

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE: Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure
DATE: 27 October 2009
CORPORATE DIRECTOR: Gordon McIntosh,
Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure
TITLE OF REPORT: Festive Lighting
REPORT NUMBER: EPI/09/106

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To inform committee of the issue's surrounding the installation, maintenance and storage of festive lighting in Aberdeen.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That members of the Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure Committee:

- a) Agree to spend £22,300 over 2 years from the existing Lighting Budget to install timing devices to reduce the energy usage of the Union Street festive illuminations and to replace the existing wall boxes for Union Street festive illuminations which have become severely corroded over the years. This budget would also cover additional work required to continue to support festive lighting on Albyn Terrace and the Green under the contract with existing festive illuminations contractor.
- b) Instruct officers within Enterprise Planning and Infrastructure to identify an alternative storage facility for the remainder of the festive illuminations lease. This facility should be available from January 2010 until November 2010 when the lights are installed for the last time under the current lease, with an option to continue use of identified storage for any future festive illuminations Aberdeen City Council may lease or purchase.
- c) Agree that communities who wish to have festive lighting installed should be asked to pay for the erection, dismantling and electrical costs of community festive lighting as budget cannot be identified to cover these costs. The total costs for all community festive lighting being approximately £38,000.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

A budget exists within the Common Good Fund for 2009-2010 of £206,950 that covers Aberdeen City Councils festive illuminations. It is anticipated that this budget would continue to be available in the future.

There is currently no budget identified in 2009/10 for community festive lighting.

4. SERVICE & COMMUNITY IMPACT

The continued delivery of Aberdeen's illuminations will support the administrations aims through:

Vibrant Dynamic & Forward Looking

- Continue to support the best city festivals.
- Promote the City as a tourist destination.
- Aberdeen is an even more attractive place in which to do business.

Single Outcome Agreement

- National Outcome 1: We live in a Scotland that is the most attractive place for doing business in Europe.
- National Outcome 5: Our children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed.
- National Outcome 10: We live in well-designed, sustainable places where we are able to access the amenities and services we need.
- National Outcome 12: We value and enjoy our built and natural environment and enhance it for future generations.
- National Outcome 13: We take pride in a strong, fair and inclusive national identity.
- National Outcome 14: We reduce the local and global environmental impact of our consumption and production.

Community Plan

- an attractive, clean, healthy and safe place to live and work
- a City that is welcoming to business and values its business community
- a City with a strong, vibrant local democracy and a sense of civic pride
- a forward looking City which values its heritage and its internationally recognised institutions and services

It is generally accepted that festive illuminations lift the spirit of the community in the winter.

All activities undertaken by Aberdeen City Councils Lighting Team are assessed in relation to Equalities and Human Rights.

5. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

All activities undertaken by Aberdeen City Councils Lighting Service are fully risk assessed to ensure both staff and contractor's safety at all times.

Council premises are used to support the festive illuminations contract.

All activities detailed in this report are currently undertaken by existing staff resources.

6. REPORT

City of Aberdeen's Festive Illuminations

The existing festive illuminations budget as funded through Common Good Fund monies in 2009-2010 covers the following:

£179,950	3 yr Lease of Festive Lighting (July 2008- Jan 2011)
£10,000	Utilities bill
£17,000	Rental of storage unit at Poynerook Seafood Park

Total: £206,950

In 2008, following the standard public procurement process, a 3 year lease contract was awarded for the design, construction, installation, removal and maintenance of the Aberdeen's festive illuminations on Union Street. Also included in the contract was the installation of a number of additional lighting features in various city centre locations including the lighting of Aberdeen's Christmas tree, the Music Hall, city centre pocket parks and Albyn / Union Terrace. These costs are fixed as outlined above.

The cost of storage may need to be reviewed following installation of the lights in 2009, as Aberdeen City Council has received a notice to vacate the current storage facility in 2010. The landlord has sold the site for redevelopment. To date, an alternative storage facility has yet to be identified. It is not anticipated this can be found within the authority's existing estates portfolio. It may therefore be necessary to rent a storage facility the costs for which have not yet been determined. This is therefore to bring the possibility of increased costs to the attention of the committee however every effort will be made to keep these costs within budget.

In an attempt to reduce the energy use of the Union Street festive illuminations, Lighting Services have received costs for appropriate timing devices that will allow the Union Street lights to be switched off during the day time thus reducing energy usage. Wall boxes which house the illumination switches, which have become severely corroded will ultimately require to be replaced.

In addition, a new electricity supply may need to be provided in Albyn Terrace as the existing supply is overloaded and cannot support the festive illuminations. The supply to support the Christmas Tree in The Green, financed by local businesses is not currently ideal. It is recommended that a suitable supply be put in place.

Works required in relation to the festive illuminations have been costed on the basis of the work will be carried out during the evening, to minimise disruption along Union Street and other city centre locations.

The costs of these works are:

£ 1,750.00	Timing Devices
£15,300.00	Replacement Wall boxes
£ 2,500.00	New electricity supply in Albyn Terrace
£ 2,750.00	Alternative supply in The Green

Total £ 22,300.00

In order to reduce the electrical loading, energy consumption and in the interest of safety it is recommended that all festive illuminations leased or purchased in the future will be LED, and all tree mounted lights should be of low voltage.

It is anticipated that these costs can be covered within the lighting budget if split over 2 years.

Community Festive Lighting

Community Festive lighting has significantly expanded over a number of years to the point where we now have nearly 200 fittings on display throughout the city. Initially there were only three areas in which community festive lighting was displayed and at the time the council accommodated the costs associated with this within the Lighting Services budget.

With the introduction of ward budgets a considerable number of elected members used the budgets to purchase lighting for their communities bringing the number of light features up to current levels.

In November 2008, the council could not, due to staff shortages put up the lights themselves and subcontracted the work to a local supplier. The cost of this work was not budgeted for and agreement was reached to fund this from the reduction in spend on other festive activities funded by the common good.

This costs was proposed for inclusion in the Common Good budget for 2009 during the budget setting process however it was rejected and officers were asked to advise elected members and community councils that the council would not be in a position to support this activity financially in future years.

Since community councils and members were advised by letter of this budget decision a number of issues have arisen including the change in ward boundaries, members past and present using ward budgets to purchase lighting but having no additional monies available for ongoing maintenance, installation, removal and storage, members inheriting lights they don't want, some community councils buying their own lights but ACC paying for installation, some community councils buying, installing and storing their own lights and community councils being left with lights they didn't buy and can't afford to install, maintain or store. It has therefore been difficult to identify ownership of the various lighting features and therefore where the responsibility for them should lie. These discussions with community councils/members have been met with much concern and it is clear that a blanket approach to payment for ward lighting cannot be applied as every ward approaches community festive ward lighting differently.

In addition no charge has been made to the communities in the past for the cost of the electricity used; this is as a result of the incremental growth of the number of lights. They are now of a scale where the electricity costs are significant and it is relevant that an appropriate budget should be allocated.

The electrical infrastructure (sockets, cabling) to support festive ward lighting has not been regularly tested to ensure the continued safety of installation and a budget needs to be identified to carry out this work.

The community festive lighting features currently occupy the same storage facility as the main festive lights and will require to be vacated by the end of 2009. If a storage facility can be identified for the main lights, the community features could also be accommodated however this will increase the size of the facility required thus increasing costs.

The projected costs associated with community festive ward lighting in the 2009 festive season are as follows:-

£22,000	Installation & maintenance of existing festive ward features.
£ 6,000	Electricity costs for 16 hour daily burning period of festive community ward features on lighting columns.
£ 5,000	Maintenance, testing and installation of lighting infrastructure (sockets etc).
£ 5,000	Storage (location to be determined).

£38,000

Should the council be willing to fund the cost of the above it is proposed that no further features should be purchased unless they are to replace existing ones that are no longer working. The cost of replacement should be borne by the community wishing to replace the lighting feature.

There is no existing budget which can be identified to cover the costs for community festive lighting.

7. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Festive illuminations contract July 2008-January 2011 is available for consideration in relation to this report.