

**FESTIVE LIGHTING**

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**1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 Across Argyll and Bute the council works with communities to help them enjoy a range of lighting displays over the festive period.
- 1.2 There is no statutory requirement nor GAE allocation associated with providing festive lighting displays, although this council, like many other local authorities across the country, has historically provided this service.
- 1.3 This has historically cost around £100,000 each year.
- 1.4 The council, at its budget meeting in February 2016, took the decision to look at alternative, community-led delivery methods, with £300,000 earmarked from reserves to support council delivery and transitional arrangements for the following three financial years, with a report to be brought forward by the Executive Director of Development and Infrastructure outlining allocations, arrangements and funding timescales in relation to the replacement of the current revenue position.
- 1.5 In a report to the EDI committee in August 2016 it was proposed that for 2016/17 that festive lighting be provided by the council on the basis of historic arrangements. This report also set out the expectation that 2017/18 and 2018/19 would be transitional years where communities seeking a community-led delivery method would be supported to develop their individual arrangements for 2019/20 and beyond.
- 1.6 At the April meeting of the EDI committee members decided that the remaining balance of festive funding (£207,611) be allocated to the four area committees to be used for long-term, sustainable festive lighting outcomes (£51,902 per area committee). At this meeting it was also agreed that officers would commence the community engagement exercise, with a view to community groups beginning the community-led delivery no later than 2019/20
- 1.7 There is a general expectation that the council will continue to deliver the service on the basis of historic arrangements for the 2017 festive period

- 1.8 This report summarises the successful initial round of engagement to date, as well as indicating potential alternative delivery methods (which include a strategic approach to scoping out a simplified switch on process), highlighting the intended work programme for this year, and asks members to consider potential alternative uses for the earmarked funds

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Note the progress so far with community engagement and the positive indications of the ambitions for community-led delivery models
- Note that festive lighting will be delivered in 2017 on the basis of historic arrangements
- Agree that a further report will come forward to EDI into the Spring of 2018 giving further detail on inventory, specification and single switch on scoping work, as well as the next phase of community engagement and the preferred route for the transfer of existing festive lighting assets
- Agree that individual reports on the financial position with the remaining earmarked funds, which will reduce if the council delivers festive lighting this December on the basis of historic arrangements, and their potential future uses in Year Three, will go to the four area committees into the Spring of 2018.

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## FESTIVE LIGHTING

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### 3.0 INTRODUCTION

- 3.1 This report summarises the work of officers to date to give effect to the council decision of February 2016 to look at alternative, community-led festive lighting delivery methods
- 3.2 The report also indicates potential alternative delivery methods (which include a strategic approach to scoping out a simplified switch on process), highlighting the work programme for this year, and sets out potential alternative uses for the earmarked funds into Year Three

### 4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- Note the progress so far with community engagement and the positive indications of the ambitions for community-led delivery models
- Note that festive lighting will be delivered in 2017 on the basis of historic arrangements
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- Agree that individual reports on the financial position with the remaining earmarked funds, which will reduce if the council delivers festive lighting this December on the basis of historic arrangements, and their potential future uses in Year Three, will go to the four area committees into the Spring of 2018.

### 5.0 DETAIL

#### 5.1 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- 5.1.1 A report on festive lighting to the April meeting of the EDI committee highlighted that officers would progress an initial round of community engagement, which would involve contacting the various community groups involved in festive

lighting across the council area in an effort to better understand their ambition and the appetite to look at a community-led delivery model

- 5.1.2 As well as a lack of inventory and specification information which was highlighted to members in the April report, there was not a central database of contact details for the key contacts within the groups. As such, there was a requirement to compile such a database to allow for initial discussions. This was completed with the assistance of the council's streetlighting team, local staff in Development and Infrastructure and elected members.
- 5.1.3 Officers have tried wherever possible to meet with groups face-to-face, and where this was not possible to conduct discussions via telephone. Of the 21 areas highlighted to members in a previous report to EDI committee in August of 2016, discussions with community representatives have been very positive, with all groups with whom there is an existing relationship agreeing, in principle, to work towards community-led festive lighting from 2019 onwards. There is additional work to do in a small number of areas where there is not an established community delivery partner
- 5.1.4 It is intended that this engagement work continues into the early part of 2018, when officers will look to progress detailed minutes of agreement in each area which will specify the arrangements going forward, and be agreed by both parties
- 5.1.5 The engagement work has allowed officers to build a more complete picture of individual arrangements, which will help to provide the strategic overview which is necessary to take this project forward. This will also help to inform the inventory and specification work which will run concurrently with the festive lighting delivery work programme for 2017.
- 5.1.6 This more complete picture shows that there are a range of models which currently operate, with the festive lighting in some areas being very much community-led already.
- 5.1.7 The work has also shown that a key consideration going forward is the sustainability of each event. It may be the case that the only way that events can be sustainable is if they are reduced in scale, but this will be a decision for the community delivery partner, on the basis of the specific financial position balanced against the aspirations of individual communities. Community led delivery of events on a similar scale to the historic arrangements could be challenging in some areas where there is not a pre-existing group with an established involvement and broad community support.

## 5.2 WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2017

- 5.2.1 The current intention, subject to area committee approval, is to deliver festive on the basis of the historic model for 2017. Work has been ongoing over the

summer months to test and, where necessary, repair or replace the council's existing festive lighting stock.

- 5.2.2 Running alongside the maintenance element, work continues to develop reliable inventory, specification and circuitry information. There were a lack of up-to-date service procedures and circuit drawings for the installation of festive features. Much of the required information appeared to be contained as working knowledge. Our street lighting team is currently working on providing more detailed specifications, and time has been set aside in their overall work programme to allow this programming and specification work to take place. This includes a simplified system of tagging festive lighting assets with information on where they should be erected, and how, and from where they are switched on. In better understanding the specific works involved, and the time and expertise required to carry out the works, we will be able to produce accurate unit costings which will give community groups reliable cost information, and allow us to develop an appropriate, proportionate and reasonable charging scheme. This will help to inform future discussions as we look to firm up the long-term arrangements, as well as helping community groups with any fundraising or applications for external funding
- 5.2.3 Work also continues to ensure an appropriate work programme and delivery method for 2017, which takes into account the lessons learned from 2016. Given the working knowledge contained within our internal street lighting team, and the suitable resourcing of the LED replacement project, it is intended to use internal resources to deliver festive lighting in 2017. It may be the case that we will need to bolster our internal resource with contracted labour, and if this is the case we will procure a suitably experienced and qualified contractor from a framework contract, to work under the direction of our own internal street lighting team
- 5.2.4 The work programme is being informed by discussions with community groups. We are in the process of compiling a master list of switch on dates and will plan our work around this. It is intended that officers will attend each site before the end of October to scope out the necessary individual arrangements, and that these sites meetings be informed by community representatives and local members. Following erection, our street lighting team will be available to respond to any issues as they develop over the festive period, and intend to have the lights removed and appropriately stored in early January
- 5.2.5 We have strengthened our internal resource with the recruitment, on a short term basis, of a lighting engineer who is assisting us with capital planning, as well as scoping out simplified switch on mechanisms. Currently the switching on of festive lighting relies on multiple fuses, which have to be manually placed in columns and/or fuse pillars, and requires several operatives to be on site to allow a synchronized switch on. This is very labour intensive, and as a consequence, costly. We are in the process of beginning to investigate the practicalities of a single or minimum number of switching points being installed, and this work will be supported by the circuitry, inventory, unit cost and

specification information which will be recorded in the process of delivery this year.

### 5.3 ALTERNATIVE DELIVERY METHODS

5.3.1 There will be different solutions in different places, depending on the ambitions of the community, balanced against practicality and affordability.

5.3.2 These solutions could include: local fundraising; private sector sponsorship; council assistance to help groups become properly constituted to allow them to access potential sources of external funding; local goodwill, e.g. the in-kind support of local tradesman and other suitably qualified and competent members of the community; potential access to community benefit monies from on-shore renewable energy developments; the council working as a contractor, with a fair, reasonable and proportionate recharge; potential hire of council equipment

5.3.3 It is envisaged that the council will help facilitate cohesive discussions, the sharing of best practice and partnership working between different community groups, to further ensure the long-term sustainability of festive lighting in Argyll and Bute. In practical terms what this could mean is community groups coming together to use their collective buying power to renew or replace festive lighting assets. It could also mean groups coming together to hire the same vehicle or use the same contractor, thus generating for the communities economies of scale

### 5.4 POTENTIAL ALTERNATIVE USE FOR EARMARKED MONIES

5.4.1 Throughout the community engagement process groups have expressed a willingness to look to move to a fully community-led model earlier than the indicative timescale set by members in their decision of Feb 2016

5.4.2 Groups have expressed the view that an initial allocation of monies from the council would allow them to establish long-term plans, as well as helping secure match funding

5.4.3 As a result of these discussions it is intended that individual reports on the financial position and the potential future uses of the remaining funds will go to each of the four area committees in the Spring of 2018, following council-led delivery in December 2017.

5.4.4 Should area committees be of the view that the remaining funds be opened up for community bids in Year Three, it is intended that the normal funding safeguards be put in place, where we would ask groups to include in their submission information such as: copy of the constitution or articles of association; the most recent accounts or OSCR return signed and dated by an auditor or someone external to the organisation who is appropriately experienced or qualified; the most recent annual report or a summary of the work/activities of your group over the past year; current bank certificates/statements showing balances held in every account; a breakdown of

any staff costs applied for; a business plan, including marketing plan for the activity, a planning framework with clear ownership, responsibility and liability for any event, ensuring that suitably qualified individuals are carrying out work on the live supplier network; and evidence of appropriate insurance coverage for any event.

- 5.4.5 When the specification work detailed at 5.2.2 is completed we will be in a position to provide community groups with accurate costs which will help them in their decision making on the scale of future arrangements and potential funding sources if required. The groups would agree with the council the extent of any lighting for their individual area. The council would have to be satisfied that any work being carried out on the live supplier network and/or the public road network was being undertaken by suitably qualified and insured individuals. It is intended that this work is carried out by the council on a recharge basis, however, groups would be free to apply for a permit for competent contractors/individuals to carry out the work.

## **6.0 CONCLUSION**

- 6.1 Officers have concluded the initial phase of engagement, with positive progress so far. Attention now turns to obtaining further information, as well as successful council delivery of event in 2017, which will allow negotiations with individual groups into the early part of 2018, at a greater level of detail than has been possible to date with a view to progressing specific agreements over the course of 2018.

## **7.0 IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 Policy	Agreed as part of service choices
7.2 Financial	Budget reductions agreed as part of service choices
7.3 Legal	None known
7.4 HR	None known
7.5 Equalities	None known
7.6 Risk	None known
7.7 Customer Service	None known

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