

## HIGHLAND COUNCIL

<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Report No</b>	<b>SCC/05/19</b>

**Committee:** Sutherland County Committee

**Date:** 25 February 2019

**Report Title:** Christmas Lighting and Decorations

**Report By:** Director of Community Services

### **1 Purpose/Executive Summary**

- 1.1 Following previous approval by the Council of budget saving CS 16 (Communities to provide their own Christmas lights) and the reduction of the lighting budget this report confirms that Community Services is implementing the uniform policy that Communities are to provide their own Christmas Lights in 2019.
- 1.2 The report confirms the 2018 costs to erect the Sutherland Christmas Lighting and Decorations in 2018, it also confirms that guidance on Health & Safety and operational procedures are to be published to assist communities.

### **2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 Members are asked to:-
  - i. Note that the Council has previously removed the £35,000 budget for the delivery of Christmas Lighting.
  - ii. Liaise with local Community Councils and/or Community Groups where communities wish to deliver Christmas lighting and decorations.
  - iii. Note that Health & Safety and general guidance will be published for communities to enable the safe erection of Christmas Lighting and Decorations in the future.

### 3 Introduction

- 3.1 In February 2017 the Councils' Corporate Redesign Board received the final report on the review of the Street Lighting Service. The report identified various areas including Christmas lighting and decorations, where there are inconsistencies in respect of the approach taken with some communities paying for provision whilst others do not, additionally under recovery of costs from the Inverness Common Good was identified.
- 3.2 At its meeting on 15 February 2018 the Council approved budget saving CS16 to remove funding of Christmas Lighting (Communities to provide their own Christmas lights). The full budget report is available at [https://www.highland.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/3934/highland\\_council](https://www.highland.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/3934/highland_council)
- 3.3 In April 2018 the Lighting & Communications budget was reduced by £35,000.
- 3.4 Until 2018 the service installed and removed community Christmas decorations as follows; column mounted decorations, cross street catenary displays and the provision, erection and removal of 20ft and 40ft trees with some decoration.
- 3.5 During the summer of 2018 the service undertook a comprehensive review of Christmas decorations and lighting. This identified various levels of delivery across the Highlands.
- 3.7 The removal of funding means that in future the Service will not be able to undertake erection and removal of Christmas lighting decorations to those communities which have previously received a free service.
- 3.8 In Sutherland as a result of positive discussions with communities over several years the majority of communities install their own lighting and in some instances the Councils Lighting Electricians assist in their own time with free use of the Councils plant. To ensure safe electrical connections and maintain public safety, the Councils Lighting service attends only to make the final connection (and disconnection) onto the Councils electrical network (see **Appendix A**).

### 4 Trees

- 4.1 Until 2017 the lighting service provided 20ft Nordic spruce trees supplied commercially by Forest Enterprise for some 30 communities in wards 12, 17, 18, 19 and 20. There are some 33 communities in wards 10, 11, 18, 20 and 21 that annually source trees locally at no cost to Highland Council. In Sutherland all communities which have trees provide their own tree except for Clashmore where the tree is donated by the private sector.
- 4.2 For 2019 all communities are being notified that they will be expected to provide their own trees where reasonably practicable. The service would only be able to secure trees where communities provide funding to cover the services full costs.

### 5 Implementation

- 5.1 The Lighting services resources are programmed for maintenance of existing lighting stock and delivery of the LED lighting programme. Erection and removal of Christmas lighting and decorations previously diverted 50% of the services operational, supervisory and technical resources between November and January. This diversion of resources reduces the rate of installation of LED units some 750 units per annum, reducing the potential energy saving by £15,000 per annum.
- 5.2 In 2018/19, the increased delivery of the LED programme enabled for 2018 only, the service to provide some resources to undertake Christmas decoration work. To support communities it was agreed that the service would undertake erection whilst minimizing costs which have been recorded for each community. Initial costs for erection are now available on the Council's financial system; costs for the January take down will be available by early March. From previous years erection and take down costs are similar; therefore multiplying the erection costs by 2 provides an early indication of outturn costs. The known and estimated costs for Sutherland are shown in **Appendix A**.
- 5.3 The larger displays include many cross street and specialist decorations, these require the use of platform access vehicles and licensed specialist trained operators. Where Council Electricians undertake these in their own time the Council will continue to provide the use of these vehicles at no cost.
- 5.4 For future years it is intended to arrange a framework tender. This would offer the Inverness Common Good and other communities a contracted facility for the erection and removal of Christmas lighting decorations.

## **6 Future Actions**

- 6.1 All those Sutherland communities (**Appendix A**) who have Christmas Lighting erected or who erect their own now need to be informed of the changes.
- 6.2 Members are asked to liaise with local Community Councils and/or Community Groups where communities wish to deliver Christmas lighting and decorations.
- 6.3 To enable communities to safely erect their Christmas lighting decorations, the service will provide Health & Safety guidance and operational procedure documents. These are currently being finalised and will be published in the Spring.
- 6.4 For 2019 onwards communities will need to fund the costs for the service to make the final electrical connection, disconnection and safety checks. Additionally where a community requests Highland Council to erect and take down decorations the community will need to fund the cost of this work. For 2018 these estimated costs are shown in **Appendix A**. To manage costs to communities, the service will where practicable always look to incorporate visits with maintenance works.
- 6.5 At present the Council does not charge for electricity consumed by Christmas lighting the costs of which are low especially where LED Christmas lights are used. It is not currently intended to change this position; however this will be kept under review.

## **7 Implications**

- 7.1 Resource – The Lighting service would be able to allocate resources to undertake the erection and removal works where communities are able fund.

- 7.2 Legal - The authority has no statutory duty to provide decorations. Where it chooses to provide decorations it has a statutory duty to protect the public and must ensure all works including third party works in public spaces are undertaken in a safe manner and remain electrically safe at all times.
- 7.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural) - For those communities providing, maintaining and erecting their own Christmas Lighting there are no implications. For those communities who historically have received a free service from Highland Council they will need to find alternative ways to provide their Christmas lighting
- 7.4 Climate Change / Carbon Clever - there are no implications arising from these proposals.
- 7.5 Risk – there is a risk that the local community may not be able to secure sufficient funding to enable self-delivery of the erection of Christmas lighting.
- 7.6 Gaelic - there are no Gaelic implications arising from these proposals.

Designation: Director of Community Services

Date: 22nd February 2019

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Background Papers: [Budget savings booklet 2018 for CS16](#)

## APPENDIX A

**SUTHERLAND (WARDS 1 & 4)**  
**COMMUNITIES CHRISTMAS LIGHTING/DECORATIONS 2018/19**

VILLAGE/TOWN	WARD	CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS		DECORATION OWNERSHIP	COSTS CHARGES – 2018/19		2019/20 HC Budget	2019/20 Estimated community funding required
		TREE	LIGHTS		Lighting costs (erection only) as of 31 Dec 2018	CC RECHARGE (Invoiced)		
LOCHINVER	1	N/A	N/A	Community Council	N/A	NO	Nil	£0
KINLOCHBERVIE	1	N/A	N/A	Community Council	£390.48 (code ELL7707)	NO	Nil	£780
CLASHMORE	1	2018/19 Provided by CC/Skibo	Decorated by HC	Community Council	£130.16 (code ELL7708)	NO	Nil	£260
SCOURIE	1	N/A	N/A	Community Council	£553.18 (code ELL7709)  Replacement fixings, one off cost	NO	Nil	£0
BONAR BRIDGE	1	N/A	N/A	Community Council	£130.18 (code ELL7710)  Maintenance only of decorations	NO	Nil	£0
DORNOCH	4	2018/19 Provided by CC	Decorated by HC	Community Council	£65.08 (ELL7704)	NO	Nil	£130
GOLSPIE	4	N/A	N/A	Community Council	HC electrician in own time, approx. 15hrs	NO	Nil	£0
BRORA	4	N/A	N/A	Community Council	HC electrician in own time, approx. 15hrs	NO	Nil	£0
HELMSDALE	4	N/A	N/A	Community Council	N/A – full delivery by Community	NO	Nil	£0