

Christmas Lighting

At the Town Council meeting on 24.11.22 a working party composing of Cllrs Soul, Johnson and Parry was established to consider options for the operation of the town's Christmas Lights. This decision was made following a letter received by the Christmas Lights and Festival Committee requesting that the Town Council consider taking on the operation of the lights due to the costs involved in maintaining the lights and associated infrastructure.

The working party met on 21.12.22 and this report has been compiled following that meeting.

Prior to the working party meeting the Town Clerk met with a Christmas Lighting contractor responsible for Wellington Town's lights and they provided an indicative estimate of the works.

Electrical Upgrade

It is now clear that regardless of what type of lights are used, 2 of the 3 electrical lines that run externally on buildings along the High Street require replacement.

Outlined in table 1 are the quotes received by the Christmas Lights and Festival Committee along with an estimate quote received by the Town Clerk for one off costs to upgrade all the sockets and brackets. Estimate 3 which was obtained by the Town Clerk is purely to upgrade the 2 electrical lines and install sockets for a new scheme and does not include provision to replace all existing sockets or tree brackets.

Table 1 Electrical Urgent upgrade Costs

	Quote 1	Quote 2	Estimate 3
Replace electrical lines 2+3 and sockets (69 total)	£5895	£9730	£9300
Visual inspection brackets	£368	£368	n/a
Replace all brackets (76 total)	£7676	£7676	n/a
Replace all sockets	Inc	inc	Inc
Total	£13939	£17774	£9300
Contingency 10%	£1393	£1777	£930
Total	£15332	£19551	£10,230

Lighting

In addition to the one off upgrade works required as detailed above, if the Town Council was to take on responsibility for the Christmas Lighting display there will also be annual costs that will need to be budgeted for to install and remove the lights.

Lighting Options

The upgrading of the electrical lines provided an opportunity to update the current lighting scheme. Members of the working party visited various towns in Shropshire to view lighting displays over the Christmas period and felt that whilst Wem's existing lights provided a good display across a large part of the town, the installation and removal of 80 Christmas trees was labour intensive. Therefore a more concentrated scheme focusing on the High Street would be more manageable and cost effective.

Advice sought from contractors is that due to the height of the buildings there are only 2 locations where it is possible to install over the road festoons on the High Street. However, an effective display could be achieved with the use of large lighting units installed on brackets on buildings. The estimate for indicative purposes recommends installing 20 individual lighting units - 10 on each side of the High Street. There is also the opportunity to Install an additional over the road lighting feature with a bespoke message like “Christmas in Wem”.

Appendix A gives some examples of the type of lights that may be suitable.

An estimate was received from a contractor for the purchase of Christmas lights on brackets and management of the installation and removal over a 3 year period.

Year 1	Purchase 20x 1.5 mtr x 0.65mtr wall displays – test, install, remove and store. Attend and support switch on 24/7 call out.	£16900
Year 2	Test, install, remove and store. Attend and support switch on 24/7 call out.	£3900
Year 3	Test, install, remove and store. Attend and support switch on 24/7 call out.	£3900

Leasing

An alternative estimate provided by a contractor would be to lease the lights on a 3 year basis. This would cost in the region of £8650/year for the services outlined in the table above. Several towns lease Christmas lights as this requires much less capital outlay and gives the Town the ability to upgrade the lights regularly. Currently Oswestry and Ellesmere have a mixture of leased lights and owned lights. Please note even with the leasing option the electrical upgrade works would still be required along with infrastructure works so that brackets can be fixed to buildings.

Indirect Costs

In addition to the direct costs associated with the lighting display there are also indirect costs that will need to be considered including;

Item	Est. Annual costs
Msc – electricity LED lights will reduce electric costs	£500
Large Christmas Trees supply and installation	£1000
Christmas Festival/switch on costs	£1000
Total	£2500

Estimated total costs to purchase lighting display outright

Year	1	2	3
Rewiring works	£10,000		
Purchase new display	£14,000		
Installation/storage/removal	£4000	£4000	£4000
Christmas Trees supply/ nstallation	£1000	£1000	£1000
Replacement lights (of 5 year upgrade)		£3000	£3000
Msc	£500	£500	£500
Festival	£1000	£1000	£1000
Total	£30500	£9500	£9500

Estimated total costs leasing lighting display

Year	1	2	3
Rewiring works	£10,000		
Lease new display	£9000	£9000	£9000
Installation / storage/removal	inc	inc	inc
Christmas Trees supply / installation	£1000	£1000	£1000
Msc (bracket installation yr 1)	£2500	£500	£500
Festival	£1000	£1000	£1000
Total	£23500	£11500	£11500

Existing Lighting Display

The 80 Christmas trees will remain the responsibility of the Christmas Lights and Festival Committee and it will be up to the committee to decide what they wish to do with the trees. The 3 year lease for the existing lighting display comprising of the over road festoon by Wem Town Hall and the 3 displays on lamp columns has now finished. However the contractor has offered the Town Council the opportunity to purchase these display units outright for £1100.

Working Party Recommendation

The Working Party acknowledged the considerable amount of work that has been carried out over several years by volunteers to ensure that the town has a lighting display at Christmas. However as the work now required is so significant the working party consider that it would be cost effective to upgrade Wem's Christmas Lighting scheme over the next financial year.

The recommendation of the working party is that:

- **The Town Council agree to take on responsibility for Christmas Lighting in Wem and that sufficient provision is made in the 2023/24 budget to cover the cost of replacing the electrical lines, purchasing or leasing a new lighting scheme along with a contract to install, store and remove the lights.**
- **£21,000 for the upgrading of the electrics and purchase of new lights (if desired) is allocated from reserves.**
- **The lighting scheme is restricted predominantly to the High Street between the Church and Halo Hairdressers.**
- **Any new lighting scheme should be traditional and in keeping with the town.**
- **Discussions are held with Wem Christmas Lights and Festival over the future running of the festival and funds are allocated in the budget to cover security and entertainment to enable a festival to be held in 2023.**

Clerks Recommendation – existing Banner light and lamppost lights

That the 3 lamppost lights and over the road banner light are purchased for £1100. This can be financed partly from the £1000 balance remaining in the 2022-23 small grants budget. The balance made up from the slight excess approx. £200 in the Jubilee accounts. At the final Jubilee steering group meeting held on 14.6.22 the following recommendation was made

“Any underspend from the event be donated to the Christmas Lights Festival Committee. This recommendation will be subject to Connexus permitting the underspend from its Connexus Grant for this purpose.”

Part of the Jubilee underspend was due to an underspend on the Connexus grant which was for street decoration. Therefore it is preferred that these funds are used to purchase infrastructure rather than run another event .