

Title of Report: Christmas Lights Update	Officer Presenting: Head of Environment Author: Head of Environment
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1 Purpose of Report/Recommendations

- 1.1 To update Members on arrangements with regard to Christmas Lights and processes used to determine locations of Christmas trees and festive illuminations.

2 Background

- 2.1 Members will be aware that each of the legacy Councils had their own arrangements with regard to the provision of Christmas lighting within their respective Districts. Within the former Derry City Council area the Council had full responsibility for the scheme. The scheme centered primarily on the key business district within the City with smaller schemes erected within the main trading areas of surrounding villages including Eglinton, Newbuildings, Drumahoe, Claudy, Park and Maydown. In addition to this some smaller settlements have had trees erected and illuminated by Council.
- 2.2 Within the former Strabane District the Council had full responsibility for the illuminations within Strabane Town. In addition to this the Council provided financial support to communities in Castledearg, Sion Mills and Newtonstewart who in turn had responsibilities for the schemes within their respective areas. Again these schemes were erected within the principal trading areas within these locations. In addition to this Strabane provided Christmas trees to a number of smaller communities spread across the district.
- 2.3 Following amalgamation a review of the funding arrangements within the Strabane area was undertaken with Council then taking on full and sole responsibility for erecting illuminations right across the entire Council District.
- 2.3 The Environment section has responsibility for the lighting schemes with the Business and Culture Directorate having responsibility for the switch on events.

3 Key Issues

- 3.1 In taking responsibility for these schemes Council has carried out infrastructural improvements by installing mini pillars, power out-take to lampposts etc.

- 3.2 Members will also be aware that Council also invested in new lighting displays across the district over recent years with enhancements and improvements made to displays within Derry City centre, Sion Mills, Newtonstewart, Castlederg and Strabane, Donemanagh, Sion Mills, Eglington and Claudy. Again each of these schemes required investment in infrastructure to support the schemes.
- 3.5 In addition to the above it was also considered appropriate to review the internal arrangements with regard to the schemes and in particular to consider how best the schemes should be managed ensuring value for money, renewing and upgrading the scheme(s) on a regular basis with a view to the lighting schemes enhancing the profile of the City and District thereby drawing in shoppers and visitors from across the region

4 Financial, Equality, Legal, HR, Improvement, Rural Needs and other Implications

- 4.1 Both of the legacy councils had broadly similar criteria in terms of light / tree provision and these have been carried forward into Derry City and Strabane District Council. Lighting schemes were / are generally installed to support business and visitor growth with schemes provided within the man business / trading areas so as to enhance and attract shoppers and visitors into these commercial areas.
- 4.2 In addition Council also recognise that schemes within smaller communities are seen as a focal point for community celebrations of Christmas and not only enhance the physical appearance of areas but also add to the community spirit and wellbeing of those communities.
- 4.3 Officers within the Environment and Regeneration Directorate work closely with officers across multiple sections within the other Directorates to ensure that displays achieve maximum impact with regard to the objectives outlined above. The schemes are also linked to the schedule of Council events held over the November and December months in terms of switch on's, community festivals etc. It is Councils overall aim to develop the region as a 'must see' destination for enhanced lighting displays and animation.
- 4.4 In consideration of the above officers had prepared a schedule of costs that can be used to determine the financial impact of adding to displays across the district.
- 4.5 At present Council have an annual budget provision of £279k with regard to Christmas illuminations. Additional provision will be needed for any additional schemes, trees etc over existing arrangements.

5 Recommendations

5.1 This item is passed to Members for information only.

Background Papers

Appendix 1 – Christmas Lights Location List