



PORTFOLIO HOLDER DECISION NOTICE

INDIVIDUAL DECISION BY THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR FINANCE AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

TOPIC – CITY CENTRE CHRISTMAS LIGHTS

PROCEDURAL INFORMATION

The Access to Information Procedure Rules – Part 4, Section 22 of the Council's Constitution provides for a decision to be made by an individual member of Cabinet.

In accordance with the Procedure Rules, the Chief Operating Officer, the Chief Executive and the Chief Finance Officer are consulted together with Chairman and Vice Chairman of The Overview and Scrutiny Committee and any other relevant overview and scrutiny committee. In addition, all Members are notified.

If five or more Members from those informed so request, the Leader may require the matter to be referred to Cabinet for determination.

Contact Officers:

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SUMMARY

- Currently Christmas Lights are provided partly by Winchester City Council and also by The Business Improvement District (BID).
- The BID have continually improved the provision of cross street displays over the past 5 years of operation and have also extended the provision of Christmas lights to other areas of the City. These improvements are ongoing.
- At present, the Council continues to maintain 60 cross street strings of lights together with tree lights at the King Alfreds Statue and also lights along the frontage of The Casson Block in St Georges Street. The BID are prepared to become responsible for provision of these in the future providing that they are handed over in good condition and that the electrical infrastructure complies with current safety legislation.
- Currently the cost of erecting/taking down the above lights during the Christmas period is £15,000. The equipment is stored at F2.

- The Council currently has a direct budget of £25,000 per annum plus apportioned support costs of c£5,000 per annum (plus an additional brought forward budget of £12,430 for 2013/14) which allows for the erection/taking down of the lights together with maintenance and any replacements required. The additional budget for 2013/14 was to update present electrical supplies which were required during 2013. This work has recently been completed by SSE and the Christmas lights contractor.
- Out of the total budget, the Winchester Town Account has a forecast contribution of £15,189 per annum towards the provision of the Christmas Lights as per Cabinet report CAB2454. This equates to approximately 50% of the annual budgeted costs.
- Discussions have been held with the BID having regard to the above and agreement has been reached for the BID to be responsible for the provision of all Christmas lights in the City Centre. The Council would make an annual contribution towards the cost of £15,000 for the next 3 years, with years 2 and 3 increasing by RPI.
- This will allow for the BID to improve the cross street displays further in line with their members' wishes.

DECISION

1. That the Council make an annual grant to the BID towards the provision of Christmas Lights for the following 3 years of £15,000.
2. That the grant be increased by RPI for years 2 and 3.
3. That the grant to be reviewed thereafter.

REASON FOR THE DECISION AND OTHER ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

The Council are no longer in a position to be responsible for the provision of all Christmas lighting in the City, especially as the BID have greatly improved and extended this over the past 5 years. Therefore no other alternative option has been considered apart from continuing to maintain the remaining strings of lights.

The BID are agreeable to being responsible for the ongoing provision/improvement of all Christmas lights including the cross street lights currently provided by the Council and by doing so it will also enable them to fully integrate maintenance agreements, improvements etc.

It will result in saving officer time in dealing with future maintenance contracts and procedures for the erection of the lights.

Space at F2 will be saved as the strings/tree will in future be stored by the contractor.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

The proposals will result in a budget saving of approximately £9,000 per annum, starting from 2014/15.

It is envisaged that this saving will be split equally with the Winchester Town Account (£4,500 per annum), which is in line with the current cost apportionment.

By saving storage space at F2 this will reduce the requirement for future storage provision required by the Council.

CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN ON THE DECISION

The BID
Portfolio Holder for Economic Development
Chief Finance Officer
Winchester Town Forum members.

FURTHER ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED FOLLOWING PUBLICATION OF THE DRAFT PORTFOLIO HOLDER DECISION NOTICE

Comments were received from Councillors Maynard, Hutchison, Power and Newman-Mckie which mainly concerned the Council's lack of support for Christmas lights in parishes, other than the City Centre. The Head of Estates explained that the purpose of the PHDN was to reflect the role that the BID now plays in the City and to save Council money. The historic link between the Town Account and the Council concerning the provision of Christmas lights in the City Centre could possibly be the subject of an Informal Scrutiny Group if so requested.

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS BY THE DECISION MAKER OR A MEMBER OR OFFICER CONSULTED

None

DISPENSATION GRANTED BY THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

N/A

Approved by: (signature)

Date of Decision: 21.05.14

Councillor Stephen Godfrey – Portfolio Holder for Finance and Organisational Development