

Highways and Transportation Street Lighting Policy and Practice

All Area Panels, item 6

Committee: All Area Panels

Agenda Item

Date: 12 September 2006

6

Title: HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORTATION
STREET LIGHTING POLICY AND
PRACTICE

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Item for
discussion

Summary

This report provides Members of Area Panels with background information which lead to the decision taken by the Essex County Council Cabinet Member of Highways and Transportation – Councillor Rodney Bass – relation to the switching off of street lighting in the District

Recommendations

That Members comment on the proposal and a letter detailing their deliberations be sent to the County Council Cabinet Member

Background Papers

ECC Reports

Impact

Communication/Consultation	The County council have agreed to hold further discussions with District, 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
Workforce/Workplace	None

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))

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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, we 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 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.

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9. Only street lights will be part night controlled. Signs, bollards, beacons and underpasses/subways will continue as full night lighting.
10. At traffic accident sites, where improved lighting has been chosen as the preferred method for accident reduction, consideration will also be given to leaving these areas as full night operation.
11. 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.

Financial Implications:

12. 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

13. 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.

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.