

**Agenda Item:**        **11 (a) Recommendations From Committees  
Christmas Lights 2023 – Report from Community  
Committee**

**Report to:**            **Finance and General Purposes Committee**

**Date:**                 **Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> September 2023**

**Subject:**             **Project plan for Christmas Lights**

**Summary:**            The F&GP committee is asked to consider setting aside a total budget of £30,000 to fund Christmas Lights in Bexhill Town Centre and recommend to Full Council for the Community Committee to proceed with the Christmas Lights project.

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## **Recommendation**

**a) To recommend Christmas Lights project plan to Full Council and for the Full Council to: -**

- i. Ringfence £24,300 from the General Reserves fund to Town Centre Christmas Lights budget making the total up to £30,000.
  - ii. Approve the delegated authority to the Community Committee to carry out safety checks and repairs to wires, appoint a Christmas lights contractor to rent, supply and install lights in all up to a value of £30,000.
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## **I. Background and objective**

- 1.1 Following the decision of Full Council to transfer funds to the Town Centre Christmas Lights Fund from the Mayor's Budget the current total in budget for Central Christmas Lights is £5,700.
- 1.2 The Community Committee is exploring the rental of Christmas Lights for the town centre area this year. The approximate cost, including safety checks and Christmas Tree is up to £30,000.
- 1.3 The Town Council's policy determines that all new projects exceeding £10,000 must be reviewed by the Finance and General Purposes Committee.
- 1.4 The Town Council's Financial Regulations determine that all expenditure over £25,000 must be approved by Full Council.

- 1.5 This committee is asked to consider the project plan and recommend that the Community Committee is delegated authority to spend up to £30,000 on Christmas Lights for 2023.

## **2. Christmas Lights**

- 2.1 The Community Committee has researched hiring Christmas lights to decorate Devonshire Square, Devonshire Road, Sackville Road, Entrance to Wickham Road, Western Road, Sea Road (near Station).
- 2.2 The existing wires require load testing and repairs where necessary to allow lights to be hung.
- 2.3 The project is likely to cost up to £30,000 and this Committee is asked to consider ringfencing £24,300 from the £171,379 general reserves fund towards Christmas Lights for 2023.

## **3. Strategic Case. Is the proposal needed?**

- 3.1 The Town Council has been made aware that Light Up Bexhill are no longer operating as Christmas Light supplier to Bexhill town centre. If the Town Council does not act now there is a risk that there will be no other organisation able to install lights, and there may be no Christmas Lights for 2023.
- 3.2 The Community Committee is exploring experienced light providers, with the intention for rental, supply and installation in time for a switch on event on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2023.
- 3.3 The Community Committee is not intending on organising the switch on event, as the council does not currently have adequate resources to arrange this. An event provider is being explored.

## **4. Economic Case. Is it achievable? Is the town council capable of delivering the project?**

- 4.1 With £171,379 funds in the General Reserve, the Town Council has sufficient funds to cover the costs of Christmas Lights. The Town Council also set aside £150,000 to fund the maintenance of the public conveniences, however decided not to proceed with the project.
- 4.2 In future years, sponsorship and financial assistance can be explored, however at short notice with limited current resources, the seeking of additional funding may not be as effective in 2023.

**5. Is it value for money? Has a range of options been considered?**

- 5.1 Christmas Lights can be considered as value for money for the Town as Bexhill is a tourist town and Christmas shopping is a key time for local businesses. Festive lights will encourage visitors to eat, shop and spend in Bexhill.
- 5.2 The option for purchasing Christmas Lights is not possible due to a lack of storage space. Rental is the only current viable option.
- 5.3 The Committee has not explored other groups that may be capable of delivering the Christmas Lights project as it felt the Town Council was the quickest option given the short deadlines.

Is it the best balance of costs/ benefits and risks?

- 5.4 Some costs, if not all, can be reduced through sponsorship in the future. The risks of Bexhill being known to not have festive lights or events for Christmas could affect its reputation and the success of local businesses now and in the future.

**6. Financial Case. Is it affordable? - Are the costs realistic and affordable?**

- 6.1 The council currently holds £171,379 unallocated in general reserves and £150,000 unspent project funds due to not maintaining the public conveniences as originally budgeted for. Christmas Lights is affordable for the Town Council.
- 6.2 Sponsorship could be sought however at short notice and with the other priorities being given to officers by the council it may not be possible to resource this plan in 2023.

**7. Management Case. Is there robust systems and processes in place?**

- 7.1 The RFO (Town Clerk) will present the quotations from the lights companies for the Community Committee to select. The Town Clerk will oversee the contract management, alongside the Assistant Clerk.

**8. Timescales**

- 8.1 The following deadlines are to be considered:

F&GP Agree Project Plan	27 <sup>th</sup> September 2023
Full Council approve delegated authority	4 <sup>th</sup> October 2023
Community Committee agree contract	15 <sup>th</sup> November 2023
Lights installed by	1 <sup>st</sup> December 2023

## **9. Legal Implications**

9.1 The Local Government Act 1972 s144 gives the discretionary powers to a Town Council to encourage tourism to the council's area.

## **10. Insurance**

10.1 A risk assessment, insurance documents and Method Statement must be provided by the selected contractor.

## **11. Impact on Climate Change and Biodiversity**

11.1 LED Lights will be used, to reduce emissions. The lights will be on for limited periods where possible to reduce impact on the environment.

## **12. Community Consultation/ Engagement**

12.1 No specific community engagement has taken place to establish a need for Christmas Lights, it is assumed that this is a Bexhill tradition and a necessity in a tourist town.

## **13. Risk Assessment**

13.1 This will be provided by the Christmas Lights contractor.

## **14. Summary**

15.1 The Finance and General Purposes Committee is asked to recommend that the Community Committee is given delegated authority to spend up to £30,000 on renting Christmas Lights for Bexhill Town Centre in 2023.

## **15. Decision Required**

### **a) To recommend Christmas Lights project plan to Full Council and for the Full Council to: -**

i. Ringfence £24,300 from the General Reserves fund to Town Centre Christmas Lights budget making the total up to £30,000.

ii. Approve the delegated authority to the Community Committee to carry out safety checks and repairs to wires, appoint a Christmas lights contractor to rent, supply and install lights in all up to a value of £30,000.