

## Community, Leisure & Recreation Committee

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<b>Title:</b>	<b>Christmas Lighting Contract</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>31 October 2023</b>
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Cassie Pinnells, Community Services Manager</b>

### 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 Three Counties Christmas Limited for the Christmas Lighting Scheme for the period 2019-2023. The last season is now under way. 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 includes the infrastructure on buildings and lamp columns.
3. The Council may elect to renew the Contract for a further maximum period of one year. The Council shall give the contractor at least 3 months' notice of its intention to renew the contract.
4. Three Counties Christmas Limited have advised that the current lighting scheme is suitable for a further one year at a cost of £18,200+ VAT for 2024/25. This cost is unchanged from the original contract.
5. Three Counties Christmas Limited have largely performed to the schedule and specification and Officers have been satisfied with the service they have provided.
6. There have been a few minor issues with electricity connections at a Greyhound Walk this is a private connection and one Highways lamppost had to be reconnected by their approved contractor. When considering budgets Officers recommend having an approved contingency sum allocated towards replacing this infrastructure over the next few years. An Additional licence fee will be expected from South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) to place seasonal lighting around Market House. A budget of £19,000 has been allocated to Christmas Lights under 102/4069 for 2023/24 giving a possible under spend of £1,800. This could be used to start to undertake negotiations with SODC and fulfill their requirements or if the Council wishes not to include Market House into the scheme should the contract be extended for one year.
7. This is an opportunity for the Council to review the options available:
  - a. Extend the existing contract for one year at a cost of £18,200+ VAT for the 2024/25 season.
  - b. Retender the contract for a five-year term with a new contract in place for the 2024/25 season. With a budget of remaining at £19,000 per annum (subject to Budget Working Group Approval).

## Resource Appraisal

8. The Council has no statutory responsibility for the provision of Christmas lights. However, the lights in the town provide an enjoyable festive environment for the residents of Thame and visitors to the town.
9. Some funding towards the current lighting scheme has been received from the commercial sector, who give permission for a private electricity connection to run Christmas lights. However, several 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 will be removed by the current contractor in January and 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 Community Services 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 note that the current 5-year contract concludes in January 2024 (unless the option to extend for one year is approved).*
- ii) To agree which option the Council proceeds with the Christmas Lighting Scheme.*
- iii) To approve that Officers to prepare for a tender process in 2024 for a 5-year contract and a working group will be convened (unless the option to extend for one year is approved).*