



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cabinet

Wednesday 11th September 2024

**Report of the Head of Streetcare
M. Roberts**

Matter for Decision

Wards Affected: All Wards

Report Title: Part-Night Lighting Pilot

Purpose of the Report:

To seek approval for a proposed part-night street lighting pilot to look at the feasibility of switching off street lights in places during the early hours to save on energy costs.

Executive Summary:

The cost of energy to the Council has increased significantly since the 22/23 financial year and, despite an above inflationary increase in the funding allocation and energy saving measures to date, the current street lighting energy budget of £1.18M is predicted to outturn some £150K over budget this year. In the current financial context an ongoing budget deficit for energy would be very difficult to sustain.

Earlier this year the Council considered a number of lighting energy saving strategies including extra dimming of lighting and part-night lighting. The extra dimming was approved but there were Member concerns regarding the part-night lighting and it was acknowledged in the decision report that further work was needed to complete a satisfactory impact assessment in relation to such savings. This included a pilot exercise, details of which were required to be submitted for scrutiny and approval.

This report provides details of the proposed pilot scheme to facilitate further consultations and impact assessment.

Background:

The cost of energy to the Council has increased significantly since the 22/23 financial year and, despite an above inflationary increase in the funding allocation and energy saving measures to date, the current street lighting energy budget of £1.18M is predicted to outturn some £150K over budget this year. Furthermore, in the current financial context an ongoing budget deficit for energy would be very difficult to sustain

On 22th March 2024 the then Cabinet Board and Scrutiny discussed the implementation of energy saving strategies relating to additional dimming of lighting and part-night lighting. The extra dimming was approved but there were Member concerns regarding the part-night lighting and it was acknowledged in the decision report that further work was needed to complete a satisfactory impact assessment in relation to such savings. This included a pilot exercise, details of which were required to be submitted for scrutiny and approval.

On 19th July 2024 a part night lighting pilot proposal was presented for Scrutiny and the significant points raised by Members are covered in the report.

Further to previously commissioned consultancy work it has been initially assessed that part-night lighting could include switching off up to around 14,000 lanterns during the small hours.

Pilot Scheme Proposals

No of proposed sites: 7

Proposed location of sites and the number of lights in each location: This information can be found in Appendix A. The locations have been selected for geographic spread throughout the authority, are predominately self-contained, and should not affect surrounding areas not participating in the trial. Further to the earlier consultation, locations do not currently include any locations flagged by the Community Safety Team/Police as hotspots for anti-social behaviour, or locations forming part of 'Operation Sentinel' which are subject to increased presence from the Police and community safety partners. Furthermore, the trial has concentrated on urban, more densely populated areas and no rural or isolated locations have been chosen for the pilot, and the pilot areas do not include any main arterial routes and associated vehicle/pedestrian 'conflict' areas. Prior to commencement there will be further dialogue with the Community Safety Team / Police team to ensure the most up to date information is being used and to ensure full engagement with the Lighting Section in the monitoring process.

Timing and duration of the pilot study: It is proposed the pilot would run for the month of November. In dialogue with partners, the pilot can be terminated early in individual locations if need be.

Times when the lights will be turned off: It is proposed lights in the pilot areas will be turned off between 01:00hrs and 05:00hrs.

Scrutiny Comments

During scrutiny, Members made further enquiries concerning resident communication and feedback links. It was stated that as part of November's trial, additional consultation will be undertaken with local residents. The pilots will be advertised through a letter drop inviting feedback both prior to and during the trial, providing details of how feedback can be submitted. VAWDASV impacts were also queried along with further enquiries into the choice of the locations. It was noted that consultation with such as the Police, Thrive Woman's Aid, and the Community Safety Team are and would be ongoing. In summary, post scrutiny, Members were supportive of the details for the pilot proposal.

Further to scrutiny queries an email was circulated to all 22 Authorities in Wales requesting information on their street lighting arrangements. 16 Councils have responded and 7 identified that they are already implementing part night lighting to reduce costs. The majority of councils utilising part night lighting switch off a significant quantity of their lighting between 12am – 5am, this includes:

Blaenau-Gwent (4,442 lanterns);
Caerphilly (16,922 lanterns);
Ceredigion (4,391 lanterns);
Flintshire (700 lanterns);
Pembrokeshire (12,000 lanterns);
Powys (7068 lanterns); and,
Rhondda Cynon Taf (13,000 lanterns)

Financial Impacts:

It is estimated that part-night lighting has the potential to save up to around £180,000 annually. This estimate would be refined after the pilot exercise is concluded.

Integrated Impact Assessment:

A first stage impact assessment has been undertaken to assist the Council in discharging its legislative duties under the Equality Act 2010, the Welsh Language Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. The first stage assessment has indicated that a more in-depth assessment is required and the proposed pilot is to help inform such assessment. The first stage integrated impact assessment can be found in Appendix B.

Should a decision to introduce part night lighting on a more permanent basis be brought forward after the pilot exercise then the associated report will be accompanied by a Stage 2 Integrated Impact Assessment.

Valleys Communities Impacts:

There is a potential for valley communities, as elsewhere in the County Borough, to be affected by part-night lighting if proposed to be implemented subsequent to the pilot being implemented and assessed.

Workforce Impacts:

Employees, as citizens, may be affected by part-night lighting.

Legal Impacts:

Further to guidance issued by the Institution of Lighting Professionals, the Council has a duty, where street lighting is installed, to ensure such lighting is maintained. However, there is nothing to stop part-night lighting proposals being implemented in appropriate circumstances.

Risk Management Impacts:

Part-night lighting could give rise to some increased exposure to potential claims from the public. On the other hand, any savings implemented would reduce financial risk on the Council going forward.

Crime and Disorder Impacts:

This pilot exercise is proposed to help assess any crime and disorder impacts in terms of both crime and fear of crime, and to explore issues further with the Police and Community Safety Partners.

Following a separate presentation of the pilot proposals the Acting Chief Inspector for Neighbourhood Policing has confirmed “they have no concerns regarding any of the proposed pilot locations”.

Counter Terrorism Impacts:

There is not expected to be any impact on counter terrorism arising from part-night lighting.

Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Impacts:

This pilot exercise is proposed to help assess any impacts. The local charity Thrive Woman’s Aid have been consulted on the pilot proposals and have provided their thoughts. In a recent meeting “Thrive” have expressed concerns with Part Night Lighting stating that Port Talbot was currently a ‘very high risk area’ for VAWDASV and they believed that there has already been a rise in issues since the recent TATA steel works news was announced.

Consultation:

Some formal consultation has already been completed but as set out in the report additional soundings will be undertaken alongside the pilot.

Recommendations:

Having had due regard to the first stage Integrated Impact Assessment, and the need to gather further information to complete a full assessment, it is recommended that Members approve the proposed part-night lighting pilot contained in the report.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

To trial the implementation of part-night lighting for a short period to help assess the impact of such a measure and to inform future decision making.

Implementation of Decision:

The decision is proposed for implementation after the three day call in period

Appendices:

Appendix A – details regarding pilot locations

Appendix B – IIA Screening Assessment

List of Background Papers:

Report to Environment, Regeneration and Streetscene Services
Scrutiny Committee – 19th July, 2024: Part Night Lighting

Report to Environment, Regeneration and Streetscene Services
Scrutiny Committee - 22nd March, 2023: Street Lighting Energy
Consultation Response

Officer Contact:

Mr. Steve Owen

Highways and Drainage Services Manager

e-mail: s.owen@npt.gov.uk