



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL



Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee

13 June 2023

Report of Councillor Paul Stokes,
Cabinet Member for Culture and
Leisure

Grantham Christmas Lights

To consider an improved lighting display for Grantham Town Centre following a compliant procurement exercise.

Report Author

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Recommendations

In consideration of this report, the Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- 1. Recommends £30,800 of the District's UK Shared Prosperity Fund allocation is utilised to fund the one-off infrastructure costs in 2023/2024 to enhance the festive light offer for Grantham, in accordance with the delegation approved by Council on 26 January 2023.**
- 2. Recommends that a three-year hire agreement with Gala Lights is implemented in order to provide an enhanced festive light display in Grantham Town Centre in readiness for the Christmas 2023 period.**

Decision Information

Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication?

Appendix 2 is not for publication by virtue of paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 – financial information.

What are the relevant corporate priorities?

Growth and our economy

Which wards are impacted?

All Grantham Wards

1. Implications

Taking into consideration implications relating to finance and procurement, legal and governance, risk and mitigation, health and safety, diversity and inclusion, safeguarding, staffing, community safety, mental health and wellbeing and the impact on the Council's declaration of a climate change emergency, the following implications have been identified:

Finance and Procurement

- 1.1 The Council has followed a compliant procurement exercise to identify a preferred supplier in accordance with its Contract Procedure Rules and Financial Regulations.
- 1.2 As a Special Expense Area (SEA), Grantham taxpayers directly pay for services delivered to the parish by the District Council. This income is used to fund specific services which includes the provision of Christmas lights in Grantham town centre.
- 1.3 As the proposal aligns to the interventions and outputs agreed by central government, it is proposed that the £30,800 one off costs in relation to the infrastructure costs and installation of uplighters on St Peter's Hill, be met from the district's allocation from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF).
- 1.4 The existing budget allocation for Christmas lights is currently set at £17.5k per year. The proposals set out in this report in relation to the three year hire agreement exceed this current budget level. As the increased investment is not budgeted for, then either funding will be reallocated from other SEA budget headings, or in the event that this is not achievable then the Grantham SEA reserve will be used for the current year only to fund the difference. For the subsequent two years the budget requirement will be increased accordingly.

Completed by Richard Wyles, Deputy Chief Executive and S151 Officer

Legal and Governance

- 1.5 The Council has followed a compliant procurement exercise to identify a preferred supplier in accordance with the Contract Procedure Rules and the Council's Financial Regulations.
- 1.6 At a meeting of the Council held on 26 January 2023, ([Budget Framework Proposals.pdf](#) (southkesteven.gov.uk)) delegation was provided to the Chief Executive, Section 151 Officer, Director of Growth and Culture and the Cabinet Member for Economic Development to take all actions necessary to deliver projects aligned to the district's UKSPF allocation. Should the proposals within this report be supported, formal sign off will be required in line with this delegation.

Completed by: Graham Watts, Assistant Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer.

Risk and Mitigation

- 1.6 There is a risk of reputational damage should the Council decide not to invest in a new lighting scheme for Grantham for Christmas 2023. This follows the negative feedback received last year via various sources.

Completed by: Tracey Elliot, Governance and Risk Officer

Health and Safety

- 1.7 Should the proposals within this report be supported and a subsequent order placed, the Council will be required to work with the contractor to ensure that the installation of the lights is carried out safely and in accordance with health and safety regulations and guidance.
- 1.8 The Council has commissioned an independent contractor to inspect the lighting columns in Grantham town centre to ensure that motifs can be safely installed. Any columns which failed the safety audit have been discounted.

Completed by Phil Swinton. Emergency Planning and Health and Safety Lead

Climate Change

- 1.9 The preferred supplier, Gala Lighting, has committed to becoming a carbon neutral company by 2025. An independent third party has assessed that in the last twenty-five years the energy consumption of the lights produced by Gala has reduced by 93% which has contributed to a 95% reduction in greenhouse gasses.

- 1.10 The lights supplied are made from low carbon aluminium which is comprised of 60% recycled materials with a lower carbon footprint. At end of their life cycle 100% of the aluminium frames are either refurbished or the material recycled to create new products.
- 1.11 The recommended lighting scheme utilises LED lights which use up to 90% less energy than the previously installed conventional halogen bulbs. As well as producing a financial saving for the Council, this will also reduce the amount of electricity used, contributing to the Council's carbon efficiency targets.

Completed by: Serena Brown, Sustainability and Climate Change Officer

2. Background to the Report

- 2.1 The Council's Corporate Plan (2020 – 2023) identifies Growth and Our Economy as a Corporate Priority, this includes an ambition to develop the centres and high streets of our four towns.
- 2.2 Following a governance review for Grantham, approval has been granted to progress the establishment of a Town Council. The anticipated timeline for this to be in place is May 2024. In the absence of a Town Council, South Kesteven District Council is currently responsible for decorating the town centre during the festive season.
- 2.3 To date the provision of Christmas lights in Grantham has been supported with a modest budget of £17,500 per year being charged to the Grantham Special Expense Area (SEA).
- 2.4 The Christmas lights currently used are owned by the Council and are over ten years old. Historically the budget for Christmas lights has been modest and the Council have received no investment proposals or requests to increase the budget. As a result, the number of serviceable lights has reduced significantly which has meant the festive light display has been reduced and limited to an area which has decreased year on year. During the Christmas period 2022 the lighting display within Grantham was the source of multiple complaints on social media and negative media interest.
- 2.5 Options have been explored to provide an improved offer for Christmas 2023 and a procurement exercise has been undertaken. If supported, this proposal will provide a significantly enhanced light display for Grantham during the 2023 Christmas period and beyond, supporting the retail and hospitality sector during this important trading period.
- 2.6 Three reputable companies have been approached and requested to provide a proposal to provide a high-quality visual offer across the following areas:

- St Peter's Hill/High Street/Watergate
- Westgate
- Market Place
- Guildhall Street
- Edith Smith Way
- Welby Street
- Butchers Row

2.7 The proposals received all quoted for a wide range of interventions including:

- Street lighting motifs
- Across street banners
- Wall decoration for the Boots store
- Hanging tree motifs for St Peter's Hill
- Uplighters for 14 trees on St Peter's Hill
- Lighting the Council offices
- String lights in various locations
- Artificial lit Christmas trees to be mounted on buildings.

2.8 It is proposed the lighting installations will be complemented by the usual traditional tree being installed in the marketplace, which would also be decorated by the preferred supplier.

2.9 If this proposal is supported the switch-on of the lights will be complemented by wraparound activity to generate footfall to the town centre. Planned activities include a Christmas market, family fun day, street entertainment and food stalls.

2.10 The HelloSK App will also be utilised to support and promote all events and activities over the Christmas trading period. This will include the lights switch-on and associated activity, and individual retail offers from traders.

2.11 Three companies submitted their proposals and costs based on a three-year hire agreement to include the installation and storage of lights each year. During April and May 2023, the tenders received were evaluated in terms of cost/best value, company experience, energy efficiency and attractiveness of offer.

2.12 Following evaluation, Gala Lights (Leblanc Illuminations UK) were selected as the preferred supplier. **Appendix One** to this report is a presentation which provides a visual representation of the proposal submitted by Gala Lights.

2.13 **Appendix Two** details a breakdown of the annual costs associated with the proposal from Gala Lights for a three-year hire agreement, the additional infrastructure costs for year one, and the cost of installing the uplighters on St Peter's Hill.

- 2.14 The mounting of light motifs on lighting columns requires the permission of Lincolnshire County Council. This has been granted subject to each streetlight being inspected to ensure it can withstand the additional weight, and safety will not be compromised. Due to the time constraints, detailed within paragraph 3.2, the inspection of the streetlights has already been undertaken at a cost of £1,750.
- 2.15 In addition to the costs identified for a three-year hire agreement, as detailed in **Appendix Two**, upfront investment of £30,800 will be required in year one to provide the necessary infrastructure and to install the uplighters on St Peter's Hill. It is proposed that this element is funded by an allocation from the district's UKSPF.
- 2.16 The use of the district's UKSPF allocation to fund the one-off costs associated with the provision of an enhanced Christmas lighting display will achieve the following three interventions, outputs and outcomes as required by the Department of Levelling Up, Homes and Communities (DLUHC):

Intervention E1 – Improvement to town centres and high streets

The installation of Christmas lights will deliver the following community and place outcomes:

- Increased footfall
 - Increased visitor numbers
 - Increased perception of facilities and amenities
-

Intervention E8 – Campaigns to encourage visits and exploring of the local area:

- An improved lighting scheme will form part of a wider campaign to encourage visitors to the town centre and wider area
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Intervention E17 – Development and promotion of visitor economy:

The proposals will deliver:

- Increased visitor spend
 - Increased perception of attractions
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3. Key Considerations

- 3.1 The result of the independent assessment of lighting columns has dictated the final number of hanging lights which can be installed across the identified areas.

- 3.2 In order for the lights to be installed for Christmas 2023, the order will need to be placed by the first week in July 2023. Members are therefore requested to consider the proposals in order this deadline can be achieved.
- 3.3 Once established, should Grantham Town Council take responsibility for the Christmas lights, then the contractual agreement will be novated to them, and they would become responsible for honouring the remaining term of the agreement.
- 3.4 The uplighters on St Peter's Hill can be utilised throughout the year to support events and activities which are ongoing and be lit in different colours to celebrate commemorative events such as World Holocaust Day and World Alzheimer's Day.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1 There are options for the Council to purchase lights rather than hire them. However, the cost of this is considered prohibitive, and additional costs would also be incurred in relation to installation and ongoing repair and maintenance.
- 4.2 The existing lights could be re-inspected and installed as they were in December 2022. However, the lights had limited impact and were the result of numerous complaints from residents, retailers and market traders.

5. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 5.1 An improved festive lighting display for Grantham will satisfy and contribute to the achievement of the interventions, outputs and outcomes the Council has agreed to deliver with central government as part of its UKSPF allocation.
- 5.2 In addition, the proposals contained within this report support the Council's corporate objective to develop the centres and high streets of the towns within the District, supporting the retail and hospitality sector during an important trading period.

6. Appendices

- 8.1 **Appendix One** - Gala Lights Christmas in Grantham presentation.
- 8.2 **Exempt Appendix Two** – Identified costs.