

AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET

Name of Committee Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date of Committee 20 September 2007

Report Title Street Lighting Hours of Operation

Summary In January this Committee asked for a consultation to be carried out to gauge views about the hours of operation of street lights. This report provides feedback on the consultation and options for the future.

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Would the recommended decision be contrary to the Budget and Policy Framework? Yes/No

Background Papers None.

CONSULTATION ALREADY UNDERTAKEN:- *Details to be specified*

- Other Committees All Area Committees during July 2007
- Local Member(s)
(With brief comments, if appropriate)
- Other Elected Members Councillor J Appleton }
Councillor K Browne } for information
Councillor Mrs E Goode }
- Cabinet Member Councillor M Heatley – for information
(Reports to The Cabinet, to be cleared with appropriate Cabinet Member)
- Chief Executive
- Legal I Marriott – comments incorporated.
- Finance

- Other Chief Officers
- District Councils
- Health Authority
- Police Views included as **Appendix A.**
- Other Bodies/Individuals

FINAL DECISION **YES/NO** (*If 'No' complete Suggested Next Steps*)

SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS :

Details to be specified

- Further consideration by this Committee
- To Council
- To Cabinet To an appropriate Cabinet if the Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommend action is taken.
- To an O & S Committee
- To an Area Committee
- Further Consultation

**Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee –
20 September 2007**

Street Lighting Hours of Operation

**Report of the Strategic Director for
Environment and Economy**

Recommendation

That:-

1. A policy of switching off street lights is not supported.
2. A small trial of street light dimming in the Warwick Area is supported and, subject to the outcome of the trial, further consultation is carried out at a future date.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In January 2007 this Committee considered a report on the hours of operation of streetlights. Possible benefits of the proposal were reduction in costs and energy use and in light pollution. It was resolved that officers be asked to undertake a consultation to gauge views on the reduction of up to 50% in street lighting levels when traffic flows are low and in suitable locations.
- 1.2 The initial suggestion by Officers was that lighting levels might be reduced by switching off selected lights. Following the January Committee two companies approached officers and Members to say that a reduction in lighting levels could be achieved through dimming lights rather than switching them off.
- 1.3 An initial consultation has now been conducted and this report provides information on the consultation responses and on possible future options for this initiative.

2. Consultation

- 2.1 The consultation process, to gather information and views, consisted of a limited formal consultation and a wider trawl of opinions from the public, the industry and other authorities.
- 2.2 Due to the level of interest in this issue it was felt appropriate to consult with all Members through the Area Committees. The Police were also asked for their

views. The response from these consultations is attached in **Appendix A** and **Appendix B**.

- 2.3 A number of individuals have made contact with the Council wanting to give their views on the proposals. These views varied. There were more individuals against the generality of the proposal than for it, although there were several people supportive of specific individual lights being switched off (generally outside their house). Those against the proposal cited safety concerns. Those for lights being switched off were concerned about light pollution or felt that certain lights were not necessary in the early hours.
- 2.4 In previous consultations, when the public have been asked about lighting levels in the County, there has been a very clear split between those who want more lights and those who do not want any more lights. This difference of view is often evident when new lighting schemes are proposed with people strongly supporting or strongly against proposed changes.
- 2.5 Informal discussions have taken place with other authorities and industry representatives. Within the industry there is concern about switching off street lights and a degree of support for dimming lights. Concerns relate to crime, fear of crime, safety and enforcement of speed limits. On the other hand there are some authorities who switch off street lights as a matter of routine in the early hours.
- 2.6 There are few hard facts about the benefits of street lights. There is evidence that lights reduce road traffic crashes, crime and fear of crime, although the reductions found in research has varied. In general the research indicates a positive but low rate of return for street lighting schemes based on crash reduction savings. Any benefits from street lights diminish where traffic flows and crime rates are low.

3. Dimming Lights

- 3.1 Although light dimming is used in other countries it is, at present, only being trialled in the UK. As dimming is in its infancy in this country there are issues to resolve before it is shown to be a cost effective process in the UK.
- 3.2 One issue is the cost in setting up and maintaining the dimming system and a need to select the most appropriate technology to allow the street lights to be dimmed. The system involves: radio receivers and a dimming mechanism installed in each light; a base station set up to control the dimming process and transmitters to send out the signals to the lights. This system allows the timing and the intensity of the lighting levels to be programmed and adjusted as necessary. It is estimated that the cost of a system to cover the whole of the County might amount to £5 million although the cost would be reduced if the system only included selected lights and if the system was installed over a long period when new or upgraded lighting systems were being installed. There are uncertainties about the costs given that the process is not in widespread use in the UK.

- 3.3 A second issue to be resolved is the agreement with the energy supplier to reduce the energy costs when dimming is in operation. The majority of street lighting systems in the UK, including those in Warwickshire, are 'unmetered supplies' with the cable connections straight from the electricity board main. Any payments for the electricity used are based on a theoretical usage, knowing the inventory of lights and measuring the burning hours for a sample of lights. In other countries, where dimming is in operation, lighting systems are connected to local authority private cables which allows supplies to be metered. With meters energy reduction due to dimming is measured. Without meters a new agreement would be required with the energy supplier. At present there is no legal requirement for the energy supplier to agree to reduce costs where lights are dimmed and at this stage it is not certain what cost reductions could be negotiated.
- 3.4 Officers have talked to two companies about their systems. There were doubts about whether one of the systems could be made to operate successfully in Warwickshire. A second system looked more encouraging and it was said that a small trial system might be installed for about £10,000.

4. Summary

- 4.1 Amongst Members there are differing views on the proposals. There was support to the proposals from a number of Members but others had concerns particularly about switching off street lights in some of the urban areas (including Nuneaton and Bedworth and Rugby and in locations where CCTV is operating). There was also some opposition to dimming street lights. There is more support for reducing lighting levels in rural areas although generally only subject to the support of the Parish Councils.
- 4.2 The view of the Police is that without further detailed information they could not support a proposal to switch off lights owing to road safety and crime and disorder concerns.
- 4.3 Although there is some support amongst the public for considering switching off lights it is believed that the level of concerns will mean that, particularly within the urban areas, many people will be strongly against the proposals. There has been very limited comment made about dimming lights.
- 4.4 Dimming street lights is a process in operation in other countries although there are cost and operational issues which would need to be resolved before widespread use could be made of the system in the UK.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 The degree of concern about possible increases in crashes and crime means that there is substantial opposition in Warwickshire to switching off street lights. Given the level of opposition it is believed that there would be limited benefit in pursuing a switch off policy in the County.

- 5.2 Dimming street lights is far less controversial but, as the technology is not yet proven in the UK, it is felt that a trial should be carried out to help evaluate the options. For practical reasons it would be best to carry out a trial close to the Budbrooke Depot where the Street Lighting team are based. If a small trial could be conducted in the Warwick Area, in the vicinity of this depot, the cost could be found from the existing maintenance budget.

JOHN DEEGAN
Strategic Director for Environment and Economy
Shire Hall
Warwick

5 September 2007

**Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee –
20 September 2007**

Street Lighting Hours of Operation

**EXTRACT FROM THE DRAFT MINUTES OF THE
NORTH WARWICKSHIRE AREA COMMITTEE 11 July 2007**

7. Street Lighting Hours of Operation – Consultation

Peter Samwell presented the report of the Strategic Director of Environment and Economy.

The report outlined that, at present, virtually all streetlights in Warwickshire operated throughout the night and that savings might be made if all (or selected) lights were switched off or dimmed after midnight. The Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee had requested Area Committees be consulted and their views reported back before further consideration was given to this issue.

During discussion the following comments were noted –

- (1) That saving on the costs of street lighting if they were switched off or dimmed after midnight should, in principle, be supported.
- (2) That parish councils and the community should be consulted to gauge their reaction and to gain support for a trial of specific areas.
- (3) That trials should not be imposed on communities.

Resolved that the Area Committee supports lights being switched off in their area in the early hours the morning or lights dimmed (when this becomes a viable option) as a trial subject to consultation with, and the support of, Parish Councils and the community.

**EXTRACT FROM THE DRAFT MINUTES OF THE
NUNEATON AND BEDWORTH AREA COMMITTEE 25 July 2007**

4. Street Lighting Hours of Operation - Consultation

Peter Samwell presented the report of the Strategic Director of Environment and Economy.

He outlined that, at present, virtually all County Council street lights in Warwickshire operated throughout the night and that savings might be made if all (or selected) lights were switched off after midnight. The Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee requested a consultation before further consideration was given to this issue. This

report requested the views of Members of the Area Committee to switching off or dimming street lights.

During discussion the following comments were noted –

- (1) The majority view was this proposal should not be supported because of the health and safety implications and Members did not want a trial in their areas.
- (2) That Members had spent many years improving the lighting in their areas and that this proposal would be a retrograde step.
- (3) That trials in rural areas might be acceptable but not in urban areas.
- (4) That comments from the Police on this proposal would be welcomed.

Resolved to note that the Area Committee does not wish any action to be taken with regard to the proposal to switch off streetlights after midnight (or dim lights) in the Nuneaton and Bedworth areas.

EXTRACT FROM THE DRAFT MINUTES OF THE RUGBY AREA COMMITTEE 12 July 2007

4. Street Lighting Hours of Operation – Consultation

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director for Environment and Economy, which outlined that, at present, virtually all streetlights in Warwickshire operated throughout the night. Savings might be made if all (or selected) lights were switched off after midnight. The Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee requested a consultation before further consideration was given to this issue. This report requests the views of Members of the Area Committee to switching off or dimming streetlights.

During discussion the following comments were noted –

- (1) That Warwickshire had a high accident rate involving motorcyclists and a high "fear of crime" and that switching off lights could not be supported.
- (2) That dimming or switching off of light on trunk roads could be supported and specific areas trialled.
- (3) That the Police's view should be sought on the proposal.
- (4) That a cost analysis of the savings resulting from dimming of lights would be helpful. Any savings made by dimming lights should be invested back into street light improvements and energy efficiency lights should be installed wherever possible.
- (5) That dimming of lights in the rural areas, subject to the support of the parish council, would be acceptable but not in the urban areas.

Peter Samwell said he would report Members' views to the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee and undertook to circulate details of cost savings of dimming lights. Additionally he undertook to contact other authorities that had trialled some aspects of the proposals and would feedback their response to Members.

Resolved that Members' views on the switching off of lights in their area in the early hours of the morning or lights being dimmed be reported to the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

EXTRACT FROM THE DRAFT MINUTES OF THE STRATFORD-ON-AVON AREA COMMITTEE 18 JULY 2007

6. Street Lighting Hours of Operation - Consultation

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director of Environment and Economy.

At present virtually all County Council street lights in Warwickshire operated throughout the night. Savings might be made if all (or selected) lights were switched off after midnight. The Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee requested a consultation before further consideration is given to this issue. The report requested the views of Members of the Area Committee to switching off or dimming street lights.

During the debate the following points were made:-

Consideration should be given to the relevant parish council being consulted about any trial proposed in their area.

Regard must be had to community safety aspects of street lighting.

The operating efficiency of CCTV could be reduced by dimmed street lights.

The development of energy efficient lighting and power sources was continually monitored.

Resolved:

That the Committee supports:

lights being switched off in their area in the early hours of the morning or lights being dimmed in their area in the early hours of the morning (when this becomes a viable option);

a trial of street light dimming in their area subject to consideration of the likely impact of dimmed street lights on the effectiveness of any nearby CCTV.

EXTRACT FROM THE DRAFT MINUTES OF THE WARWICK AREA COMMITTEE 10 July 2007

8. Street Lighting Hours of Operation – Consultation

The Committee considered the report by the Strategic Director for Environment and Economy.

Councillor Tim Naylor suggested that local universities and manufacturer should be approached to ask them to develop appropriate technology to deal with the issue of dimming/turning off street lights. He commended the idea of a trial and asked that a list of possible roads for the trial be prepared for the Committee to consider.

Councillor Ken Browne had heard from Canada that when lighting was reduced by 50% there, the result was barely perceptible to the human eye. Although switching off the lights in some area might be acceptable and even welcome, in others it would not be.

The Chair said that she would like to see a demonstration of dimming street lights.

Councillor Mota Singh said that there was a danger that reducing street lighting would be an invitation to criminals.

Councillor John Whitehouse said that there was a need for a very careful audit street by street to improve lighting.

Councillor Marion Haywood said that there was a need to be selective about choosing which lights to switch off or dim. She understood that the photocells used would need to be removed and replaced if any alteration was needed to the timing.

It was then Resolved:-

That Area Committee support a trial of lights being switched off or dimmed in their area in the early hours of the morning and that a list of options for the trial be brought to the Committee to choose an urban street and a semi-rural street.

**Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee –
20 September 2007**

Street Lighting Hours of Operation

**CONSULTATION RESPONSE FROM WARWICKSHIRE POLICE
In response to a request for views on reducing the hours that street lights are lit
in certain locations (for example between midnight and 5.30am)**

Firstly, Warwickshire Police have not seen the results of any formal research to indicate what the potential effects of such action would be from either a road safety or a crime and safety perspective may be.

I understand that this concept may have been trialled in Essex and that the very early indications are that there has not been a dramatic change in the collision levels or patterns, although I have not personally seen anything on this project.

However, in relation to road safety in Warwickshire there is evidence to suggest that vehicle speeds increase at night, when traffic volumes are low and it is known that a driver's ability to perceive and recognise hazards are reduced in unlit areas.

There is, therefore, the potential that the removal of any street lighting would either contribute to the occurrence or severity of an increased number of road crashes.

In addition where such incidents do arise, the scene would potentially be left in darkness, which may affect the safety of those involved, those dealing with the immediate aftermath and those, such as our staff, who have to investigate the crash.

This could once again have a detrimental affect on the safety of those people affected by such an incident.

It is clear that street lighting was introduced for a number of reasons, what evidence is there that those reasons have ceased to exist?

In relation to crime and disorder issues, there are obviously various potentially significant dis-benefits to removing street lighting in relation to perceived fears and actual crimes, although the RSU are not best placed to comments on these.

At present I would recommend that without further detailed information Warwickshire Police could not possibly support such a proposal owing to road safety and crime and disorder concerns.

Adrian Knight
Chief Inspector – Operations