

Community, Leisure & Recreation Committee

Date:	5 February 2019
Title:	Christmas Lighting Scheme
Contact Officer:	Janine Sparrowhawk, Asset Manager

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide background on future options for the Christmas lighting contract.

Background

2. The Council entered into a five year contract with Blachere for the Christmas Lighting Scheme for the period 2014-2018. The last season has now been completed. The contract is for the hire, installation and removal of the Christmas Lighting Scheme. The contractor is also responsible for the storage of the lights and any maintenance that is required on the lights, this excludes the infrastructure on buildings and lamp columns.
3. Within the contract document the Council may elect to renew the Contract for a further maximum period of two years. The Council shall give the contractor at least 3 months' notice of its intention to renew the contract.
4. Blachere have advised that the current lighting scheme is suitable for a further one year at a cost of £17,456.00 + VAT for 2019/20. This cost is unchanged from the 2018/19 charge.
5. Blachere have largely performed to the schedule and specification and Officers have been satisfied with the service they have provided. The main issues this season related to a private electricity supply being terminated from Greens. This powered four lights in the Upper High Street. Alternative private power supplies will need to be negotiated with other properties as there are no street lights within this area and the cost of this new power supply will need to be paid for by the Council unless negotiated otherwise with support from the business(es).
6. It has become apparent during last season that there is a significant problem with the electrical infrastructure that controls the lights. This is due to the age of timers and sockets. A contingency sum should be allocated towards replacing this infrastructure over the next few years. A budget of £19,000 has been allocated to Christmas Lights under 102/4069 for 2019/20 giving a possible under of spend of £1,544. This could be used to start to undertake repairs to the infrastructure should the contract be extended for one year.
7. This is an opportunity for the Council to review the options available:
 - a. Extend existing contract for one year at a cost of £17,456.00 + VAT for the 2019/20 season.

- b. Retender the contract for a five year term with a new contract in place for the 2019/20 season. With a budget of approximately £19,000 per annum.

Resource Appraisal

8. The Council has no statutory responsibility for the provision of Christmas lights. However the lights in the town provide a pleasurable festive environment for the residents of Thame and visitors to the town.
9. No funding towards the current lighting scheme is received from the commercial sector, however a number of businesses sponsor the Christmas Light Switch-on event.
10. If the contract is retendered the Council will need to agree the scheme requirements and total budget over the contract term. The current fixing brackets do limit the size of lights that can be displayed and therefore the choice of light product, however the street lighting columns do allow for a greater choice of light design. The colour of the scheme will also need to be agreed. In the event of the contract being re-tendered, a Working Group would be created by the Asset Manager to assist her in the task.

Risk Assessment

11. Partnership agreements are entered into with property owners who agree to have Christmas lights on their property for the duration of the contract. This will need to be renewed for either an extension to the contract or a retender of the contract and there is always the possibility that this will be refused and will affect the overall effect of the scheme.

Legal Powers: Localism Act 2011.

Recommendation:

- i) ***To agree which option the Council proceeds with the Christmas Lighting Scheme.***