

## Notes of Christmas Lights Working Party held on Monday, 22 January 2007

### Present:

Cllr N Chard (Chairman), Cllr P Chambers, Cllr Mrs B Charlton, Mrs B Kennar, Mr N Welsh and Mrs N Wood

### In Attendance:

Terry Simpson

#### 1. Notes of Meeting Held on 18 July 2006

**Agreed** that the notes of the meeting held on 18 July 2006 be approved as a correct record.

#### 2. Review of 2006

##### (a) Lighting Displays

In overall terms the general comment from the public was very positive and no adverse responses to the lights have been received.

##### (b) Use of Lights within the Deciduous Tree with no Christmas Tree

Whilst there had been some worries about the absence of a Christmas tree when the decision had been taken the general consensus once the lights were in place, was that the display this year had been a significant improvement on previous years. Indeed the only comment received about the absence of the Christmas tree was from the Market operator who had expressed his pleasure at its removal. In practice the tree had had an adverse effect on the operation of his market.

Difficulties had been experienced with the provision of the electricity supply but these had been overcome by the use of specialist Contractors, Solent Power Systems Ltd of Southampton. This firm specialised in temporary lighting displays. Subject to Hampshire County Council approving the arrangements it was suggested that the LED lights, which had a life expectancy of 70,000 hours, should be left within the trees and not removed each year. Certain work would be required to facilitate this which would be dealt with later on the Agenda.

**Agreed** to recommend to the Town Council that subject to approval of Hampshire County Council, the LED lights in the deciduous trees in the Market Place be retained in place and not removed each year.

##### (c) Financial Report

The Town Council's budget for 2006/07 amounted to £10,080 together with the opportunity of using some accumulated reserves for unexpected expenditure. Costs incurred for work invoiced to date amounted to about £900 more than the original budget figure but this was partly as a result of additional lights required and extra work for provision of supplies to the deciduous trees. Any excess expenditure would need to be met from the provision in reserves held for this purposes.

**Recommended** that the financial report be received and excess expenditure be met from the provision in reserves.

##### (c) Contribution to be made by the Chamber of Trade

The Chamber representatives reported that it would be able to contribute £500 towards the lights in the current financial year and these monies were available now. For 2007/08 the Chamber had at present agreed to contribute £1,000 although this would need to be reviewed in July with a view to payment of the contribution in August.

(f) Provision of Electrical Certificates

The Town Clerk explained that there had again been differences of view on the interpretation of the requirements for the electrical certificates. Local Electricians had felt unable to provide the necessary certificates because of the lack of clarity in the Licensing Authority's requirements. Solent Power Systems Ltd provided that service for Lyndhurst and they had visited the site and dealt with the necessary certification on behalf of the Town Council. The Town Clerk was trying to obtain further confirmation on the certification requirements so that there would be no problem again this year.

(g) Provision of Electricity Boxes for Deciduous Trees in the Market Place

It was explained that all the deciduous trees were supplied from a feeder pillar in the Market Place. The main on/off switch was provided in that feeder pillar. In order to further isolate the lights in the trees it had originally been thought that it would be necessary to install small steel supply boxes at the base of each tree which boxes would be affixed to the ground. However following further investigations a local electrician had indicated that it would be possible to fix a small rectangular connection high in the trees, cut the ducting at the base of each tree to ground level and fill the void with silicon and then provide an additional isolator within the feeder pillar. This work would be less expensive than the provision of steel boxes at the base of each tree and costs should amount to less than £280. This work would of course be subject to Hampshire County Council agreeing to security insulation tubing being fixed to the tree trunks and also to the fixings being loosened each year to take account of tree growth.

**Recommended** that the alternative method of providing small junction boxes in each tree and associated additional works in the feeder pillar together with compliance of any requirements of Hampshire County Council be approved.

3. **Proposals for 2007**

- (a) It was noted that the Town Council had made a budget provision of £10,000 for the next financial year and that the Chamber had at this stage allocated £1,000 for Christmas lights. The Working Party was reminded that installation, removal and storage costs for the lights currently amounted to almost £5,000 per annum and this year would be the final year of a three year contract with the existing installer.
- (b) The Town Clerk reported that he was making arrangements to meet with a representative of Flag and Flagpole to discuss arrangements for replacement lights in Southampton Road where the catenary had failed. It would not be possible to replace this on a like for like basis and invited Members of the Working Party to accompany him at the meeting.

**Agreed** that Cllr Chard and Mrs Kennar attend the meeting with Flag and Flagpole.

- (c) **Possible Extension of Lights**  
Agreed that investigations be undertaken to ascertain the feasibility and costs of:-
- (i) New cross street catenary and festoons in West Street
  - (ii) The provision of a cross street display bearing the words "Merry Christmas" on West Street
  - (iii) A display on either Greyfriars or across the street at Darryl's Fish Bar in Christchurch Road
  - (iv) The installation of catenary and festoons from Friday's Cross along Christchurch Road as far as the Opticians
- (d) **Market Square**  
The Town Clerk had written to the Vicar enquiring whether he and the Parochial Church Council would support investigations into the provision of LED lighting in the five trees alongside the wall fronting the Market Place. The Working Party believed that the church would probably support this arrangement but a reply was still awaited to the Town Clerk's enquiry. Information would be reported to the Working Party as soon as a reply was received.
- (e) **Provision of Electrical Certificates**  
Recommended that once full details of the County Council's requirements are received, arrangements be made for either a qualified local electrician or Solent Power Systems to be employed to provide the necessary electrical certificates for 2007/8.
- (f) **Electricity Supply Boxes**  
The Town Clerk reported that the Council held two supply boxes in store. These had been intended for use in the Market Square on the old cinema and also the building on the south side now used by Halifax Building Society. However since traders in the town had not been able to agree a scheme for provision of Christmas trees with lights on the front of most of the buildings in the High Street and Southampton Road, he was reluctant to affix these two new boxes until it was clear that they were going to be used. The number of boxes provided within the High Street and Southampton Road had been determined by the anticipated usage and power requirements for the provision of Christmas trees on shop fronts. Before any further expenditure in this area should be incurred there needed to be some commitment from traders with regard to funding and provision of Christmas trees and infrastructure to provide displays on their premises.
- Agreed**
- (i) that quotations be invited for the supply of reusable Christmas trees with LED lights for installation on shop premises within the town
  - (ii) that once quotations are obtained the Chamber of Trade canvass its Members to ascertain the extent of the support for the centralised provision, installation, removal and storage of reusable trees for shop premises in the town.
- (g) **Town Roundabout**  
Nigel Welsh referred to the continued absence of any Christmas lighting arrangements on the main entrance to the town and in particular the roundabout adjoining the Furlong car park. He could not believe that lighting on that roundabout would create any more danger

to road users or distraction to drivers than other illuminated signs across the country.

**Agreed** that further investigations be undertaken with Hampshire County Council in order to obtain consent for the provision of some Christmas lighting on the roundabout.

#### 4. **Role of Working Party**

The Town Clerk explained that currently this body was a Town Council Working Party with membership drawn from the Town Council and the Chamber of Trade. The provision of Christmas lighting was organised and funded almost entirely by the Town Council. There was a need to get greater community involvement in this type of function since the Town Council should not be expected to be the main funder of the service on a permanent basis. In addition the Government was taking new legislation through Parliament, which would encourage much greater public and community involvement in local affairs. There was an opportunity with some services operated by the Town Council to change the structure to provide a Council led arrangement but with significant community involvement. This would provide for the establishment of a Christmas Lights Advisory Committee with a Town Councillor as its Champion and Chairman to advise the Town Council on all matters relating to the Christmas lights. The Festival Committee operated in exactly this manner and was a good model on which to base any new arrangements for Christmas lights and certain other services. The Festival Committee whilst underwritten by the Town Council obtained most of its funding from external sources. This created additional community involvement and 'public ownership' and led to less reliance on the Town Council although it did need to be led by someone who would champion the service and was fully committed to it. It would also encourage other people in the community who were interested in only single issues to become involved and give their support.

Additionally once established as an Advisory Committee, meetings would be open to the public and the press and the Council's public participation arrangements would be brought into play. This too could encourage greater public involvement.

Cllr Peter Chambers in supporting the proposal explained that this new way of working gave additional support to the Government's Good Governance Agenda and involvement of the public and might also open the door to enable an Advisory Committee to obtain grant aid which was often not available to the Town Council.

**Agreed** that the proposal be supported in principle but that a final decision be made at the next meeting.

#### 5. **Date of Next Meeting**

**Agreed** that the next meeting be held at 6pm on 2 April 2007 at Greenways, Ringwood.

Meeting finished at 7.10pm

TRS/CSS

s.Christmas lights 2007/notes of Working Party 22.1.07