

Report No. 2

Policy and Resources Committee 8th February 2017

Christmas Lights

1. Purpose of the report

- 1.1 To seek the views of the committee on the approach to be taken in respect of the provision of Christmas lights used to decorate the town centre.

2. Background

- 2.1 The lights were originally old style filament bulbs and belonged to the Chamber of Trade who put them up with modest funding support from the Town Council.
- 2.2 The situation was reversed as membership of the Chamber declined and eventually the Town Council took over the whole task with no external support.
- 2.3 New LED lights were purchased by the Town Council and arrangements made with an electrician to put them up each year, using power sources outside of our direct control.
- 2.4 The annual cost has risen to around £2,000 and whilst we do have lights, they are not of a new or particularly attractive style.
- 2.5 This year a high sided vehicle travelled through the High Street and damaged one of the light strings beyond repair, snapping the supply cable mid-length.
- 2.6 Close examination of some of the other strings revealed that they too have been stretched, possibly by high vehicles or the wind.
- 2.7 Various attempts have been made over the years to achieve a coordinated switch-on of the lights to coincide with the opening of "late night shopping". However, the power supplies are reliant upon tenants or owners of local shops and residential accommodation agreeing to provide a power socket into which the timer switches may be plugged and leaving the device undisturbed until the end of the display period.

3. Proposals

- 3.1 There are insufficient secure mounting brackets in the High Street which means that the lights have for several years been wrapped around the lamp standards.
- 3.2 To install new brackets on properties fronting the High Street will require listed building consent and the consent of property owners.
- 3.3 Other towns appear to use the street lamps as a power source and attach brackets to the street lamps which will then accept a display of modern LED lights in patterns such as trees, reindeers and other Christmas themes.
- 3.4 These styles of installation would no longer result in trailing lights across the High Street and possibly not require a qualified electrician to connect.
- 3.5 In addition, some companies offer a full service of supply and installation and this could change each year.

4. Financial implications and risks

- 4.1 The replacement or enhancement of Christmas Lights has not been written into the budget for the next financial year, only the cost of installation. Funds would therefore have to be taken from reserves.
- 4.2 The existing lights would need a full examination by a competent person before they may be considered for use next Christmas and the broken string replaced with a similar product.
- 4.3 Enquiries into alternatives for the lights and power supplies will be time consuming and before commencement the Town Clerk will require guidance from this committee.

5 Recommendations

- 5.1 Members are requested to note the report and determine if enquiries should be made about alternative styles of lamps and the possibility of power supplies being taken from the street lights.

Jeff Penfold
Town Clerk
31st January 2017