

Report of: Leisure and Cultural Services Business Manager

To: Executive Board

Date: 11th September 2006

Item No:

Approval of capital allocation of funds for Festive Lights and improvements to power supply

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: For Executive Board to approve the proposed spending of allocated capital funds to Festive Lights and improvements to power supply in parks and streets

Key decision: No

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Alan Armitage

Scrutiny Responsibility: Environment

Ward(s) affected:

Report Approved by

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Armitage

Legal: Lindsay Cane

Finance: Mike Baish

Strategic Director: Sharon Cosgrove

Policy Framework: None

Recommendation(s):

To approve spending £15,000 of the £50,000 allocated to Festive Lights in the Capital Programme for the provision on new lights in St Giles, with the remaining £35,000 being allocated as a reserve for 2007/8

To approve the movement of the £60,000 allocated to the improvement of power supply to parks and streets from the 2007/8 capital programme to 2006/7 and approval to spend these funds as outlined in the report (on new environmentally sustainable infrastructure for festive lighting and floodlighting at Rosehill Park)

- Note that a report will follow later in the year into options for either leasing or purchasing new festive lights for the city in 2007/8

Introduction

1. A provision of £50,000 has been made in the Capital Programme for the purchase of new Festive Lights for the City Centre in 2006/7 with an additional provision of £60,000 being made for the improvement of power supply to parks and streets in 2007/8. Both of these capital funds require approval before they can be spent.

2. The funds set aside to improve power supply to parks and streets is required to include a new power supply for the festive lights situated in the trees in St Giles, new RCD power units with timers for the city centre lights and new floodlights in Rosehill park.

Festive Lights allocation (£50,000)

3. It was originally anticipated that the entire £50,000 set aside for the purchase of new Festive Lights for the City Centre would be spent in 2006/7, however initial investigations into the cost of new lights for the City Centre indicate that this sum would fall substantially short of the estimated £120,000 required to purchase new lights for the City Centre and St Giles.

4. Further investigation was carried out into other options for the provision of new Festive Lights, which included the option to lease lights on a yearly basis. This would eliminate the need to purchase new lights every 3-4 years, which is the recommended life expectancy of this type of lighting, and the need to check and repair old lights on an annual basis as is the case at the moment. The lease is likely to also include storage provision as well as installation, upkeep and take down of the lights on an annual basis.

5. Indicative prices for the full cost of this leasing option including storage and installation have been sought and are awaited. This option will be investigated further and approval will be sought to tender this option in a future report to committee. This option could also be extended to include other areas of the City which currently either organise their own festive lighting or who seek funding from area committees for its provision.

6. At this stage it is recommended that due to the timescales needed to investigate and tender a leasing option and the lack of required funds in the current Capital programme, the current Festive Lights be retained in the City Centre for a further year with the purchase of new lights solely for St Giles.

St Giles Lights

7. The requirement for new lights in St Giles this year stems from the fact that the lights used in previous years could only be run using generators. The generators were found to be generally very noisy and as such were cause for complaint.

8. The generator option is also costly in call out charges as they were often turned off during the night, and their use is not environmentally sustainable.

9. The new lights would be run from an RCD protected power unit with timers which will ensure lights are not left on throughout the day. The new lighting scheme will consist of LED lights that use less electricity and again are considered more environmentally friendly.

10. The cost of new lights for St Giles is estimated at £15,000 this year, with the remainder of the allocated £50,000 being recommended for retention in the Capital Programme and reallocated to next year in the event that the leasing option for new lights for the City Centre is not realised. However should there be a requirement to purchase new lights next year as opposed to leasing them it would be necessary to make a further bid for additional Capital funds to buy them.

Improvement of power supply to parks and streets (£60,000)

11. This fund has originally been allocated to be spent in 2007/8, however several projects included within this allocation require completion this year and therefore it is requested that this money be moved into the 2006/7 financial year allocation.

12. Approximately £15,000 of this money is required to install the new RCD and timer infrastructure required in St Giles for festive lights. Without the required infrastructure the only options are to put up the old lights and run them from generators as described earlier in this report or not to have festive lights in St Giles this year.

13. A further £6,000 of this money needs to be allocated to replace the RCD units for the festive lights in the City Centre with RCD units that include timers to enable the lights to be switched off during the day. In previous years the lights have been left on all day, which is costly and again not environmentally sustainable.

14. Finally £20,000 of this fund has been earmarked to go towards the purchase of new floodlights at Rosehill Park. This lighting was promised to area committee as match funding and is required for the new football season this year.

Alternative Options

15. Alternatively the Board could opt not to re-allocate the funds to 2007/8 and/or not approve the budgets for spending. In this case the old festive lights could still be put up in the City Centre but without timers the lights would remain on throughout the day. If the money is not approved for the new St Giles lights or infrastructure it is unlikely that lights will be put up in this area due to the cost and complaints associated with using generators in this area. Also money has not been allocated within the revenue budget to pay for generators this year.

Financial implications

16. A review of the capital programme and funding position is currently in progress and a report will be brought to Executive Board in October. Members should take into account in considering this report that the approved capital programme assumes that over £2 million of capital receipts from asset disposals will be realized in 2006/2007 in order to fund the planned level of spending. This report increases the planned spending in the current year and therefore increases the required level of capital receipts needed.

17. In purchasing these items officers will adhere to the Council's Procurement rules set out in the constitution.

Staffing Implications

18. There are no staffing implications that result from this report.

Recommendations

19. It is recommended that £15,000 of the £50,000 fund earmarked for new festive lights be approved for spending this year on new lights for St Giles with the further £35,000 within this fund allocated as a reserve for 2007/8.

20. The £60,000 allocated for improvement to power supplies should be moved from the 2007/8 Capital Programme to 2006/7 and approved for spending as stated within this report on improved infrastructure for festive lights and floodlighting in Rosehill Park. It is recommended that any remaining money is retained to spend on future agreed projects of this nature in 2006/7 or 2007/8.

21. The Board are also asked to note that a report will follow later in the year into options for either leasing or purchasing new festive lights for the city in 2007/8.

Contact: Claire Newport 01865 467242
cnewport@oxford.gov.uk

Background papers: None