

John Fullbrook

From: John Fullbrook
Sent: 06 December 2024 11:22
To: agmachine
Subject: Response - Steyning Clock Tower Ownership - Freedom of Information Request (FOI)
Attachments: Clock Tower Clock scope of works 2024.pdf

Dear Trevor

In response to your Freedom of Information request dated 8th November, we thank you for your patience whilst awaiting a reply.

In terms of the details of your request, the associated questions and assertions presuppose that the Clock Tower was at some point owned by Steyning Parish Council.

We have so far found no substantive evidence to suggest this was in fact the case. Clearly SPC has previously believed this to be true, but this was not due necessarily to the SPC office having possession of title deeds, rather likely an unfortunate error by either staff or councillors at some point in the distant past, whereby there may have been a non-evidenced supposition that merely by having ownership of the clock mechanism and clock faces, that indeed the Council therefore owned and needed to insure, the tower in which it was housed.

All historical documents so far ascertained relating to the matter when ownership by the council is mentioned, have provided an evidence base born out of hearsay and conjecture rather than proven fact.

Most recently, on the 9th of July 2024, the Council addressed the matter of Clock Tower ownership, and agreed to set up a working party to allow a thorough search for information. This decision was published on the SPC website as per minutes of that meeting shortly thereafter, and for ease of reference it is noted below for you.

To agree actions concerning the Clock Tower, as per raised within the Chairs supporting paper

Members discussed the contents of the Chairs briefing notes and in particular the five recommended actions as proposed, relating to ascertaining specific documentation in order to clarify the situation. Once collected then to bring back to F&GP for further discussion.

Cllr Sharp **proposed, seconded** by Cllr Norcross that SPC follow the recommended actions {as per the Briefing paper} and that SPC use all efforts to locate, source and then discuss documents, and that this responsibility is delegated to Cllrs Sharp, Norcross and the SPC Clerk. **Agreed**

When the working party has completed its deliberations, then it will report back to our F&GP Committee and at that point we will certainly forward on a more reasoned reply to you, if you so wish.

In the meantime we can confirm there has been no direct communication with the SPC solicitor on the matter as so far it has not been agreed by council to be necessary to do so. Neither has there been a need for SPC to necessarily pay for a structural survey of the Clock Tower, therefore again we do not have said information.

Regarding your other request for information concerning the contractor's scope of works. Please find attached the details of these works.

The cost of the scaffolding component is yet to be finalised, as these works are ongoing.

We hope this response meets with your approval, however if you are unhappy with how this request has been dealt with, then you may request that the matter be reviewed by our FOI panel with the reasons for this review noted, and I will pass the matter on.

Yours Sincerely
John

John Fullbrook
Clerk to the Council
01903 812042



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From: agmachine <Sent: 08 November 2024 12:48

To: John Fullbrook <**Subject:** Re: Steypning Clock Tower Ownership - Freedom of Information Request (FOI)

John,

Many thanks for acknowledging receipt of my Freedom of Information request in relation to the ownership of the Steypning Clock Tower.

I copied in all SPC councillors and others in the interests of openness and transparency in local government. In addition I did so because my correspondence to yourself in the past has often not been shared with SPC councillors nor acknowledged in the correspondence item at the end of full SPC council meetings,

Kind regards,

Trevor.

Sent from my iPhone

On 8 Nov 2024, at 11:05, John Fullbrook <john.fullbrook@steyningpc.gov.uk> wrote:

Dear Mr Cree

I acknowledge receipt of this Freedom of Information Request, and will reply more substantively when time allows, and in due course.

I see you have chosen to include all Councillors in this request, and for some reason have included cc'ing in District and Country Councillors, though the request doesn't appear to need their input, their attention necessarily, nor therefore their response.

As a former Councillor I thought you might be aware of the processes and procedures involved in making requests such as this. However, suffice it to say that following this initial response to you, I will not be cc'ing in either Parish, nor District and County Councillors, even if you continue to do so in future communications – so this comment is ensure you are aware of that fact – as it is a matter for the Clerk to deal with in the first instance - , and it is also for their benefit and understanding.

Yours Sincerely
John

John Fullbrook
Clerk to the Council
01903 812042

From: Trevor Cree <**Sent:** 08 November 2024 09:15
8th November 2024

Steyning Clock Tower Ownership - Freedom of Information Request (FOI)

Dear SPC Clerk, SPC, HDC and WSCC Councillors,

As you are aware there has been great concern within the Steyning community in recent times about the apparent ceding of ownership of the Steyning Clock Tower by the Steyning Parish Council (SPC) to a third party, namely the current owner of the Old Market House, 72 High Street, Steyning. For such an action to have taken place I assume that there is definitive legal proof that the ownership no longer resides, as was believed for generations, with the Steyning Parish Council and Steyning residents as a whole.

I am therefore making this official Freedom of Information (FOI) request to put this fundamental issue to bed once and for all. If myself and Steyning residents are given irrefutable proof that the iconic and historic Steyning Clock Tower no longer belongs to the community then I am sure that that great loss to the town will be accepted by all, including myself. (According to the October 2024 SPC Asset Register the Steyning Clock Tower was valued at £124,258.12 for insurance purposes and so this is also a great financial loss to the community). The requested information and evidence will be available within the SPC Office and I would therefore be very grateful if that correspondence and evidence can be made publicly available to residents prior to the full SPC meeting to be held on Monday, 18th November 2024.

My FOI information request is for the following:

- All dated correspondence between the Steyning Parish Council (SPC) and SPC solicitor in relation to the legal ownership of the Steyning Clock Tower structure that sits atop the Old Market House, 72 Steyning High Street, Steyning. This should include the gilded cockerel weathervane. (It is understood that the clock mechanism and clock faces belong to the Steyning Parish Council).

- All evidence supplied to the SPC solicitor by the SPC and others in relation to the historic and current ownership of the Steyning Clock Tower.
- All dated correspondence and evidence exchanged between the SPC, SPC solicitor and the current owner of the Old Market House, 72 High Street, Steyning, in relation to the ownership of the Steyning Clock Tower.
- The latest structural survey of the Steyning Clock Tower undertaken by a qualified surveyor on behalf of, or supplied to the SPC, identifying structural and decorative deficiencies and repair requirements.
- Scope of Works for structural and decorative repairs that are currently being undertaken (This is to ensure that the SPC clock mechanism will be protected from rainfall and damage in the future).
- The SPC component of the scaffolding cost associated with the current Steyning Clock Tower repairs (The cost of the removal, renovation and reinstallation of the clock mechanism and clock faces by Smith of Derby is known to be £15,028 + VAT).

Many thanks for your anticipated assistance,

Kind regards,

Trevor Cree.