

Report of the Deputy Chief Executive

THE POLICY, SUPPLY AND PROVISION OF CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS1. Purpose of report

To provide members with information on the policy, supply and provision of Christmas decorations.

2. Background and detail

The Borough Council currently provides Christmas decorations in the four town centres of Beeston, Eastwood, Kimberley and Stapleford; and also at Hilltop in Eastwood and, in 2020, a small number at Gilthill adjacent to some businesses.

The last policy agreed by committee in 2018 was not to provide them any more in primarily residential areas. As a consequence, they were no longer provided at Beeston (Middle Street to Queens Road), Eastwood (between the town centre and Hilltop), Kimberley (between the Depot and the first business) and Toton (Nottingham Road to Swiney Way). However, the same committee also agreed to additional decorations in the town centre cores of Kimberley and Stapleford.

In 2020 the County Council clarified that a 5KN load test must be undertaken for all over-carriageway fixings. Sadly, some anchorages failed a 4KN test in September 2020 and, as a consequence no over-carriageway decorations were provided in any location in 2020. It has not been possible to prioritise replacement options during 2021 as this involves negotiations and legal agreements with private building owners, probable structural works to their properties and hence additional expenditure beyond the available budget.

Further details are given in the appendix.

3. Options for future years

The main options which could be considered for future years are as follows:

- Status quo (ie. as per 2020), albeit with replacement of life-expired items.
- Status quo plus investigate options and costs to reinstate across carriageway decorations.
- Explore handing over responsibility for Christmas decorations to the town councils in Eastwood, Kimberley and Stapleford and recharge those in Beeston to the Special Expenses Fund.
- Enhancements.

4. Financial implications

These are given in the appendix.

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee is asked to:

- 1. NOTE the report**
- 2. CONSIDER whether it should receive detailed reports on options for future years and RESOLVE accordingly.**

Background papers - Nil

APPENDIX

Background information**Management of Christmas decorations**

Broxtowe Borough Council

Until 2012 Christmas decorations were managed by the then in-house street lighting team. This changed when the street lighting function transferred to the County Council. Since 2012 they have been managed variously by the Environment, Town Centre Management and Public Buildings teams, using a private contractor to undertake the actual works. It has been a struggle to give them the priority they need (especially during the pandemic period), which is why one option may be to handover management responsibility, where applicable, to the town councils. It is interesting to see that no nearby councils provide Christmas lights in parished areas (other than on a rechargeable basis).

Amber Valley Borough Council

“Local parish councils are responsible for the Christmas lighting within their own local area. The Borough Council does not provide any grant aid or financial support towards the provision of Christmas trees/decorations provided by the Parish Council’s. You are correct in your assumption that the cost is met directly by the Parish/Town Council via their Precept.”

Ashfield District Council

“ADC funds the three (non-parished) town centres, we no longer fund the villages/ neighbourhoods, some of these receive funding via the county councillors/ parish etc.”

Bassetlaw District Council

“The xmas lights in Bassetlaw are managed by the North Notts Business Improvement District Ltd (Bassetlaw Bid)”

Erewash Borough Council

“The Borough Council only pays for Christmas Lighting Decorations in the two main towns (Ilkeston & Long Eaton) (these are non-parished areas). We do undertake Christmas lighting installations / maintenance / removal for Sawley Parish Council and Dale Abbey Parish Council but all associated costs are recouped back off the Parish Councils. All other Parishes (Breaston, Draycott, Borrowwash / Ockbrook / Stanley etc) carryout their own installations and Erewash BC has no involvement in these.”

Newark & Sherwood District Council

“The Christmas lights in Newark are funded by Newark Town Council”
The same applies in Southwell and Ollerton.

Others

Any further responses received from Mansfield, Gedling and Rushcliffe will be reported verbally at committee.

Ownership of decorations

The decorations in Broxtowe are owned by the Borough Council. However, in 2016/17 the town councils of Eastwood and Stapleford 75%-funded the replacement of the Christmas lights in their respective towns. Some years prior to this the then Beeston BID funded additional Christmas lights in Beeston, whilst Kimberley Town Council 100% funded the replacement of the lights in Kimberley.

Approximate replacement costs were: -

- Eastwood - £16,000
- Kimberley - £15,000
- Stapleford - £20,000

It can be seen that all of the main decorations are now at least 5 years old (other than some newer tree decorations in Kimberley and Stapleford), with some in excess of 10 years old in Beeston. As such most will need replacement within the next 2-4 years.

Installation contract

Until 2012 the decorations were installed, maintained and taken down by the in-house street lighting team. Since then the works have been tendered, with the same contractor throughout: -

- Leisure Lites (an Eastwood-based company who also provide Christmas decorations for Erewash Borough) won a 3-year contract for the period Christmas 2012-2014.
- In 2015 five companies were invited to tender. Three submitted tenders but one of these did not meet the required criteria. The contract for a maximum of 3 years (2015-2017) was again won by Leisure Lites Ltd. The only other acceptable tender was priced significantly more than Leisure Lites.
- In 2018 committee agreed to a 1-year direct award to Leisure Lites for Christmas 2018.
- In 2019 further tendering was undertaken but only Leisure Lites responded, despite extensive publicity via Contracts Finder etc. Leisure Lites were consequently awarded the 2019 contract, a position continued for 2020 due to the pandemic, and also proposed for 2021.
- Other decoration companies were directly approached in 2019, but the two that engaged stated that they were not interested in an installation-only contract and would only do this if new and enhanced lighting was also purchased through them at the same time. They also indicated that their approach in such circumstances is often to sub-contract installation to local companies.
- Re-tendering will be required for future years, especially if a more radical enhancement option is chosen.

Budgets

The annual budget is mostly spent on the installation contract and electricity charges, with a small amount (c£3-4,000) available for major repairs and ad-hoc replacement of life-expired decorations. The electricity consumption and cost has reduced significantly in recent years with the conversion of all lights to LED, but this saving has been matched by an increase in installation contract costs and the need to repair / replace an ageing lighting stock.

Year	Budget	Out-turn
2018/19	43,000	47,555.58
2019/20	50,000	49,112.06
2020/21	50,000	48,582.62
2021/22	50,000	

Options for future years

Status quo (ie. as per 2020), albeit with replacement of life-expired items

Under this option the current £50,000 budget would need to be gradually increased to allow for extra repairs and ad-hoc replacement as the existing stock ages. The estimated cost of like for like replacement of all the current decorations is **£75,000 one-off**, in addition to the annual installation contract.

Status quo plus investigate options and costs to reinstate across carriageway decorations.

The loss of the over carriageway decorations in Eastwood and Kimberley was particularly noted in 2020, less so in Beeston. The two main sub-options to reinstate them are:

- Install Broxtowe-owned columns in the footways to replace the failed anchorages, at an approximate cost of £1,500 per decoration plus possible electrical connection charges. However, some locations would not be suitable due to narrow footway widths and/or existing street clutter.
- Upgrade the existing anchorages to the required standard – all of which are on privately owned buildings. The cost is difficult to estimate as new legal agreements with building owners may be needed - especially if physical works are required to their properties – in addition to the cost of the anchorages themselves.

Explore handing over responsibility for Christmas decorations to the town councils in Eastwood, Kimberley and Stapleford

This would match what appears to be the practice in many neighbouring districts where towns have a parish council. However, no formal consultation has been carried out with any of the three town councils concerned. Beeston's lights would have to be funded via the Special Expenses fund and continue to be managed by the Borough Council.

Enhancements

In 2019 contact was made with a number of organisations regarding significant enhancements to our current level of Christmas decorations. Two responses were received:

- Major enhancement with renting all new enhanced decorations for 4 years (including installation contract and storage) - **£105,000 per annum** Borough-wide
- No written quote but a verbal response that “£50,000 per annum is significantly short of the budget you need for a major enhancement. Unless you are proposing to increase that budget it is not worth us providing a detailed response”.