

Cheltenham Borough Council

Cabinet – 12th October 2021

Grant to Cheltenham Business Improvement District – Christmas Lights

Accountable member	Cabinet Member Culture, Wellbeing and Business – Cllr. Atherstone
Accountable officer	Director of Planning – Tracey Crews
Ward(s) affected	All
Key/Significant Decision	Yes
Executive summary	
<p>The Christmas lights activation around the festive period is an important element of supporting the town centre economy. The prosperity of the town centre during this period is key for the range of businesses across the town and supporting the spirit of Christmas for our residents to enjoy. This is particularly important as we deal with the recovery arising from the Covid-19 pandemic.</p> <p>Creating an environment that attracts and increases the visitor economy together with encouraging residents to use the town centre for shopping, hospitality and wider entertainment is a key contributor to delivery of the Cheltenham Place Vision, Cheltenham Recovery Strategy, Cheltenham Economic Recovery Task Force Business Plan and Visitor Economy Strategy.</p>	
Recommendations	
Cabinet agrees:	
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. To provide an annual grant of £47,000 to the Cheltenham Business Improvement District (BID) until January 2026 to contribute to the cost of the BID providing Christmas lights in Cheltenham town centre and a switch on event/activation;2. That the Council meets the cost of the electricity consumption reasonably and properly incurred by the Lights and that this is sourced from a renewable supply;3. To delegate authority to the Director of Planning to agree the terms of the grant agreement.	

Financial implications	<p>Costs to be borne by ECD101 (Xmas In Cheltenham) R4000 where there is a budget of £50,500. Hence, this should be sufficient to cover the grant and the energy costs (which were estimated £3,100).</p> <p>Contact officer: Andrew.taylor@cheltenham.gov.uk,</p>
Legal implications	<p>The Council has powers under S145 Local Government Act 1972 to provide financial assistance to others for the purposes of providing entertainment.</p> <p>One Legal will prepare a grant agreement setting out the conditions to be agreed by the Director of Planning for the giving of the grant to the Cheltenham Business Improvement District.</p> <p>Contact officer: legalservices@onelegal.org.uk</p>
HR implications (including learning and organisational development)	<p>No implications arising from this report.</p> <p>Contact officer: Georgie.Tweddell@publicagroup.uk</p>
Key risks	<p>See Appendix 1.</p>
Corporate and community plan Implications	<p>The Councils Corporate Plan includes a key priority to continue the revitalisation and improvement of our vibrant town centre and public spaces. Continuing to support the delivery of the Christmas lights and associated Christmas activities in Cheltenham supports the vibrancy of our town centre for businesses, residents and visitors and helps shine a light on our commitment to delivering high quality environments to future investors.</p>
Environmental and climate change implications	<p>It is not possible to eliminate environmental and climate change implications with a project of this nature, however, the following considerations have been given to reduce them as far as possible.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of an energy supply, which can be guaranteed to be green. (Subject to agreement between CBC and current and future suppliers). • Use of low energy LED lights throughout the display • length of time the lights will be on to limit impacts on nocturnal ecosystems. <p>See controls set out in the risk assessment.</p> <p>Contact officer: Alexandra.Wells@cheltenham.gov.uk</p>

Property/Asset Implications	<p>Christmas lights are an important part of the festive season and create a cheerful atmosphere in the town centre. Post pandemic, this is more important for the retail sector and the return of shoppers on the high street.</p> <p>Attachment of lights is, in the main, to infrastructure owned by the County Council (including lampposts and street trees) together with attachment to buildings generally in private ownership. It is the responsibility of the Cheltenham BID to ensure the relevant licences and agreements are in place. Where lights are attached to buildings in CBC ownership, such as the Municipal Offices, the appropriate agreements are in place.</p> <p>Contact officer: Simon.hodges@cheltenham.gov.uk</p>
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1. Background

- 1.1 In 2017 Cheltenham Borough Council entered into contract with the Cheltenham Business Improvement District (BID) to supply, erect, maintain and remove the Christmas lights; together with organising and running the Christmas Switch On Event. This contract aligned with a new approach to the procurement of Christmas lights. Before this time the Council had owned a range of displays, which had become challenging to maintain because of their age, were staid in respect of the display, which was static year on year and did not respond to the increasing demand from businesses and residents to improve the offer.
- 1.2 Through collaboration with the Cheltenham BID, it was agreed to trial a new approach which saw Cheltenham Borough Council contributing to wider funding that enabled the hiring of Christmas lights as opposed to having an owned display. This approach enabled greater flexibility in terms of wider areas of the town centre that could be added to or removed from, depending on the format of the display procured and provided the opportunity to refresh the lights on a regular basis.
- 1.3 Since 2017, there have been two full changes in light displays, with extensions of areas covered, including Pittville Street, Winchcombe Street, Cambray Place and The Strand. This year the area will be extended to cover the town centre sections of Bath Road, Bayshill Road, St Georges Place, St Georges Road and Royal Well, reflecting the wider geography now covered by the BID (see Appendix 2).
- 1.4 The trial has been successful and has added much needed vibrancy to the Cheltenham Christmas offer, supporting our visitor economy, businesses across the town centre and wider community enjoyment of the town centre and its Christmas sparkle.
- 1.5 Now that the BID has been successful for a second term, this now offers an opportunity to enter into a longer-term arrangement, giving certainty to the BID in respect of the value of contribution provided by the Council to enable them to better plan for and deliver their business plan.
- 1.6 Following engagement with One Legal the appropriate mechanism is via a grant to the Cheltenham BID on an annual basis for the period of the BID second term (ends March 2026).
- 1.7 In the review of the Christmas lights consideration has been given, in consultation with the Councils' climate change team, to wider environmental and climate change implications. This has included;
 - Review of LEDs which use around 75% less power,

- Building in testing of new technologies as part of future procurement
- Using green/ renewable electricity supply
- Give consideration to the length of time the lights will be on to limit impacts on nocturnal ecosystems

1.8 In response to the points above the BID have advised that the contract is currently at year 2 of a three year contract with Festive Lighting who have an environmental policy supporting their delivery that includes; “We will invest in the improved energy efficiency of products we use and investigate environmentally safe and sustainable energy sources.” As part of the tender process for 2023 – 2026 the BID will liaise with the CBC Climate Change team and will include in the tender specification the need to use the most energy efficient products without compromising the quality of the display.

1.9 The current display has a powder coating on the products, this allows for day-time interest and thereby enables a switch-on time later in the day which runs from 4pm – 12am

1.10 The electricity used, is currently being investigated by the Climate Change team who are confirming the status of the renewable source.

2. Conditions of grant

2.1 The Council will prepare a grant agreement to cover the period November 2021 – January 2026 that will contain conditions for payment of the Grant.

2.2 The BID will be expected, as a minimum, to match fund the financial contributions provided by the Council. It will also be responsible for arranging necessary permissions for the switch on event activation and siting and removal of the lights.

3. Reasons for recommendations

3.1 To maintain the effective collaboration with the Cheltenham BID to supply, erect, maintain and remove the Cheltenham town centre Christmas lights between November 2021 and January 2026, together with the delivery of high quality event activation that brings the town centre to life over the Christmas period for residents, visitors and businesses.

4. Alternative options considered

4.1 An alternative option would be to purchase lights and for the Council to supply and fit on an annual basis. Evidence clearly demonstrates that this is no longer an effective way of supporting the visitor economy nor meet the expectations of our residents, visitors and businesses. Light displays quickly date and require ongoing storage and maintenance in addition to the contracting required for installation and removal.

4.2 A further option would be for the Council to not offer a grant, but this may restrict access and collaboration to the funding of lights brought by the BID.

5. How this initiative contributes to the corporate plan

5.1 The Corporate Plan includes a key priority to continue the revitalisation and improvement of our vibrant town centre and public spaces. Continuing to support the delivery of the Christmas lights and the activities that support Christmas in Cheltenham supports vibrancy of our town centre for businesses, residents and visitors and helps shine a light on our commitment to delivering high quality environments to future investors.

5.2 Christmas 2021 will be a key event for businesses and residents as we move forward post Covid-19 pandemic. Continued investment in the Christmas lights and the event activation around them provides a positive contribution to our economic recovery as supported by the Cheltenham Recovery Strategy and Cheltenham Economic Recovery Task Force.

6. Consultation and feedback

6.1 A full review has been undertaken of the collaboration with the Cheltenham BID that has facilitated successful delivery of Christmas lights and event activation for a number of years. Engagement with BID Board and Cabinet Member for culture, wellbeing and business, One Legal, Head of Assets and Finance and Climate Change team.

7. Performance management – monitoring and review

7.1 Should Cabinet support the offer of an annual grant to the BID, this will be monitored in line with the conditions of grant agreed.

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Appendices	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Risk Assessment 2. Plan of town centre area covered by the Christmas lights
Background information	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. https://www.cheltenham.gov.uk/downloads/file/7401/corporate_plan_2019-23 2. https://www.cheltenham.gov.uk/recovery-strategy 3. https://movingtocheltenham.com/certif

The risk				Original risk score (impact x likelihood)			Managing risk				
Risk ref.	Risk description	Risk Owner	Date raised	Impact 1-5	Likelihood 1-6	Score	Control	Action	Deadline	Responsible officer	Transferred to risk register
	Not providing a grant puts at risk the successful supply and installation of Christmas lights and wider activation for the town	Director of planning	15.9.21	3	2	6	Close	Continued collaboration with Cheltenham BID on effective Christmas lights delivery	12.10.21		N/A. linked to Cabinet decision
	By their very nature, the installation of a light display has a negative impact through using electricity on climate change impacting on the Councils climate change emergency declaration	Director of planning	15.9.21	2	2	4	Transfer to 3rd party Close	Work with BID to test environmental impacts with suppliers. Ensure electricity used is green supply	30.10.21	Climate Emergency Programme Officer Climate Emergency Programme Officer	N/A, managed by 3 rd party N/A if able to close risk
<p>Explanatory notes</p> <p>Impact – an assessment of the impact if the risk occurs on a scale of 1-5 (1 being least impact and 5 being major or critical)</p> <p>Likelihood – how likely is it that the risk will occur on a scale of 1-6 (1 being almost impossible, 2 is very low, 3 is low, 4 significant, 5 high and 6 a very high probability)</p> <p>Control - Either: Reduce / Accept / Transfer to 3rd party / Close</p>											