



Title of meeting: Cabinet

Date of meeting: 5 September 2023

Subject: Christmas Lights 2023
Supporting Infrastructure & Christmas Lights provision

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Wards affected: All

Key decision: Yes

Full Council decision: No

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 To address the current concerns with 2023/34 Christmas Lights budget concern and provide a definitive response.
- 1.2 This is extremely time sensitive, with procurement and action needing to be in place for September to enable procurement and repairs for early November 2023 when lights are installed for the season.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To request Ward CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) via the existing Neighbourhood CIL procedure, as outlined within the Draft CIL Neighbourhood Portion Spend Guidance Note to fund the repair and enhancement of Christmas lights infrastructure across the city of Portsmouth (or otherwise agreed priority sites). **AND**

To request Ward CIL via the existing Neighbourhood CIL procedure, as outlined within the Draft CIL Neighbourhood Portion Spend Guidance Note to fund additional/replacement Christmas Light Motifs across the city (or otherwise agreed priority sites).

OR



For Cabinet to Approve funding from city wide Neighbourhood CIL fund to fund the repair and enhancement of Christmas lights infrastructure and additional/replacement Christmas Light Motifs across the city (or otherwise agreed priority sites).

And, in either case

- 2.2 For Cabinet to give approval that any underspend from the allocated funding is retained as a ringfenced reserve for the future of maintaining the provision of Christmas lights in the City.

3. Background Infrastructure

- 3.1 Christmas lights provision (including infrastructure) have had limited investment previously and acknowledged by the electrical contractor in 2022/23 as near end of life.

- 3.2 In 2023 we commissioned a report to establish the seriousness of the current infrastructure and lighting problems for Christmas 2023/24. Across the city:

- 139 infrastructure points were deemed as requiring immediate replacement or attention
- 40 infrastructure points were deemed passable condition (unable to confirm either condemned or good status - we anticipate some or all of these units to require replacement for reliable light provision)
- 105 were deemed good condition (requiring no action for 2023/24)

- 3.3 Replacement is estimated at £500 per connection point (please note this could be reduced to £395 for some points but we do not know ahead of commissioning how many, if any would be costed at the lower price) putting costs in the region of a maximum estimate of £89,500.

- 3.4 Details of the location of each of the infrastructure point requiring immediate replacement of attention to maintain previous levels of Christmas Lights coverage (Option A below) are contained in the table in Appendix 1.

4 Background Christmas light provision

- 4.1 Christmas lights have had limited investment previously and acknowledged by the electrical contractor in 2022/23 as near end of life (with many working beyond reasonable expectations). This reflects feedback from contractors in previous years.

- 4.2 All lights are currently allocated specifically to wards and linked to specific infrastructure (although many could be used in other locations or smaller patterns in wards).

- 4.3 Some lights and infrastructure has been funded from Neighbourhood CIL, or are linked to particular infrastructure which limit where items can be used or prevent them being used in different Wards.
- 4.4 Items (particularly motifs) were removed as unsafe following breakages on site in 2023/24 as one style was deemed unsafe reducing lights in different areas across the city. At the time we extended (using an alternative lamppost provision) or removed lights to maintain maximum provision for each ward.
- 4.5 Significant additional costs were incurred in 2022/23 due to electrical faults. Some of this reflected deliberate vandalism which was a significant problem, but some reflected the age of the infrastructure and the condition of the lights.
- 4.6 Previous Neighbourhood CIL funding against Christmas lights means these areas should be considered for priority funding to maintain this investment - noting that any Christmas lights would be considered to have a life of 3-5 years (please note that means that Milton ward, for example, is beyond reasonable life expectancy). These recent NCIL grants are detailed in the table below:

Scheme	NCIL Funds awarded	Ward	Year	MIS item
Electrical infrastructure and Christmas lights including all installation, storage and switch on and maintenance costs for 5 years at Eastney Road, Milton.	£32,190	Milton	2017	13.10.17
Purchase of 32 Christmas lights motifs located from the southern end of Fratton Road to the ward boundary with Nelson ward.	£7,782	Fratton	2020	30.10.20
Purchase of 20 Christmas lights located along the southern end of the shopping area of North End.	£4,864	Nelson	2020	13.11.20

- 4.7 Estimates for new motifs are in the range of £200-£300 per unit. And work has been undertaken to identify locations where lights have had to be removed as unsafe and require additional provision if the past coverage for Christmas lights is to be maintained.
- 4.8 All the units (over 60) are identified as being required to support Copnor, Fawcett and Winter Roads requiring a further investment and all other centres have needs for some new lights or repairs to existing lights. Some rebalancing of resources across areas, as the same motifs are used in different areas, could reduce ward costs and balance the provision across the city.

- 4.9 Commercial Road and Cosham all currently have cross street lighting which is close to the point of failure and it is recommend that repair or replacement is necessary for some of these features. As estimate of £600 per unit for replacement and £400 for repair has been used for these lights
- 4.10 Further investment is required to maintain lights beyond 2023/24 across all areas as motifs move beyond lifespan and on installation there may be reduction in all areas to allow reasonable light display.
- 4.11 Other Ward upgrades to lights not yet identified may be sought separately, if communities or ward councillors wish to pursue this through the normal Neighbourhood CIL regime, as it is anticipated that this may gain public interest/attention over time as without a significant response to replacement of failing, we face a situation of aging lights and therefore a reduction in provision in all areas.
- 4.12 Details of the identified areas where in new motifs are required to maintain previous Christmas Light coverage (Option A below) is detailed in the table in Appendix 1 where information is available. Please note that further investigation will be required on some installations at the time of fitting to ensure provision.

5. Options

- 5.1 No provision has currently been made within the capital programme for the maintenance or replacement of Christmas Lights. The options available to the Council therefore are either to seek significant funding, either on a ward by ward basis or from 'City Wide Neighbourhood CIL', for repairs and replacement in line with the recommendations at 2. Above; to seek limited funding from the Neighbourhood CIL funding stream, either on a ward by ward basis or from 'City Wide Neighbourhood CIL', to maintain and replace infrastructure and lights in a small number of 'priority areas' for lights (to be identified); or to seek no funding and provide no Christmas lights for Christmas 2023.
- Option A
Provide full infrastructure repairs in 2023 to build capacity for lights and purchase additional lights to provide coverage reflecting 2022/23 provision
 - Option B
Select priority areas for a limited display across the city, officers' initial recommendation would be to focus on the high streets of Commercial Road, Southsea and Cosham to recognise the comparative hierarchy of centres in the city and achieve a geographical spread in the area.
This would need to be costed against priority areas.
 - Option C
Decide to provide no Christmas lights for 2023 - please note that this will impact on Christmas Tree expenditure already in place.

- 5.2 If funding is to be sought from ward based neighbourhood CIL on a case by case basis, this would require a number of separate applications to be completed by Officers, approved by Ward Members and publicised through the MIS process in accordance with the adopted CIL Neighbourhood Portion Spend Guidance. Details of the available Ward Based Neighbourhood CIL funding are provided in the table at Appendix 1 along with the estimated costs for each centre which currently has lights. Some centres straddle ward boundaries and therefore ward based funding would be proportionately sought from more than one ward. Different amounts of CIL funding are available in different wards, different investment needs are identified in each centre and Members are likely to have different priorities between wards. This approach, while keeping local communities at the heart of the decision and funding of Christmas lights, is likely therefore to lead to perceived disparity across the city.
- 5.3 If funding is sought from the 'City Wide Neighbourhood CIL', which currently has an uncommitted balance of £235,140, the decision lies with the Cabinet to distribute this reserve. The Draft CIL Neighbourhood Portion Spend Guidance advises the Cabinet that this spending should be used for the benefit of the whole city, and must of course follow the normal spending restrictions associated with money gathered under the Levy.
- 5.4 The financial requirements for both lighting infrastructure (estimated to be a maximum of £89,500) and for 2023 Christmas light motifs (estimated to be £32,500), are a significant call upon the available Neighbourhood CIL funding from which ever 'pot' it is sought. However, noting the precautionary way this budget requirement has been calculated it is anticipated that there will be some underspend against this total amount. It is therefore further proposed that any underspend is retained as a ringfenced reserve for future Christmas lights replacement and works to maintain provision in order that such unanticipated spending can be better managed.

6. Reasons for recommendations

- 6.1 Recommendations for continued Christmas Lights provision reflects the need to support local businesses with the attracted footfall derived from Christmas lights with associated switch on events that supports and brings communities together with the emphasise on encouraging the promoting community cohesion (events are only held in Commercial Road, Cosham and Southsea and are reliant on sponsorship. Please note that no sponsorship has been secured for 2023/24 to date.
- 6.2 The report also acknowledges the positive impact for residents and visitors who benefit from the Christmas light provision at a time when the cost of living crisis may lead to individual householders reducing celebrations at Christmas due to expense.

7. Integrated impact assessment

See Appendix 3

8. Legal implications

In areas where there are no parish councils, the charging authority (PCC) retains the neighbourhood proportion of the Community Infrastructure Levy receipts.

Under Regulation 59F Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 the charging authority (PCC) may spend the neighbourhood portion of CIL on:

- (a) The provision, improvement, replacement, operation or maintenance of infrastructure; or
- (b) anything else that is concerned with addressing the demands that development places on an area.

This allows local communities and the charging authority greater freedom over what to spend the neighbourhood funding element of CIL on.

9. Director of Finance's comments

No provision has currently been made within the capital programme for the maintenance or replacement of Christmas Lights.

The cost of replacing the 139 condemned infrastructure points and up to 40 which were 'passable', but not 'good' is estimated to be £89,500. This is a worst-case estimate assuming all are replaced at a cost of £500 rather than repaired at a lower cost of £375.

The cost to replace motifs is estimated to be in the range of £200-£300 per unit. Replacing and repairing the recommended 130 units will cost up to £32,500, bringing the total call on CIL funds to £122,000.

Appendix 1 shows the split of costs by Ward and the available Neighbourhood CIL funds for each Ward. The City Wide Neighbourhood CIL currently has an uncommitted balance of £235,140.

In the event that the City Wide NCIL is used and should expenditure fall below the total call on CIL funds, it may be considered prudent to hold the balance for future Christmas light replacement and repair works.

The annual cost of setting up, turning on, powering and putting away the Christmas lights are covered in the Cash Limited Budget based on the current complement of lights.



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Signed by:

Appendices:

Appendix 1
Costs and NCIL availability by location and ward

Appendix 2
Portsmouth health check 2023 - electrical infrastructure report produced by SparkX Ltd as the current contractor

Appendix 3
Integrated Impact Assessment

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972
Draft CIL Neighbourhood Portion Spend Guidance

The recommendation(s) set out above were
approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/ rejected

by on

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Signed by:

Appendix 1

Christmas Light Location	Ward	Infrastructure points requiring investment	Cost for Infrastructure points	New Christmas Light Motifs needed	Cost of new Christmas Light Motifs	NCIL funds Available
Commercial Road CITY CENTRE	Charles Dickens	6 require immediate replacement; 3 passable condition	£4,500	22 Cross Street motifs need repairs	£8,800	£89,027
Cosham High Street / Wayte Street COSHAM	Cosham	8 require immediate replacement; 6 passable condition	£7,000	14 Motifs and new 'icicle zig zag'	£2,800 + £600	£210,612
Osbourne Road /Palmerston Road / Marmion Road SOUTHSEA	St Jude	36 require immediate replacement; 4 passable condition	£20,000	6 motifs	£1,200	£48,046
Fratton Road FRATTON	Charles Dickens and Fratton Wards (location of units on Ward boundary)	5 requires immediate replacement; 8 passable condition	£6,500	0	£0	Charles Dickens: £89,027 Fratton: £6,423
Stubbington Ave to Clydebank Road NORTHEND	Nelson	22 require immediate replacement	£11,000	0	£0	£149,676
Clydebank Road to Washington Road NORTHEND	Nelson and Fratton (location of units on Ward boundary)	6 require immediate replacement	£3,000	0	£0	Nelson: £149,676 Fratton: £6,423
Washington Road to Hampshire Street NORTHEND	Charles Dickens and Fratton (location of units on Ward boundary)	16 require immediate replacement	£8,000	0	£0	Charles Dickens: £89,027 Fratton: £6,423
Albert Road Victoria Road South to Lawrence Road SOUTHSEA	St Jude	18 require immediate replacement	£9,000	8 Motifs (including LED tube ropes)	£2,400	£48,046

Albert Road Lawrence Road to Festing Road SOUTHSEA	Eastney and Craneswater and Central Southsea Wards (location of units on Ward boundary)	13 require immediate replacement; 2 passable condition	£7,500	8 Motifs (including LED tube ropes)	£2,400	E & C Ward: £18,300 Central Southsea Ward: £1,090
Tangier Road BAFFINS	Baffins	2 require immediate replacement	£1,000	3 Motifs	£600	£49,250
Fawcett Road SOUTHSEA	Central Southsea	3 require immediate replacement 1 passable condition	£2,000	34 Motifs (all)	£6,800	£1,090
Winter Road (NB Southsea Ward links) MILTON	Milton	1 requires immediate replacement 1 passable condition	£1,000	8 Motifs (all)	£1,600	£60,546
Castle Road SOUTHSEA	St Thomas	3 require immediate replacement	£1,500	0	£0	£25,828
Eastney Road MILTON	Milton	15 passable condition	£7,500			£60,546
Copnor Road COPNOR	Copnor	0	£0	19 Motifs (all)	£3,800	£4,456
Havant Road DRAYTON	Drayton and Farlington	0	£0	3 Motifs	£600	£268,607
Allaway Avenue PAULSGROVE	Paulsgrove	0	£0	4 Motifs	£800	£33,844