

FESTIVE LIGHTING UPDATE

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 In February 2016 Argyll and Bute Council took the decision to look at alternative, community-led delivery methods for festive lighting with £300,000 earmarked from reserves to support council delivery and transitional arrangements for the following three financial years – 2016/17, 2017/18 and 2018/19
- 1.2 The EDI committee in August 2016 determined that the council should deliver in 2016 on the basis of historic arrangements, with the intention that 2017/18 and 2018/19 by transition years. Community engagement began in earnest in the early part of 2017 and was successful in the sense that officers were able to begin dialogue and establish outline agreements in principle in all areas where there is an existing relationship with a third party that these groups would work towards a community-led solution.
- 1.3 In April 2017 members of the EDI committee determined that the remaining balance of the central allocation would be divided by administrative area (£51,902 per area).
- 1.4 At the September meeting of the same committee it was determined that the council would deliver again in 2017 on the basis of historic arrangements but that if a community group felt it was ready to take full responsibility they could apply to the festive lighting fund for monies to support their events.
- 1.5 Grant funding was provided via area committees to Tobermory and Helensburgh, with the remaining Christmas lights switch-on events delivered successfully by the council, on the agreed basis of historic arrangements.
- 1.5 This report updates members on the position and intended next steps and seeks approval for these next steps.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members of the committee are asked to:

- Note the successful delivery of festive lighting across Argyll and Bute by the council and by community groups in 2017;
- Agree the draft principles/template heads of terms at Appendix One, and delegate authority to the Head of Roads and Amenity Services to progress agreements on this basis;
- Agree the draft methodology for disposal of lighting assets at Appendix Two and delegate authority to the Head of Roads and Amenity Services to progress matters on this basis;
- Agree the strategy for use of any unspent funds at the end of 2018/19 outlined at 4.3.2 of this report;
- Note that the final accounts are yet to be settled and that final figures will be reported to EDI in June;
- Note the advice of officers at 4.4 and agree that costs to provide single switch-on points are prohibitive and that no further work should be done in this area, but that any future public realm projects should consider the inclusion of the required cabling improvements to enable single switch-ons as part of their overall scope, with individual decisions to be made on a case by case basis in the context of any overall future project

FESTIVE LIGHTING UPDATE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 This report summarises the work in relation to festive lighting following on from the previous update to this committee in September 2017, as well as setting out the preferred principles/methodology to govern the next stage of community engagement where officers will make best endeavours to take the verbal in principle agreements of 2017 to formal agreements for community led solutions from 2019 onwards, if not before, depending on the individual circumstances in each area/of each group

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Members of the committee are asked to:

- 3.1 Note the successful delivery of festive lighting across Argyll and Bute by the council and by community groups in 2017;
- 3.2 Agree the draft principles/template heads of terms at Appendix One, and delegate authority to the Head of Roads and Amenity Services to progress agreements on this basis;
- 3.3 Agree the draft methodology for disposal of lighting assets at Appendix Two and delegate authority to the Head of Roads and Amenity Services to progress matters on this basis;
- 3.4 Agree the strategy for use of any unspent funds at the end of 2018/19 outlined at 4.3.2 of this report;
- 3.5 Note that the final accounts are yet to be settled and that final figures will be reported to EDI in June;
- 3.6 Note the advice of officers at 4.4 and agree that costs to provide single switch-on points are prohibitive and that no further work should be done in this area, but that any future public realm projects should consider the inclusion of the required cabling improvements to enable single switch-ons as part of their overall scope, with individual decisions to be made on a case by case basis in the context of any overall future project

4.0 DETAIL

4.1 SUCCESSFUL DELIVERY IN 2017 AND FINANCIAL POSITION

- 4.1.1 The council provided technical support to enable festive lighting switch-on events/ festive lighting displays for 17 towns and villages across Argyll and Bute in December 2017.
- 4.1.2 Two towns – Helensburgh and Tobermory – had groups which took on the responsibility themselves and delivered successfully, with the aid of grant funding from the council for which the groups applied and were assessed as part of the council's normal funding assessment process. This grant funding was provided from the reserves which were earmarked for this purpose in February 2016, and the funding decisions were made via the local area committees following the delegation of these funds to them at the EDI meeting of April 2017. The Tobermory Christmas Lights group received £1525.40 and the Helensburgh Festive Lighting Charitable Trust received up to £20,000. A further two areas – Innellan and Sandbank – had council input historically but are now community led, with no input from the council.
- 4.1.3 The remaining balance of festive funding which was delegated to area committees in April 2017 was £207,611 or £51,902 per area committee. In September 2017 the EDI committee noted that festive lighting would be delivered in 2017 on the basis of historic arrangements. It is not possible to give the exact cost position per area at this time following the work in December, January and February. Given the proximity to the year end, the final accounting will be settled as part of the year-end financial process. However, it should be noted that the costs in MAKI and B&C are likely to come out slightly higher than 50% on the basis that there were significant costs this year in repairing and replacing some of the assets which would not normally be incurred. It is proposed that the financial position be reported to the June meeting of this committee.
- 4.1.4 The costs to deliver to date will be presented at an area level because they have not been accounted on a job-by-job or town/village by town/village basis. Once the inventory exercise is completed following the take down operation it will be possible to give unit costs per item. This will support the continued engagement process as we will be able to provide community groups with accurate cost and specification information

4.2 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- 4.2.1 Over the course of the spring and summer of 2017 officers engaged with communities in the towns and villages across the council area where our streetlighting team had supported/delivered events historically.

- 4.2.2 Officers 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.
- 4.2.3 It is intended that this engagement work continues into the spring and summer of 2018, informed by the accurate inventory, specification and costing information which has been collated as part of the successful council delivery in 2017. Members should note that arrangements are in place for 2018/19 festive lights. However, for 2019/20 there are a number of areas where future arrangements have not yet been concluded and it may be challenging for some communities to deliver the current level of festive lighting from 2019/20 onwards.
- 4.2.4 To support this process members are being asked to consider and give their views on the key principles/template heads of terms at Appendix One of this report, and the disposal methodology for existing council festive lighting assets at Appendix Two.

4.3 ALTERNATIVE USE FOR REMAINING FUNDS

- 4.3.1 The EDI committee in September 2017 agreed that should a community group wish to take on delivery in 2017, and they wished to apply to the council for funding to do so, any such application would be subject to the council's normal funding request process, and would be a matter for area committees to determine on the basis that the budget has been delegated to them. It is proposed that this is replicated for 2018, but note that the council has committed to delivering this year unless there is that established community alternative.
- 4.3.2 It is further proposed that any monies which remain in these funds after 31st March 2019 be made available to any group with whom the council has entered into a signed formal agreement in that particular administrative area be gifted to that group pro rata. If there is no formal agreement with a group then the money should carry forward into 2019/20 and be subject to the normal grant application process as outlined at 4.3.2. The council will cease to deliver from the end of financial year 2018/19.

4.4 INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS TO ALLOW SINGLE SWITCH ONS

- 4.4.1 In each town/village there are a range of switch on points at various cabinets. To enable a single switch on point in each town/village a substantial capital investment in new cabling and associated infrastructure would be required. The total forecast estimate provided by the council's Lighting Engineer is in excess of £100,000. Officers consider this cost to be prohibitive and are of the view that this does not demonstrate value for money. Any future capital works in relation to public realm improvements in these areas should consider cabling and associated improvements to reflect the improvements made in Helensburgh as

part of the town centre regeneration work funded through the council's CHORD scheme.

5.0 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 Festive lighting was successfully delivered in December 2017. There is one year of funding remaining from the earmarking which was made in February 2016 and this funding could be accessed by community groups or used by the council to deliver this year. Community engagement will continue over the course of the spring and into the summer on the basis of the outline terms and asset disposal methodology appended to this paper.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Policy – consistent with framework set via Council and EDI
- 6.2 Financial – the remaining balance on the earmarking is INSERT.
- 6.3 Legal – none at this stage
- 6.4 HR – none at this stage
- 6.5 Equalities – none at this stage
- 6.6 Risk – none at this stage
- 6.7 Customer Service – none at this stage

Executive Director of Development and Infrastructure Pippa Milne
Policy Lead for Roads and Amenity Services, Councillor Roddy McCuish

31/1/18

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APPENDICES

- Appendix 1: Draft key principles/template heads of terms
- Appendix 2: Draft methodology for disposal of lighting assets