

**Highways and Transportation Street Lighting Policy and Practice
Environment, item 8**

Committee: Environment

Agenda Item

Date: 19 September 2006

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Title: HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORTATION
STREET LIGHTING POLICY AND
PRACTICE.

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Item for
Decision

Summary

This report provides Members of the views taken by Members of Area Panels in relation to the decision taken by the Essex County Council Cabinet Member of Highways and Transportation – Councillor Rodney Bass – with regard to the proposal to switch off street lighting in the District. In addition, it provides Members with the exemptions to switching off lights and seeks Members views on the exemption criteria..

Recommendations

That Members respond to the formal request with regard to the exemption criteria set out in the report and that a formal request is made to ECC to ensure that formal consultation takes place between the District, Town and Parish Councils before the pilot scheme commences.

Background Papers

ECC Reports

Impact

Communication/Consultation	ECC are mapping all street lights and this information will be available via the ECC website in October. Further consultation will take place with Town and Parish Councils.
Community Safety	ECC will consider variations where they consider it appropriate
Equalities	Not Applicable
Finance	Not applicable to UDC
Human Rights	Not applicable
Legal implications	Not applicable
Ward-specific impacts	All

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Workforce/Workplace	None
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Situation

1. Last year the County Council revised its Street Lighting Policy to reflect growing environmental concerns. Measures included the introduction of 'white light' (SON) lighting with downward reflectors in all new schemes and for replacement lighting (as opposed to the old undirected 'yellow light' (SOX) lighting) and a more rigorous approach to evaluating whether street lights are required at all in new developments.
2. This policy whilst laudable in itself, will not deliver the requisite reductions in energy consumption in the short term as the replacement programme will take years to accomplish. Consequently further changes in practice are urgently required.

Background

3. The current County Council Street Lighting practice is to keep street lights on throughout the hours of darkness, regardless of where they are located. In the face of increasing concern about light pollution and the County Council's commitment to reduce CO2 emissions, the County Council is now reviewing this arrangement.
4. The revised Street Lighting practice will introduce alternative technology to assist in reducing the level of light pollution attributed to street lighting. Moreover, because of rising energy prices, the cost of supplying electricity for the county's street lights rose by 65% over 2005/06 levels in 2006/07 when the new contract for supply was let to EDF in April 2006. This increase in the energy budget (now £3.9 million in total) is being borne by the Highways and Transportation service by postponing other work.
5. By investing £1.8 million over 2 years on technology, which will allow street lights to be turned off during the least busy part of the night, ECC will realise savings of £1.0 million per annum on energy costs.
6. A part Night Photocell has the benefit of controlling the light source by switching off the light during the hours requested. The standard setting is between midnight and 5.30am GMT. During BST the times are advanced by an hour.
7. The photocell uses an advanced timing algorithm running on a microprocessor which monitors the time elapsed between the evening switch-on and morning switch-off light levels. Using this data the middle of the night can be determined which closely approximates to 12.00 midnight GMT. The process is repeated each night and the photocell continually adjusts for changing light

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patterns throughout the year. Hence there will be a slight variation to the actual switching on/off times of approximately +/- 15 minutes.

8. The part night photocell has the same physical dimensions as a standard photocell and can be fixed to a light without any modification. The product is guaranteed for ten years, which is in excess of a standard one which is six years.

Exception Criteria

- 9 ECC have formally written to the Council and indicated that the general presumption will be that all street lights will be altered to part night operation unless covered by the exemptions. To this end, ECC has requested the Council's formal views on the proposed exemption criteria set out below:-.

- (a) Major lit inter urban dual carriageway traffic routes
- (b) Conflict sites e.g. roundabouts, lit by columns > 6m high.
- (c) Sites where street lights installed for accident remedial measures
- (d) Town Centre type development where there is one or more of the following features:

CCTV sites

High proportion of high security premises e.g. banks, jewellers etc.

High crime risk

High concentration of people at night such as - Transport interchanges, nightclubs etc.

Main approaches to areas defined in (d) above where there is a mix of development between residential and commercial/industrial i.e. not exclusively residential

Sites where the police can demonstrate that there will be an increase in crime if the lights are switched off.

Remote alleys linking residential streets

Where there is a statutory requirement.

Only street lights will be part night controlled. Signs, bollards, beacons and underpasses/subways will continue as full night lighting.

10. Further exceptions will be determined in consultation with the District/Borough Councils and the police on a District by District basis taking into account the views of Parish Councils and local organisations.
- 11 Further clarification is required as to whether or not Parish and Town Councils are able to participate in the scheme should they so desire. Members also need to be aware that the Council owns street lights around the District - predominantly on housing estates.

Financial Implications:

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- 11 A maximum total aggregate investment of £1.8 million over two years on the technology, assuming full roll out through the county, to yield savings of £1.0 million funded by the council's forward Capital Programme, and subject to year on year approvals.

Decision

- 12 The ECC Cabinet Member – Councillor Rodney Bass agreed to the following: -
- give a clear statement of intent to switch off street lights at midnight GMT and on again at 0500 GMT.
 - seek approvals for an investment of £1.8 million over the next two years to yield annual savings of £1 million.
 - introduce the new practice progressively by piloting in Maldon and Uttlesford in the first instance, measuring local reaction, and evaluate the success of this initiative to the rest of the county over the next two years.
 - ask the Highways and Transportation Policy Development Group to oversee the initiative and measure public acceptability.

Views of Area Panel Members

13. Members of the East Area Panel questioned the sense of this suggestion and commented that any money saved could be countered by increased danger of accident or injury. It was considered that most street lights had been placed in their location for a reason and said there was little purpose to a street light if it was not turned on. In villages people were being encouraged to walk to events and they would be deterred from doing this if there was insufficient light. Also a number of street lights in the parishes had been paid for by the parish precept and concerns were expressed as to how these would be affected. Some members commented that in some residential areas it might be appropriate for specific lights to be switched off, but it was important that there was full consultation with the local councils and residents so that each light could be individually assessed.
- 14 The Panel resolved that the Environment Committee be advised that the East Area Panel could see huge safety concerns with this proposal and stressed the importance of full consultation and that no lights should be switched off without the full support of the parish or town council concerned.
- 15 The South West Area Panel Members were unclear of whether the aim was to save money or prevent environmental damage. It was considered that many people would appreciate less light pollution, and some streets in rural locations

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would benefit from having some street lights turned off. However the public should be consulted on their views.

- 16 The North Area Panel expressed similar concerns to those above. It considered that there had been insufficient consultation with town and parish councils and that this required addressing. Members considered that there were definite ecological advantages that would be gained by the switching off; a straw poll was conducted, the results of which suggested that members of the audience were generally in favour of the lights being turned off subject to proper consultation.

Risk Analysis

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
There maybe a perception that by turning off street lights that community safety could be compromised	Medium	Low	Reassurance to the community that this is a pilot project and the County Council will be monitoring the situation as the scheme progresses.