

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Lochaber Area Committee

Date: 10 April 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 Lochaber Christmas Lighting and Decorations, 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. Agree that the engagement with Fort William community groups will be arranged to discuss the changes and to explore options for the future delivery of Christmas lighting and decorations.
 - iii. Note that Health & Safety and general guidance will be published in the future for communities to enable the safe erection of Christmas Lighting and Decorations.

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
- 3.3 As from 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 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, in Lochaber, this applies to Fort William.
- 3.6 In Lochaber following positive discussions with communities over several years the majority of communities now install their own lighting. As part of this agreement and to ensure safe electrical connections and maintain public safety, the Councils Lighting Service attends to make the final connection (and disconnection) onto the Councils electrical network (see **Appendix A**). Under the agreement these activities are carried out during maintenance visits to the areas so do not incur costs.
- 3.7 In Lochaber, Caol in Bloom pay for the Caol Christmas lighting to be erected.

4. Trees

- 4.1 Until 2017, the Lighting Service provided 20ft Nordic spruce trees to some 30 communities in wards 12, 17, 18, 19 and 20. There are around 33 communities in wards 10, 11, 18, 20 and 21 that annually source trees locally at no cost to The Highland Council.
- 4.2 From 2018 communities were notified that they will be expected to provide their own trees where reasonably practicable. In future the service would only be able to secure trees where communities provide funding to cover the costs of the tree (excluding electrical connection and reconnection).
- 4.3 Since 2010 all communities in Lochaber have provided their own tree.

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 around 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. The recorded costs for Lochaber are shown in **Appendix A**.
- 5.3 The larger displays such as Fort William include many cross street and specialist decorations. These require the use of platform access vehicles, for which the operators must have specialist training. All of the Council's lighting operatives have this training. These specialist skills exist within some communities, and could be developed further with training and support. The service would be able to support communities by offering training where the community agreed to undertake erection and removal. Alternatively the service could, where the community provided funding, continue to undertake the work.
- 5.4 To support communities, the service is intending to organise a framework tender for erection of Christmas lighting. This would provide Communities with the option of a contracted facility for the erection and removal of Christmas lighting decorations.

6. Future Actions

- 6.1 All those Lochaber communities (**Appendix A**) who have Christmas Lighting erected or who erect their own now need to be informed of the changes.
- 6.2 Ward Members are asked to support the engagement with their local Community Councils and/or Community Groups.
- 6.3 To enable communities to safely erect their Christmas lighting decorations, the service will continue to provide Health & Safety guidance and operational procedural advice. Documentation is currently being finalised and will be published in the Spring.
- 6.4 In continuation of the 2010 agreement with the Lochaber communities the Lighting service will fund its costs to undertake the final connection, disconnection and safety checks. This ensures public safety is maintained.
- 6.5 For 2019 onwards, the Fort William community will need to either directly deliver or provide funding for the costs for erection of Christmas lighting, whilst Caol in Bloom will need to continue to provide funding. From 2018 the estimated costs are: Fort William £8,000, Caol £730.
- 6.6 At present the Council does not charge for electricity consumed by Christmas lighting. The costs 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 to provide funding.
- 7.2 Legal - The authority has no statutory duty to provide Christmas lights and 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. The lighting service undertaking final electrical connection, disconnection and safety checks will ensure electrical safety is maintained.

- 7.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural) - For those communities providing, maintaining and erecting their own Christmas Lighting there are no implications. Those communities who historically have received a free service from Highland Council will need to find alternative ways to provide their Christmas lighting or provide funding.
- 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: 27 March 2019

Author: Robin Pope, Policy and Programmes Manager
John Allan, Lighting and Communications Manager

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

**LOCHABER (WARD 11 & 21)
COMMUNITIES CHRISTMAS LIGHTING/DECORATIONS 2018/19**

VILLAGE/TOWN	WARD	CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS		DECORATION OWNERSHIP	COSTS CHARGES – 2018/19		2019/20 Estimated community funding required
		TREE	LIGHTS		HC Lighting costs as of 31 Jan 2019	CC/CG RECHARGE (Invoiced)	
CAOL	11	2018/19 Provided by CC	Decorated by HC	Community Council	£0	Caol In Bloom, invoiced £730	Budgeted by Caol in Bloom Est £730
CORPACH	11	2018/19 Provided by CC	Decorated by community	Community Council	£0 (code ELL7101)	NO	£0
BANAVIE	11	2018/19 Provided by CC	Decorated by community	Community Council	£0 (code ELL7105)	NO	£0
ROY BRIDGE	11	2018/19 Provided by CC	Decorated by community	Community Council	£0 (code ELL7102)	NO	£0
SPEAN BRIDGE	11	2018/19 Provided by CC	Decorated by community	Community Council	£0 (code ELL7103)	NO	£0
INVERGARRY	11	2018/19 Provided by CC	Decorated by community	Community Council	£0 (code ELL7104)	NO	£0
MALLAIG	11	2018/19 Provided by CC	Decorated by community	Community Council	£0 (code ELL7106)	NO	£0
MORAR	11	2018/19 Provided by CC	Decorated by community	Community Council	£0.00 (code ELL7107)	NO	£0
ARISAIG	11	2018/19 Provided by CC	Decorated by community	Community Council	£0.00 (code ELL7108)	NO	£0

VILLAGE/TOWN	WARD	CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS		DECORATION OWNERSHIP	COSTS CHARGES – 2018/19		2019/20 Estimated community funding required
		TREE	LIGHTS		HC Lighting costs as of 31 Jan 2019	CC/CG RECHARGE (Invoiced)	
FORT WILLIAM	21	Donated by private sector	Column mounted & cross street installed by HC	HC	£5046.42 (code ELL7093) & £2,828.65 (code ELL7078)	NO	£8,000
UPPER ACHINTORE, FORT WILLIAM	21	2018/19 Provided by Community	Decorated by community	Community	£0.00 (code ELL7094)	NO	£0
CLAGGAN	21	2018/19 Provided by CC	Decorated by community	Community Council	£0.00 (code ELL7095)	NO	£0
BALLACHULISH	21	2018/19 Provided by CC	Decorated by community	Community Council	£0 (code ELL7096)	NO	£0
GLENCOE	21	2018/19 Provided by CC	Decorated by community	Community Council	£0 (code ELL7097)	NO	£0
KINLOCHLEVEN	21	2018/19 Provided by Community	Decorated by community	Community	£0 (code ELL7098)	NO	£0
INVERLOCHY	21	2018/19 Provided by CC	Decorated by community	Community Council	£0 (code ELL7099)	NO	£0