

Footway Lighting - Maintenance

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Councillor Allan Holiday
LEAD OFFICER: Keith Parker , Head of Neighbourhood Services
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WHAT BENEFITS WILL THESE PROPOSALS BRING TO COPELAND RESIDENTS?

All stakeholders will have a clear understanding of the role of the Council in respect of its footway assets.

WHY HAS THIS REPORT COME TO THE EXECUTIVE?

Changes to the ways in which Electricity North West manage their supply is having a knock on effect on the viability of the Council's maintenance budget leading to the need to adopt a more sustainable approach to footway lighting going forward.

RECOMMENDATION:

That Executive confirm a management approach towards footway lighting is taken consistent to that now adopted towards other 'street scene' assets, as outlined in section 2.1.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The council currently has responsibility for approximately 1400 footway lights in the borough on its asset register.

1.2 Traditionally these lights have been maintained by the same contractor as Cumbria County Council and, more recently on the replacement of the contractor with an in-house operation, by the County Council's own team. Maintenance levels are contained within this Council's limited budget of circa £40,000 p.a..

As already reported to the Executive as a potential risk or pressure in the Medium Term Financial Strategy report of 9th January this year the impact of Electricity Northwest proposals will put this limited budget under even greater stress.

1.3 Electricity Northwest (ENW) have notified the Council that there has been a change to their policy regarding the attachment of equipment to their timber poles. The change

means that ENW will not permit the attachment of lighting fixtures to new or replacement poles, or where safety clearances between lighting brackets and ENW conductors are considered inadequate.

ENW have undertaken to notify us if there is a pole replacement programme which affects any of the Councils lights in order for us to have them removed (if we do not ENW will remove them by default and a charge may be levied).

1.4 The financial impact of this change is significant with the disconnection costs of individual lights being in the order of £600 – £800 each and replacement standalone columns a further £2,000 - £3,000 per light. The asset register indicates that there are around 200 of these lights on ENW poles and it would be fair to assume at least half of these will be affected by the changes in the short term. At an average of £3,000 per light to decommission and replace this means a budget of £300,000 would have to be set aside if the Council were to continue to provide footway lights as now. The current situation is that the financial position is that like for like replacement is unaffordable within current spending constraints. The proposal in this report is therefore that the same approach to footway lights as other street scene ‘assets’. This is in effect a long term managed withdrawal unless funding for specific lights is secured from third parties. To do so provides a consistency of approach as recommended by the Grounds Maintenance and Street Scene Policy Development Group last financial year, building on the work of that PDG.

1.5 The current revenue budget is only adequate to affect the repair of faults on lights and a limited programme of replacement of potentially dangerous columns. It should be noted a substantial number of lights are thought to be of an ageing asset and therefore their condition is deteriorating adding yet further pressure to the limited revenue budget.

1.6 There is no statutory duty on local authorities to provide public lighting, but all three tiers of local government have the power to do so if they so wish.

1.7 This issue affects all authorities within the ENW region. The approach proposed in this report is consistent with the outcomes of the other Cumbrian Districts where known.

2. PROPOSALS

2.1 Unless substantially increased budgets can be found the Councils approach to footway lighting needs to be reviewed. It is therefore recommended an approach is taken consistent with the policy proposed by the PDG and now adopted for other ‘street scene’ assets.

In effect this means:

- a) The Council would continue to maintain existing lighting for as long as they are considered to be structurally sound and compliant with safety requirements
- b) The Council would continue to facilitate requests for new lights, but only on the basis that all capital and revenue costs are wholly funded by a third party (such as a Parish Council or Housing Association)
- c) Priority will be given to removal of footway lights where they are in a poor physical condition with no automatic replacement unless funded by a third party. The exception being where the Council is required to provide lighting in discharge of other legal duties, to ensure no new risks are created.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS TO BE CONSIDERED

3.1 The revenue budget could be increased to accommodate a more active maintenance and replacement programme, but, say, for 100 lights p.a to be dealt with over a 14 year period, to encompass the Council's entire lighting stock, would require a tenfold increase in budget.

4. CONCLUSIONS

4.1 The Council cannot continue to maintain the current level of footway lighting provision within the existing revenue budgets and therefore a phased withdrawal as suggested in 2.1 a-c is recommended.

5. STATUTORY OFFICER COMMENTS

5.1 The Monitoring Officer's comments are:

Lights in various locations are maintained by the Council including those on adopted highways (including public footpaths), Council owned land and private land. In respect of lighting on Council owned land (including its car parks) withdrawal of street lighting needs to be considered on a location by location basis at the time of proposed discontinuance to ensure that any exposure to civil claims is not increased

5.2 The Section 151 Officer's comments are:

There is no funding in the current budget and MTFs to undertake the work that potentially is required and as the provision of footway lighting is not a statutory service it makes sense to realign our policy in line with other street scene assets.

5.3 EIA Comments are: In compliance with the Equality Act 2010 Public Sector Equality Duty an EIA was carried out against the initial street scene proposals as part of the Budget process and decision making. It is advised that this is referred to in order to determine any specific equality and diversity implications that may arise from this specific proposal.

Policy Framework: The proposals at 2.1 are consistent with the Council's new Corporate Plan and Corporate Policy Framework.

5.4 Other consultee comments, if any:

Legal Comments:

Recommend "or the Council is required to provide lighting in discharge of other legal duties" is added to 2.1.c. (as included above)

6. HOW WILL THE PROPOSALS BE PROJECT MANAGED AND HOW ARE THE RISKS GOING TO BE MANAGED?

6.1 There will be no change to the existing management arrangements in the medium to longer term.

7. WHAT MEASURABLE OUTCOMES OR OUTPUTS WILL ARISE FROM THIS REPORT?

7.1 The Council's budget for footway lighting will be targeted at the greatest priorities whilst containing expenditure within available resources.

List of Appendices None

List of Background Documents: