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PORTSMOUTH CHIMES



The Newsletter of the Portsmouth District of the Winchester & Portsmouth Diocesan Guild

<http://www.portsmouthringers.org/>

Inside this issue:

- Editorial
- Reg Cockle
- A fun evening at Jack & Jill
- Ringing.... Why do we actually bother?
- Junior Plain Bob Doubles Day, 9 Dec 2006
- 35 Years and counting!
- Ancient v Modern
- Celebrating a centenary of Scouting
- Portsmouth District goes Cockney!
- The things I get myself into!

Victory in fight for the Chimes

THE real Pompey Chimes are to ring out again across Portsmouth. City chiefs last night finally listened to the 10,000 people who signed up to The News' We Want Our Chimes Back campaign and agreed to fix the Guildhall's historic bells. And today victorious supporters are celebrating. John Goodall, of Stamshaw, the secretary of Portsmouth Heritage Watch, said: 'I am over the moon - it's amazing. I thought they were lost. This is the most sensible decision this council has ever made.'

The decision to fix the bells was made when Portsmouth City Council finally voted on its capital budget. The meeting had been abandoned last month after it descended into chaos. But when it resumed last night, the vote went 19-15 in favour of spending £480,000 to retune the bells and restore the clock tower they sit in. And it was the empty spaces on the Lib Dem bench that made the difference.

Last month the 19-strong ruling group unanimously voted for the cheapest option of fixing the floor and installing a recording. And for the past two weeks, they have been testing electronic recordings of bells to see what residents think. But last night, with Margaret Foster ill, Hugh Mason in Africa and Howard Jones coming in too late to vote, they were out-voted by the other parties. Instead of spending £220,000 on the floor and recording, the council will now pay an extra £260,000 to fund the restoration of the bells.

Afterwards, council leader Gerald Vernon-Jackson said he thought it was the wrong thing to do, as the council had already received 24 complaints about the electronic chimes keeping people awake, but was happy to accept the decision.

Deputy Tory leader Alistair Thompson said: 'This is a fantastic day for residents and football fans. We would not have achieved this without the campaign fought by The News.' Southsea pensioner Eddie Chesman, who collected hundreds of signatures for the We Want Our Chimes Back campaign, said: 'It will be brilliant to have them back.' And Pompey fan John Westwood said: 'To Pompey people this will mean so much. This gives the city its heart-beat back - the Chimes are Portsmouth.'

Emily Pykett
THE NEWS



Portsmouth Guildhall

