

Meeting	Community Development Committee
Date	Tuesday 1 st November 2022
Report Title	Christmas Lights
Agenda Reference	14
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Officer's Recommendations

1. To note the contents of the report and acknowledge the cost implications of Christmas lights on the Council's energy bill this year.
2. To note cost saving measures that the Council to reduce less energy usage this winter.
3. To consider ringfencing the Solar Panel FIT payments approx. £100 in 23/24 to pay for additional energy use or remaining funds in Festive Enhancements (307 / 4604).

Background

At the Larger Local Councils Forum and in the national press, there is ongoing debate about whether *'Christmas should be cancelled this year'* and Christmas lights are switched off in view of the rising cost of living and energy costs. Conversely, it is acknowledged that Christmas lights and cheer provide a sense of community spirit and celebrate the festive season, especially in these unprecedented times.

It should be noted that Haydon Wick Parish does not have a vast amount of Christmas lights however we should be mindful of the escalating energy cost and impact of Christmas lighting on our budget.

Costs of Electric

Current monthly electric costs for the office are £53.98 - £61.21 per month on average usage. Although, the costs will rise in November when heating is required for office comfort, meetings and the warm spaces initiatives. The true cost of the electric will be unknown until after Christmas.

Budget

There is £500 budget in festive enhancement for replacements, trees and potential replacement programme for low energy bulbs.

Cost Saving Considerations to proceed with

The feedback from the Technical Officers are as follows:

- The Council already has energy saving LED lights so there is no need for any replacements.
- The office will have a tree in the upstairs office to make for a pleasant working environment on the lead up to Christmas but the switch on times will be restricted.
- The timer switches for the external trees and various lights outside the building are usually 3pm until 10pm (7 hours) – these could be reduced from 4pm until 8pm (4 hours) to cut down on the excess energy use. It is thought that the lights are most likely to be seen by passing vehicles and pedestrians on the way home from work.
- Sponsorship for the cost of a Christmas tree is being sought by the Community Development Officer but funds are available if this is not achieved.



Cost Saving Considerations not to proceed with

- There are no Christmas activities (*incorrect there is the Memory Café, Council Christmas Buffet and Staff Christmas Buffet*) taking place in the Council Offices this year (as the venue has changed to the Haydon Centre) so the downstairs meeting room Christmas tree could not be put up this year.
- The Office could be lit at the front of the building, but not install the icicles around the back of the building (entrance side), as this would save half of the energy usage and take less time for the team to put up (*visitors/councillors to the office will be met with a less than festive greeting*)
- If there is a community Christmas tree with 2,000 LED bulbs, then the two smaller building Christmas trees could not be used (*one tree alone is not impressive*).

Solar Panel Feed in Tariff (FIT) Return

The Council receives £100.00 per year as a FIT return for the solar panels on the roof of the Council Offices. This income goes back into the utilities budget, but it could be used to offset the increase in energy for Christmas lights.