

## Community, Leisure & Recreation Committee

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<b>Date:</b>	<b>9 February 2016</b>
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Christmas Lighting Scheme</b>
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Janine Howells, Asset Manager</b>

### Purpose of the Report

1. To consider proposals to change the Christmas lighting scheme operating hours.

### Background

2. The Council entered into a five year contract with Blachere Illumination for the Christmas Lighting Scheme for the period 2014–19. The second season has now finished with the lighting scheme. A number of comments had been received by the Council asking why the Christmas lighting was not on fully during the day.
3. The electricity to the lighting scheme is controlled by timers. These are set to operate for 7.5 hours between 16:00 hours and 23:50 hours from switch-on evening until twelfth night. The Christmas tree is lit 24 hours a day and the electricity is supplied from the Town Hall. It is not envisaged to change the lighting operating hours for the Christmas tree. The Upper High Street trees are also lit 24 hours per day.
4. The information relating to electricity usage from street lighting points is supplied to Oxfordshire County Council and an unmetered agreement is entered into with UK Power Networks as part of the licence conditions. The Council is invoiced for the electricity usage by UK Power Network.
5. The lighting contractor looks after 40 similar schemes and has advised that the majority of clients have timers on the lighting display. Clients tend to opt for 24 hour lighting when the timers in the majority of the infrastructure requires replacing and insufficient financial resources are available to undertake the replacement work.

### Options

- a. 24 hour operation of all lights.  
Lights would be operating continually during the day and night, with no further need for timers. Within the scheme there are a large proportion of residential properties and this may cause issues with residents. It would also add to the complexity of the switch-on event.  
Estimated annual cost = £539 (i.e. an additional cost of £383)
- b. Town Hall and Market House to operate 24 hours. All other lights to be timer controlled and operating from 15:00 hours until 23:50 hours. Most lights would be operating from the end of the school day and operating during sunset into night time with the main town buildings lit all day and night. This would also release 2 spare timer units.  
Estimated annual cost = £288 (i.e. an additional cost of £132)

- c. All lights to operate from 15:00 hours until 23:50 hours.  
This is an increase of 1 hour to the current operating hours, but would not create any additional benefit in the early morning.  
Estimated annual cost = £202 (i.e. an additional cost of £46)
- d. All lights to continue to operate on existing time programming from 16:00 hours until 23:30 hours.  
Estimated annual cost = £156 (as at present)

*Note:*

- *Estimated costs are based on the electricity charges for the 2014/5 season and may differ for 2015/6.*
- *The Christmas tree and Upper High Street trees remain lit 24 hours during the Christmas lights operating period.*

**Resource Appraisal**

6. The electricity costs are identified separately (4014) within the budget 105 – Christmas Events. The 2015/16 allocation is £200 with the estimated costs for 2015/16 at £147. An invoice is yet to be received. The budget for 2016/17 has been increased to £220.
7. If options a or b are considered an increase to this budget would need to be approved by Council.

**Risk Assessment**

8. Any amendments to the scheme will be added to the annual licence with Oxfordshire County Council to permit the Council to install seasonal decorations on the public highway.
9. Eight of the lights are non LED and these are the large lamp post mounted lights. The remaining lights are LED and are more energy efficient and economical to run. It should be a consideration when retendering the contract that all lights utilised on the scheme are LED.

**Legal Powers:** Local Government Act 1972, S144

**Recommendation:**

- i) To consider proposals detailed above to change the Christmas lighting scheme operating hours. Officers' view is that option b goes furthest to meeting the requests received, while not significantly impacting on residential properties.***
- ii) If options a or b are selected that the additional cost associated with the proposals be met from General Reserves.***