

Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport

HT23(13/14)

Amendment to the Street Lighting Policy for Part Night Lighting

Key Decision:

Yes

Part I

Report by Executive Director Service Operations, Diane Ashby and Head of Highways and Transport, Geoff Lowry

Electoral Division(s):

N/A

Executive Summary

The street light timing regimes for all night lighting in residential areas set out by local councils in 2008 reflected the opinions at that time. Part night lighting, with lights switched off from approximately 0030 to 0530 (GMT), has been operation in many residential roads in West Sussex since the 1970s.

However with increasing costs in energy and a wider understanding of climate change, public opinion is changing and many residents, where all night lighting is introduced, now state concerns over the use of public money, the use of fossil fuels, light intrusion and the loss of dark skies. This amendment to the policy is a response to that concern, such that in areas where previously a preference was stated for all night lighting, discussions will be held with local councils with a view to encouraging a change to part night lighting for residential roads in response to local concerns.

Funding for the changes will be met from existing budgets and savings realised will help meet the requirement for savings from street lighting contained with the County Council’s approved savings plan.

Recommendation

It is recommended that:-

- (1) WSCC adopts a policy of part night lighting in residential areas and discussions will be held with local councils where there was a previous decision for all night lighting,
- (2) The policy includes the possibility for exceptions to part night lighting where support is needed to be given to Police in dealing with crime and disorder issues,
- (3) Changes are made to the Street Lighting Private Finance Initiative (PFI) contract output specification to reflect this.

1. Background

1.1 West Sussex County Council was one of the first English shire counties to introduce a policy of enabling part night lighting in residential areas, this commenced in the mid 1970s. Since the mid 1980s the decision on which

areas will have part night lighting (typically switching off between 0030 and 0530 GMT) has been the subject of consultation with local elected representatives, Borough/District and Town/Parish councils.

- 1.2 During the procurement phase of the West Sussex Street Lighting Private Finance Initiative (PFI) contract two consultations were carried out with local councils to determine their wishes for future street lighting times. The first of these in 2005 was supported by a confirmation consultation in 2008, the results of which were built into the PFI contract documents for implementation.
- 1.3 The PFI contract commenced in April 2010 and included aims to deliver:-
 - part night lighting in residential streets (though a number of parishes and parts of districts opted for all night lighting)
 - all night lighting on main roads (which is dimmed by 50% in the middle of the night)
 - all night lighting in key pedestrian areas (such as town centres)
- 1.4 During the last 5 years energy usage and energy saving have come to the fore in public comment and concern. Increasingly the decision to allow all night lighting in some residential areas is being challenged by members and the public.
- 1.5 It is therefore proposed that decisions on lighting regimes are reviewed on an area wide basis, with a view to designating residential areas as part night lighting, with the exception of Crawley (where much higher numbers of residents are on shift work). If approved, conversion of non-compliant lights can commence in the summer of 2014. There are currently 10,700 columns which could be converted to part night and approximately 33,000 already part night.
- 1.6 Exceptions to part night lighting for individual residential streets are possible to support Police in dealing with crime and disorder issues.

2. **Community Engagement**

- 2.1 Both Adur and Worthing Councils had elected, in 2005, to move to all night lighting in residential areas. When these changes started to be introduced both WSCC and the PFI provider were inundated with complaints from residents who did not want the change. This indicated the depth of feeling held by residents. As a result, discussions were held which led to approval by the Chief Executive of Adur and Worthing to revoke this change and instead to implement part night lighting.
- 2.2 The change in Chichester has brought a similar significant response and discussions with the City Council have also indicated that a change to part night lighting would be well supported.
- 2.3 There are a number of other communities which previously opted for all night lighting, in the main these are Midhurst, Haywards Heath, Burgess Hill, Littlehampton and Arundel. As a result of this policy change we will now encourage a change to part night lighting based on our learning from other sites.

3. Costs and funding

- 3.1 Delivery of part night lighting regimes will depend on local choices but will deliver future cost savings. A change to a predominantly part night regime across the county could result in additional energy savings of £120K pa at current rates.
- 3.2 Further savings will be delivered as a result in the associated reduction in carbon emissions, as from 1 April 2014 the County Council is required to make a Carbon Reduction Commitment (CRC) payment. A further annual saving in the order of £12k would be possible if all appropriate residential lights were converted to part night.
- 3.3 To bring this change into the PFI will require an amendment to the project specification, the cost of which will be dependent on the number of communities which agree to the change and will be funded from within existing contract payments.
- 3.4 Typically the cost of introducing this change can be recovered within 2 years of operation.
- 3.5 Savings arising from this work will go towards meeting the savings plan target of £40,000 for Street Lighting as identified in the County Council's approved Savings Plan.

4 Equalities Impact Report

- 4.1 An Equalities Impact Report is attached at appendix A.
- 4.2 Any change arising from implementation of this policy impacts all residents equally, though concern is often expressed on behalf of the elderly and more vulnerable members of society. However national research does not show a link between changes in lighting and the incidence of crime.

5. Resource Implications and Value for Money

- 5.1 The cost of any implementation will be met from existing budgets and are anticipated to be recovered within two years of operation.
- 5.2 This proposal is in line with the County Council's aspiration to achieve reductions both in the energy requirement as well as carbon footprint and is a favoured option to secure additional reductions in energy use.
- 5.3 Changing the policy will help to offset some of the future increased costs resulting from predicted energy price rises. The WSCC corporate energy procurement service (LASER) predicts a further rise of 10% in 2014. This is likely to be a continuing pressure for future years. Therefore steps to reduce energy use will result in reduced future costs.

5.4 As a part of the PFI project street lighting is also being dimmed where appropriate. For example, on many main roads where lighting is not part night, lights are dimmed by 50% after midnight, which achieves approximately 40% saving in energy during those times. This will continue at no further cost to the county.

6. Risk Management Implications

6.1 There is a reputational risk for WSCC in not making this decision. The forecast on-going rise in the cost of energy will continue to attract criticism to WSCC if the decision is not made to maximise the use of energy reduction opportunities.

6.2 Where there have been changes away from the part night policy customer service staff, within both the PFI Service provider and WSCC, have received many contacts from customers objecting to the waste and of light intrusion. These are very difficult decisions to justify in our current climate of budget reductions and the need to reduce waste. However, where part night lighting has been introduced complaints tend to be few and much more easily justified.

6.3 Residents at times express concern over the risk of increased crime in neighbourhoods when lighting is reduced or switched off. National studies have failed to show that there is a link between the two (see para 7.1 below).

6.4 There is considered to be very little risk of the increase in road traffic accidents as a result of this recommendation. Only a very small proportion of traffic volumes use roads between midnight and 5:30 am, the majority being on main roads which are unaffected by this policy.

7. Crime and Disorder Act Implications

7.1 There is concern expressed that part night lighting is responsible for a rise in unsociable night time activity and crime. Recent studies in areas where part night lighting has been introduced have shown no evidence that reduced lighting leads to increased crime (see Appendix B).

7.2 It is recognised that individuals may have increased fear of crime in darker areas. However statistics showed that, when West Sussex was the only authority operating a part night lighting policy, there was little difference in after midnight crime compared to neighbouring authorities. Recent studies (see above) do not show a link between reduction in lighting and an increase in crime.

8. **Human Rights Act Implications**

8.1 There are no identified human rights issues associated with this decision.

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Background Papers

Appendix A – Equality Impact Report
Appendix B – Fear of Crime