

Notes of Christmas Lights Working Party held on Monday 6th July 2009 at 1.15pm at 'Greenways'

Present:

Cllr B Woodfield (In the chair), Mr Phil Harmsworth (Chamber of Trade), Belinda Charlton, Jon Grant

In Attendance:

Mr Terry Simpson

1. Notes of Last Meeting

AGREED that the notes of the meeting held on 22nd June 2009 be approved and signed as a correct record.

2. Meeting with Traders on Thursday 2nd July 2009

All present were exceedingly disappointed that, in addition to the Seven Fish, only Simon Neave of Carr & Neave had attended the meeting at the Seven Fish. This was despite the fact that Phil Harmsworth had personally delivered letters of invitation to every shop premises in the Fridays Cross area, which letter also invited owners and occupiers to contact the Town Council prior to the meeting if they had any questions to ask. None of those to whom the letter was delivered made contact with the Council prior to the meeting. A copy of the letter is attached as Appendix 1 to these notes.

The Chamber of Commerce representative was confident that the Chamber would contribute £500 towards new lights in Fridays Cross, but despite this, the traders in that area had made no offer to contribute a matched amount between them towards the several thousand pounds of the cost of the proposed lighting displays. The Working Party debated whether or not further attempts should be made to interest traders in Fridays Cross in improved Christmas lighting or whether to utilise the unspent budget provision elsewhere in the town. It was noted that the Working Party had already decided to upgrade the bulbs on the cross-street displays. It would be exceedingly difficult to substitute any new schemes at this late stage, bearing in mind the infrastructure arrangements that would be needed to support any new proposals. Whilst the Working Party was concerned that, as a result of the lack of co-operation from the Fridays Cross traders, the budget might not be spent this year, it was important to preserve the full amount of the budget in following years so that the Council and the Chamber of Trade could continue to try to improve Christmas lighting provision in the town.

Following detailed consideration of all the options available, it was AGREED :

- (i) that in view of the lack of co-operation from the traders in the Fridays Cross

area, no further action be taken this year to improve Christmas lights in that area;

(ii) that the previous decision to enhance the existing cross-street displays be reaffirmed and the Town Clerk be instructed to obtain detailed prices for upgrading the light bulbs;

(iii) that the Town Council be advised that whilst there would be an under spend in the current year's budget, there were extenuating reasons for this under spend and the full budget provision would be required next year to enable the continued improvement of Christmas lights within the town in partnership with the Chamber of Trade.

3. Cross-Street Displays

The Town Clerk had not yet had the opportunity of fully costing the upgrading of the light bulbs, but it was noted that these costs could be contained well within the overall budget. AGREED that a full schedule of costs when calculated be circulated to the Working Party members.

Date of Next Meeting

AGREED that the next meeting be held after the Summer holidays at a date to be determined in consultation with Working Party members.

Meeting concluded at 1.50 pm

09.07.09

Approved as a correct record :

Date

Chairman

My Ref: TRS/sg/L6/1

Your Ref:

25th June 2009

Dear Sir or Madam

CHRISTMAS LIGHTS

As you may be aware, Christmas lights within the town were originally provided and funded by local businesses through the Chamber of Trade. Unfortunately, and for a wide variety of reasons, traders and the Chamber became unable to sustain the service. As an interim arrangement, the Town Council stepped in and became the primary funder of Christmas lights, with some additional support from the Chamber of Trade.

Initially, and in order to comply with various regulations, the Town Council had to carry out a significant amount of work in improving the infrastructure to provide for the catenery across the roads and new electricity supply boxes. All of the initial work has been carried out and the Town Council, in partnership with the Chamber, wish to improve the Christmas light provision in other areas. The Council has funds available which it wishes to use for improvements to the Christmas lights within the Friday's Cross area. The precise area has not been determined, but will generally be from the end of the cross-street displays in the High Street and down to 'Eye See Eye' Opticians in Christchurch Road and along Southampton Road towards the cross-street display which ends at Boots the Chemist.

There are technical problems with regard to cross-street displays, particularly in Southampton Road area. It will not be possible to overcome these in time for any new cross-street displays this year. Instead, the Town Council would like to implement an arrangement fairly quickly to provide artificial trees with lights on most of the premises in this area. There are one or two places where the frontages will not take the necessary fixings and some other arrangement may have to be made in these cases.

On previous occasions when Christmas trees have been installed on the front of premises, it has been on the basis of individual premises meeting the full cost of installation and the Council meeting electricity cost. This year the Council has funds available which will enable it to explore other options.

The purpose of this letter is to invite you to meet with members of the Council and the Chamber at 5.30 pm on Thursday 2nd July 2009 at the Seven Fish, Southampton Road, to discuss improved Christmas lighting in this area. Coffee will be available on arrival.

Time is short to implement any changes this year especially if we have to install new electricity supply boxes. Decisions will therefore have to be made at the meeting and we hope that you will attend with an intention to make decisions on the night.

I hope you will attend but if you need any further information please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Terry Simpson

Town Clerk