware of others who are equally concerned and that the chiming on the hour, half hour and quarter hour during the night disturbed sleep and constituted a significant nuisance.

Angus District Council received similar complaints in the past and Angus Council considered the issue in 1996 as a result of a complaint from the proprietor of a nearby hotel. The proprietor reported that sometimes guests whose sleep has been disturbed by the bells have declined to return to the hotel and business suffers as a result. After consultation with the community council, some people were of the view that the tradition of the chimes ringing throughout the 24 hour period was an important consideration and at that time, it was agreed to take no action.

Also, at that time it was not feasible to silence the bells for any given period due to the mechanical nature of the clock. The clock mechanism was however changed from mechanical to electrical in 1997 (reference report no 453/97) and the system now allows for the chimes to be switched off during pre-set times.

The Director of Environmental Health and Consumer Protection has conducted an exercise to monitor the sound levels generated by the chimes within the vicinity of the Steeple. He has concluded that the monitoring found the environment surrounding the Steeple to be very quiet. This was particularly evident after 10.00pm. The noise from the Steeple Clock chimes every fifteen minutes raised decibel levels considerably above ambient noise levels and complaints would be justified following the completion of the curfew bells until 7am the next day.

2 CONSULTATION

The proposal to consider silencing the bells during the night was referred to the Montrose Community Council and the Montrose Society together with an explanation of the case by the complainants. Both organisations supported the silencing of the bells between the hours of midnight and 7am.

In addition, the issue was raised in the local press and Grampian Television and members of the public were invited to express their views through the Council's ACCESS line or by writing to the Council or any of the local members. Following conclusion of this public consultation exercise, the results were as follows:

	SWITCH OFF 10.05pm – 7.00am	SWITCH OFF 11.00pm – 7.00am	SWITCH OFF Midnight – 7.00am	MAINTAIN THE STATUS QUO
Public responses	8	1	0	19

It should be noted that the addresses of the respondents in favour of switching off and maintaining the status quo were spread fairly evenly over the town and therefore no weighting due to location could be given to the conclusion that the public response is in favour of retaining the status quo in the ratio of 2:1.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

4 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT IMPLICATIONS

The Director of Law and Administration has advised that there is no breach of Human Rights in the present circumstances since the chiming of the bells has been a long tradition in the area. The Director however warns that if a decision is taken to silence the bells during the night then it could be regarded as a breach of human rights if the chimes were to be switched back on again at a later date since this would constitute a new situation affecting a person's right to peaceful enjoyment of their home.

5 CONCLUSION

The committee is invited to decide on which option to adopt:

1. switching the bells off between 10.05pm and 7.00am
2. switching the bells off between 11.00pm and 7.00am
3. switching the bells off between midnight and 7.00am
4. maintain the status quo – i.e. continue with the bells chiming throughout the night.

6 CONSULTATION

The Chief Executive, the Director of Law & Administration, the Director of Finance and the Director of Environmental Health and Consumer Protection have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

REFERENCES

<u>Committee</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Report No</u>	<u>Subject</u>
General Purposes Sub-Committee of the Policy and Resources Committee	3.6.97	453/97	Report on the Proposed Electrification of the Steeple Clock, Montrose
Personnel and Property Services Committee	10.6.97	453/97	Report on the Proposed Electrification of the Steeple Clock, Montrose

BACKGROUND PAPERS

No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information), were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above report.

M G Lunny
Director of Property Services

