

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE: Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure
DATE: 23 February 2010
CORPORATE DIRECTOR: Gordon McIntosh,
Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure
TITLE OF REPORT: Community Festive Lighting
REPORT NUMBER: EPI/10/068

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To inform committee of the decision regarding the installation, maintenance and storage of Community festive lighting in Aberdeen.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

- a) confirm that going forward, the Council will no longer fund the installation, maintenance and storage of Community Festive lights.
- b) confirm that Aberdeen City Council will store of the features up to the November 2010 and thereafter the Communities must make alternative arrangements for their future storage, maintenance and erection.
- c) agree that a fee for the erection, removal, storage, maintenance and energy of £150 plus VAT per feature or part thereof dependant on council involvement be paid for by the Community Councils. This cost to be reviewed on an annual basis
- d) that any festive light not maintained by the Council requires an Electrical Safety Inspection Certificate prior to erection.
- e) that a letter is sent to all councilors and community councils reminding them of the future implications of erection, removal, storage, maintenance and energy costs

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There is currently no budget identified for the works associated with the community festive lighting in the 2010-2011 budget.

4. SERVICE & COMMUNITY IMPACT

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. Any other company installing the lights must have the same safety standards and appropriate risk assessments or work to those of the Lighting Section.

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

6. REPORT

Historically, the bulk of the lights were purchased by Councillors through the various Ward Budgets in conjunction with various Christmas Lighting Committees (Culter and Dyce). The current 200+ lighting features in use are owned by both Community Councils (some through Ward Budget contributions) and other Community Festive lighting groups.

The Community Ward budgets ceased to exist as of 1 April 2008; no monies were available thereafter to support the future purchase of lights.

Installation or removal of ward features did not have an allocated budget but it was agreed, where possible, Aberdeen City Council would attempt to identify some level of support. The costs associated with Community Festive lighting were accommodated within the Lighting Services budget.

With current budget constraints, along with the high number of features, the costs for erection and removal plus an ever increasing cost in maintenance means it is no longer feasible to carry these costs within this budget.

There is also the issue of the significant electricity bill and connection costs associated with festive ward lights that to date Aberdeen City Council have been paying without an identified budget.

The electrical infrastructure (sockets, cabling) to support festive ward lighting has not been regularly tested to ensure the continued safety of installation and no budget exists to carry out this work or upgrade existing equipment.

As with the festive illuminations, the existing 200+ festive ward features are currently occupying the same storage facility paid for by the Common Good Fund that requires to be vacated as it is earmarked for demolition. A short term alternative site has been identified but in the longer term we need to know which Communities wish the Council to store costs festive/ ward lighting

in order that suitable arrangements can be made.

At the EP&I Committee of 27th October 2009 the decision was taken to support the Community Festive lighting for the season 2009-2010 and to store the lights until their erection in October/ November 2010.

Since the Community Councils and members were originally advised 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.

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.

Following discussion and agreement at the relevant budget meeting, a letter was issued to all community councils/relevant members in 2009, advising of this position and an attempt was made to establish current allocation/ ownership of the various features.

It is intended to write to all community councils/relevant members again to advise them of the current position and the requirement for them to take control of the features themselves.

7. AUTHORISED SIGNATURE

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8. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Festive Lighting Report which was approved by Committee on 27 October 2009 is available for consideration in relation to this report.

