

Cheltenham Borough Council
Council – 20th June 2022
Light Up Sandford Park - Petition

Accountable Member	Leader, Cllr Rowena Hay
Accountable Officer	Director of Community & Economic Development
Ward(s) Affected	All
Significant Decision	Yes
Executive Summary	<p>The following petition was received by Council on 18th February 2022. As the petition had in excess of 750 signatures it is entitled to a debate at Council.</p> <p><i>“Light Up Sandford Park – Petition</i></p> <p><i>To Cheltenham Borough Council and specifically to the cabinet member for Safety and Communities, We the people of Cheltenham would like to use Sandford Park safely both day and night, we therefore politely ask the council to place in this park lighting, as seen in other parks in Cheltenham. Our justification for this comes in the form of two different studies:</i></p> <p><i>Kate A Painter PhD and David P Farrington PhD both of the Institute of Criminology at Cambridge University revealed the findings of their Street Lighting observations in 2001 which shows a 41% and 43% decrease in crime in their respective experimental areas (Dudley and Stoke on Trent on this occasion) as well as a notable decrease in crime in surrounding areas. The financial savings (from reduced crime) exceeded the financial costs by up to ten times within 1 year.</i></p> <p><i>As well as their findings, the College of Policing report on street lighting (Feb 2015) shows a notable decrease in crime of an average of 21% when an areas is well lit.</i></p> <p><i>We would like Sandford Park to be provided with lighting throughout, on both sides of College Road and from Bath Road to Keynsham Road. The evidence provided shows that not only is possible to reduce crime in this area but also the effect of doing so would be financially beneficial.”</i></p> <p>In reviewing the detail of the petition, what is clear is that debate on crime prevention and community safety is a whole town issue and not limited to our parks and gardens.</p> <p>This reflects the Council’s Corporate Plan and Place Vision. In</p>

responding to this petition, the council has therefore broadened out its response as noted at Council on 21st March 2022, to include wider community safety issues and engaged with relevant key agencies, whilst at the same time reviewing the particular issues raised in respect of Sandford Park.

The recommendations of this report are therefore split to reflect this approach

Recommendations

In respect of Sandford Park:

1. **Recognise the existing strong relationship between the Council and the Friends of Sandford Park and thank them for their hard work in supporting the maintenance and upkeep of the park working in collaboration with the councils Green Spaces team**
2. **For the Council to work with the Friends of Sandford Park during volunteer working parties to identify and sensitively manage vegetation to improve security and public safety, whilst also having regard to the work being undertaken by the University of Gloucestershire to survey bat populations in Sandford Park**
3. **Note the importance of urban green spaces in providing vital dark space important for the survival of urban fauna and flora**
4. **For the Cabinet Member Waste, Recycling & Street Services to share this report and liaise with his counterpart at Gloucestershire County Council regarding improvements to existing cycle path lighting in Sandford Park in the context of active travel**

In respect of community safety across the borough:

5. **Recognise the importance of the partnership working between the Council, Gloucestershire Constabulary, the Police and Crime Commissioner, the MP and Gloucestershire County Council to keep the public safe and work collaboratively on the wider issue of crime prevention and community safety**
6. **Recognise the valuable relationship that the council has with local community groups across the town and local ward councillors in supporting efforts to keep the public safe.**
7. **Thank the petitioners and acknowledge that this is a very important issue**

Financial implications

Both capital and revenue funding would need to be identified for any new lighting schemes proposed, for supply and on-going maintenance

Contact officer: andrew.taylor@cheltenham.gov.uk

Legal implications	The petition will be debated at Council in accordance with the Council's Petition Scheme. The petition will be considered in accordance with the Council Procedure Rules varied in so far as necessary to comply with the attached Process. In relation to any decisions that arise from the Petition, Full Council can only take those decisions that are the responsibility of Full Council Contact officer: legalservices@onelegal.org.uk
HR implications (including learning and organisational development)	None arising from this report Contact officer: Georgie.Tweddell@publicagroup.uk
Key risks	See Appendix 2
Corporate and community plan Implications	Of relevance, the Council's Corporate Plan and Place Vision states that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>We ensure that all our residents, businesses and visitors feel safe</i> <i>We will continue to invest in our high street and public spaces for the benefit of people living, working and visiting Cheltenham</i>
Environmental and climate change implications	Artificial lighting can have a serious detrimental effect on urban wildlife, and could negatively affect the Council's aims to improve biodiversity. Careful consideration needs to be given to the energy consumption of any proposed lighting schemes. Contact officer: laura.tapping@cheltenham.gov.uk
Property/Asset Implications	The Council does not currently have budget for maintenance of street style lighting in its parks. Where they exist, they are maintained and paid for by Gloucestershire County Council. Revenue funding would need to be identified for the continual upkeep and energy usage. Contact officer: gemma.bell@cheltenham.gov.uk, 01242

1. Background to the Petition Scheme

- 1.1 The Council's Petition Scheme is designed to ensure that the public have easy access to information about how to petition their local authority and they will know what to expect from their local authority in response. Included within the Scheme is the requirement to have a full Council debate should a petition with 750 signatures be received.
- 1.2 The Scheme recognises that the issue may be referred to another part of the authority where the matter is not one reserved for Council. The purpose of the requirement for Council debate, therefore, is not to ensure that the final decision relating to the petition issue is made at that Council meeting but to increase the transparency of the decision making process, ensuring that debates on significant petitions are publicised with sufficient notice to enable the petition organiser and public to attend. It also ensures that local people know that their views have been listened to and they have the opportunity to hear their local representative debate their concerns. The outcome of debates will depend on the subject matter of the petition.

2. The Petition

- 2.1** The Council received a petition at its meeting on 18th February 2022. The wording of the petition is set out in the Executive Summary of this report.
- 2.2** Richard Newman was nominated as the petition organiser.
- 2.3** The Council is therefore required to debate the petition for a maximum of 15 minutes in accordance with the Petitions Scheme approved by Council on the 13 May 2010. A process for dealing with a petition was produced by officers and is attached as Appendix 1 as a process to be followed for the debate at this meeting. The debate should conclude with one or more decisions taken pursuant to the Petition Scheme as follows
- Taking the action requested in the petition (provided the matter is reserved to full Council for decision);
 - Referring the matter to Cabinet or an Appropriate Cabinet Member or Committee (including Overview and Scrutiny) for further consideration;
 - Holding an inquiry into the matter;
 - Undertaking research into the matter;
 - Holding a public meeting;
 - Holding a consultation;
 - Holding a meeting with petitioners;
 - Calling a referendum;
 - Writing to the petition organiser setting out our views about the request in the petition;
 - Taking no further action on the matter.

3. Sandford Park assessment

3.1 Lighting in the Park

Sandford Park currently has 13 lamp columns running east to west along the River Chelt cycle path. This incorporates both parts of the park either side of College Road. Further lighting exists outside of the park along the designated cycle path between Keynsham Road and Old Bath Road, and then through Cox's Meadow to Moorend Road. In addition, highway lighting on the Hight Street, College Road and Keynsham Road illuminate parts of the park where columns are adjacent to its perimeter. The lighting is managed and maintained by Gloucestershire County Council (GCC).

The Council currently has no revenue budget for lighting, and is dependent on GCC to undertake this. Where the Council has previously introduced lighting into green space, the County Council has adopted the lighting as long as it meets their standard specification. Proportionately, Sandford Park has approximately the same amount of lighting as similar parks in the town, where often it is situated along designated cycle routes.

3.2 Gloucestershire Constabulary Advice and Comments

The Crime Prevention Design Advisor at Gloucestershire Constabulary has undertaken a crime prevention assessment of Sandford Park, which is attached as appendix 3 to this report. The document contains analysis of reported crimes in Sandford Park over five years compared with other parks in Cheltenham, as well as commenting on previous research undertaken on lighting in urban areas. Academic research relating to lighting in parks and public open spaces is very limited. Research, such as that referred to in the petition, has tended to focus on streets and housing estates and the types of crimes associated with these areas.

More recently academic research concerning the principles of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) has been discussed more openly following the tragic death of Sarah Everard.

Most reported crime in Sandford Park, as with other parks in Cheltenham, is related to anti-social behaviour, and occurs more frequently during spring and summer and in daylight hours.

The report also recognises the importance of ecological considerations, and when more people use public space, natural surveillance is increased which reduces crime and anti-social behaviour. The report also refers to other non-lighting related measures that could be undertaken to improve security such as assessing tree canopies and foliage; a point, which is reflected within the recommendations of this report. The advisor's report concludes that:

"The proposed addition of more artificial lighting through the parks needs to address the delicate balance between visitor numbers and the need to reduce crime; the need to address light pollution and maintain dark skies; and the impact it will have on the nature and the ecology."

The neighbourhood policing team have commented that they feel there is not a compelling case for introducing additional lighting in Sandford Park in order to reduce Anti Social Behaviour.

3.3 The Friends of Sandford Park

The Friends of Sandford Park have undertaken their own assessment, and support some additional lighting, but limited to the friendship circle. They would like to see existing lighting along the cycle path improved, and have offered to manage vegetation through existing volunteer work parties in areas of the park where natural surveillance could be improved. They recognise the need to maintain dark areas of the park, and would like to see the path network improved in the vicinity of the boules piste.

3.4 Ecology

Plants and animals depend on Earth's daily cycle of light and dark rhythm to govern life-sustaining behaviours such as reproduction, nourishment, sleep and protection from predators. Scientific evidence suggests that artificial light at night has negative and deadly effects on many creatures including amphibians, birds, mammals, insects and plants.

The Council is currently working the University of Gloucestershire who will be undertaking a bat survey in the park shortly to identify populations and habits.

3.5 Cheltenham Carbon Zero Considerations

Each of the existing park lanterns are rated at 19 watts and over a year burn for about 4070 hours, consuming in the region of 48KW per hour.

4. Community safety across the borough

4.1 As the petition highlighted the important issue of crime and the fear of crime, the Leader of the Council facilitated a meeting of key stakeholders including the Police and Crime Commissioner, the MP, Gloucestershire County Council and the Borough Council Portfolio lead for Communities & Safety. The Leader outlined her view on this via Leader Communications at Council on 21st March 2022;

"She advised that receipt of a 750-signature petition at the March Council meeting, concerning women's safety and lighting of Sandford Park and other public areas, together with other active petitions raising similar concerns, would trigger a council debate. Although the council doesn't have direct control over the wider issues of safety, she confirmed that it should have an active

role and that, in order to ensure a meaningful debate, she had arranged a meeting with the PCC, Cheltenham's MP, and GCC and CBC cabinet members for safety. The first available meeting for the Council debate is June; she reassured Members that the issue of safety is extremely important and not taken lightly, but could not be achieved by CBC alone – it needed government intervention and work with partners."

4.2 At this meeting of stakeholders, there was agreement that partnership working was vital on the issue of community safety. Critical partners include:

- Gloucestershire Constabulary in terms of enforcement, intelligence and data gathering
- Criminal Justice system
- Education providers
- County Council (highways)/Borough council for lighting on highways CCTV Etc.

4.3 Actions arising from the meeting included:

- Police and Crime Commissioner and Cheltenham Borough Council to continue working to develop shared outcomes through the work of Safer Gloucestershire and the Cheltenham CSP and any subsequent bidding activity
- Police and Crime Commissioner to provide data and intelligence on crime trends (including in relation to parks connected to the petition)
- Relevant Gloucestershire County Council Cabinet member to be engaged
- Recognition that other mechanism going through Parliament such as the Online Safety Bill are other important measures to review

5. Reasons for Recommendations

5.1 To recognise the shared endeavours needed across partners to tackle the wider issue of community safety across the borough

5.2 To acknowledge the need to address light pollution and maintain dark skies; and the detrimental impact it will have on the nature and the ecology our parks and green spaces.

5.3 Reinforcing that proactive management of landscape features across our parks and green spaces will improve security by increasing sight lines and natural surveillance, in line with Crime Prevention through Environmental Design principles.

5.4 Undertaking a review of existing lighting where required, will determine if the current lights are still suitable for their intended purpose by today's standards

5.5 To support the review of existing lighting in Sandford Park

5.6 To identify funding for any future lighting improvements in Cheltenham's Parks and assess this within the context of the impact on nature and ecology

Report author	Contact officer: adam.reynolds@cheltenham.gov.uk , Green spaces manager
Appendices	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Process for dealing with a petition at council 2. Risk assessment 3. Sandford Park Crime Prevention Assessment from Gloucestershire Constabulary

Background information	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Council's petition scheme – report to Council 13 May 20102. Leaders Communications – Council 21st March 2022 https://democracy.cheltenham.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=143&MId=3337&Ver=4
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Process for dealing with petitions at Council

The following is the recommended process to be followed for the debate of a petition at the Council meeting in accordance with the Council's Petition Scheme. The Council Procedure Rules shall be suspended in so far as necessary to facilitate this process.

1. The Mayor will remind members of the procedure to be followed

2. Statement by the petition organiser

The Mayor will invite the petitioner organiser or their representative to come to the microphone and speak for up to 5 minutes on the petition.

There will be no questions and the petition organiser/their representative will take no further part in the proceedings.

3. Clarification on the background information in the officer's report

Members will be invited to ask any questions for clarification as to the facts in the officer's report.

4. Statement by the relevant Cabinet Member

The Cabinet Member whose portfolio is most relevant to the petition will be invited by the Mayor to speak for a maximum of 5 minutes on the subject of the petition. They may wish to refer to the background report from officers circulated with the papers for the meeting.

They may also wish to propose a motion at this point; if so, the motion must be seconded.

5. Debate by members

Where a member has proposed a motion (which is seconded), the usual Rules of Debate (Rule 13) will apply.

If there is no motion, the Mayor will invite any member who wishes to speak on the petition to address Council for up to a maximum of 3 minutes.

When the 15 minutes set aside for the debate (as laid down in the Council's Petition Scheme) is up, the Mayor may decide to extend the time allowed for the debate but will bring it to a close when they feel sufficient time has been allowed.

6. Conclusion of Debate

The debate should conclude with one or more decisions taken pursuant to the Petition Scheme as follows:

- Taking the action requested in the petition (provided the matter is reserved to full council for decision);
- Referring the matter to Cabinet or an Appropriate Cabinet Member or Committee (including Overview and Scrutiny) for further consideration;
- Holding an inquiry into the matter;
- Undertaking research into the matter;
- Holding a public meeting;
- Holding a consultation;
- Holding a meeting with petitioners;
- Calling a referendum;
- Writing to the petition organiser setting out our views about the request in the petition;
- Taking no further action on the matter.

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
	If the Council does not address safety, and people perception of safety in green space, then it may deter sectors of the community using green space	Director Climate Change & Place Services	13/05/2023	4	1	4	Yes	Continue to ensure green spaces are maintained to take account of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design principals	Ongoing	Green Spaces Manger	Transferred to team risk register
	If the Council doesn't carefully consider the effect of lighting on fauna and fauna then it may have a detrimental impact on biodiversity in green spaces	Director Climate Change & Place Services	13/05/2023	4	1	4	Yes	Lighting schemes in green space should consider local wildlife habitats when being planned	Ongoing	Green Spaces Manger	Transferred to team risk register
<p>Explanatory notes 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) 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) Control - Either: Reduce / Accept / Transfer to 3rd party / Close</p>											