



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Environment, Regeneration and Street Scene Cabinet Board

22nd March 2024

Report of the Head of Streetcare M. Roberts

Matter for Decision

Wards Affected: All Wards

Report Title: Street Lighting Energy – Outcome of the Public Consultation Exercise

Purpose of the Report:

To advise Members on the outcome of the public consultation exercise which was undertaken in relation to two potential street lighting energy saving proposals.

Executive Summary:

The cost of energy to the Council has increased significantly and, despite an above inflationary increase in the funding allocation this year, the current street lighting energy budget of £1.4M is predicted to outturn £295K over budget. Furthermore, in the ongoing financial situation any ongoing deficit would be very difficult to sustain. As such there is a need to consider potential savings strategies to reduce lighting energy costs.

This report provides feedback to Members on the outcome of a six week public consultation to assist Members in determining which, if any, of the savings proposals should be implemented to assist with the budget position whilst ensuring the council is able to deliver its statutory duties associated with street lighting.

Background:

The cost of street lighting energy has increased significantly and, despite an above inflationary increase in the funding allocation this year, the current street lighting energy budget of £1.4M is predicted to outturn £295K over budget. Furthermore, in the ongoing financial situation any ongoing deficit would be very difficult to sustain. As such there is a need to consider potential savings strategies to reduce lighting energy costs to help with balancing the budget.

Previous energy saving measures

Between 2012 and 2018, the Council undertook a large scale street lighting renewal project, which as well as replacing life expired columns, cables and lanterns introduced some energy efficiency measures including new fluorescent lanterns in residential areas with electronic switch gear and dimming. Subsequently, in 2020, the Public Lighting Section commenced a further SALIX funded project to replace high wattage sodium oxide and high pressure sodium lanterns with more energy efficient LED lanterns. During this project over 6000 lanterns were replaced with lower energy units. If the SALIX project had not been undertaken then at today's energy rate of 41p per kWh the Council's lighting energy bill would be a further £712,000 above the current energy costs.

In addition to the above, in the recent context that energy costs were going to remain high and that trials indicated a small reduction in

power levels across all lanterns would make no discernible difference, then 3 watts has been 'trimmed' off all lanterns to provide some immediate savings and relief from soaring costs. This measure was implemented immediately by Officers to maximise in-year savings. Full year estimated savings from this action are expected to be in the region of £95k per annum at today's energy rate of 41p / KWH.

Proposed Energy Saving measures

Aside from switching some lighting off altogether, there are two further potential savings strategies that could be considered and were the subject of the recent consultation exercise:

Increased dimming

There are currently 10,600 LED lanterns installed within the county borough which it is believed may be suitable for dimming up to 25% (i.e. significantly above the 3 watt 'trimming of power levels already implemented). This could be done all evening or within the small hours. The implementation of this proposal would secure an annual saving of £115k per annum.

[The fluorescent lanterns in the borough, some 8500 55W PLL units largely in residential areas, are already under a dimming regime following previous investment and cannot be dimmed further.]

Part Night Lighting

As opposed to, or in addition to, increased dimming the lights in many areas could potentially be switched off in the small hours when vehicular and pedestrian activity is significantly reduced. Further to consultancy work commissioned by officers, a proposal in this regard could include switching off up to around 14,000 lanterns during the hours of 01:00 – 05:00hrs.

The savings associated with part night time lighting between the hours specified would amount to £218k, whilst the cumulative impact of dimming and part night time lighting would deliver an annual saving of £285k.

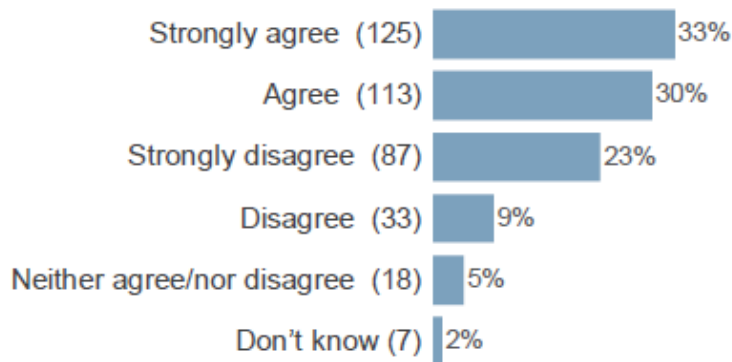
Consultation Exercise

The aforementioned potential energy saving measures were highlighted in 2023 whilst acknowledging they would need to be the subject of public consultation, in addition to consultation with other stakeholders across the council.

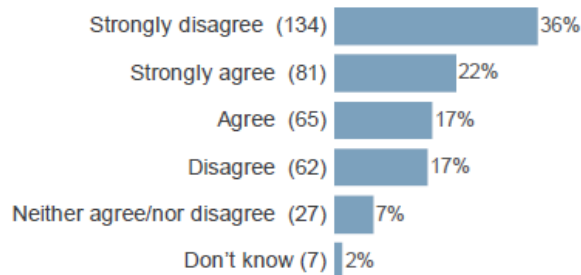
The public consultation was undertaken by means of 'Online Polling' and ran for a period of 6 weeks. In addition to the online polling, direct consultation was undertaken with the Emergency Services as well as the Council's Community Safety and Road Safety Teams. In tandem with the consultation, seven trial sites were established around the authority for Members and their constituents to view the impact of 25% dimming. These were live on 25th / 26th / 29th & 30th January 2024, and information on the sites was circulated to all Members by the corporate team.

There were 384 respondents to the public consultation of whom 98% lived in Neath Port Talbot. The 5 main questions asked, together with the responses, were as follows:

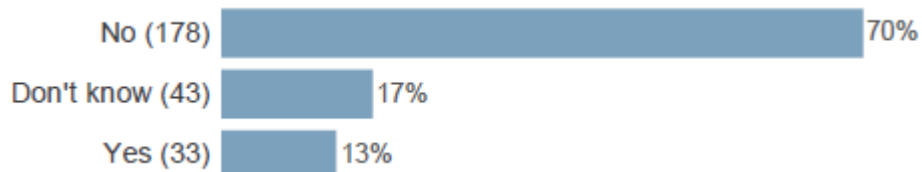
1) How do you feel about the option of dimming 10,600 LED lanterns in the county borough?



2) How do you feel about the option for lights in residential streets to be switched off in the small hours (i.e. up to around 14,000 lanterns during the hours of 1am – 5am)?

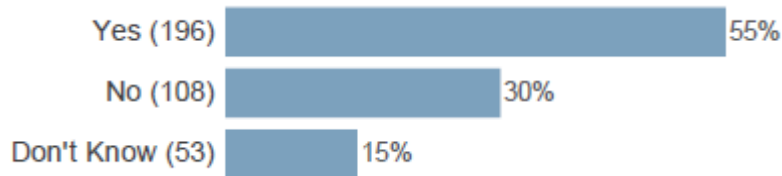


3) If you disagree or strongly disagree with question 2, are there any alternative times for lights in residential streets to be switched off that would be acceptable to you?



Followed by: If yes, what times would be acceptable to you?

- 4) If these proposals were to go ahead, would you have concerns about any specific locations?



Followed by: If yes, please list these locations and why you would be concerned about them in the box below

- 5) Is there anything else you want to say about the proposed options for cutting the cost of street lighting?

[More detailed analysis is provided in the appendices.]

In terms of the responses from specific departmental consultees, the Community Safety Team were reassured with regard to the minimal impact that is likely to occur as a consequence of the dimming of lights. In terms of part night lighting, they have identified a number of hotspots for anti-social behaviour where they would have concerns. These areas are part of 'Operation Sentinel' and are subject to increased patrols from the Police and presence from community safety personnel and partners. Any proposals associated with reduced lighting in these specific areas may be counter-productive.

The Road Safety Team were also supportive of the proposed dimming of lights and indicated that they would have no major concerns with regard to part night lighting on condition that the main arterial routes and 'conflict' areas would remain unaffected i.e. that these would not be subject to part night lighting.

See also Crime and Disorder impacts section.

Financial Impacts:

The order of potential savings would be as follows:

Dimming the output of LED Lanterns by 25% all night - an annual saving of up to £115,000.

Part Night Lighting where potentially suitable between 01:00 – 05:00hrs - an annual saving of up to £218,000.

Part Night Lighting where potentially suitable and dimming of LEDs elsewhere - an annual saving of up to £285,000.

[Note: All potential savings are modelled on a current energy cost of 41p/KWH.]

If the 25% dimming of LED lanterns were implemented then, along with the previous 3watt 'trimming' of power levels, a saving around of around £210k should be achieved.

Integrated Impact Assessment:

A First Stage IIA has been completed and, taken with the consultation responses, is considered sufficient for the recommendation, although if part night lighting were to be contemplated further then further in-depth impact assessment would be required.

Valleys Communities Impacts:

There is a potential for valley communities, as elsewhere in the County Borough, to be affected by the potential saving strategies in particular the part night lighting proposal.

Workforce Impacts:

Employees, as other citizens, may be affected by the savings strategies in particular the part night lighting proposal.

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 the proposal being implemented in appropriate circumstance.

Risk Management Impacts:

Part night lighting in particular could give rise to some increased exposure to potential claims from the public. On the other hand, any savings strategies which are implemented would reduce financial risk on the Council with future cost increases.

Crime and Disorder Impacts:

Crime, and fear of crime, are matters of public concern and are one reason why the consultation has been undertaken. Feedback from South Wales Police was as follows:

“We would be opposed to part night lighting due to the deterrent that such lighting provides in relation to ASB, crime and disorder, particularly in more isolated or rural areas. In addition to this, the fear of crime amongst the community is likely to be heightened through part night lighting schemes, even if crime recording statistics do not support this view, which we would be keen to avoid.”

Counter Terrorism Impacts:

There is not expected to be any impact on counter terrorism arising from the savings strategies.

Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Impacts:

See Crime and Disorder impacts.

Consultation:

Consultation response is the subject of this report.

Recommendations:

Having had due regard to the First Stage Integrated Impact Assessment it is recommended that Members:

1. Note and consider the feedback from the consultation;
2. Approve the 25% dimming of LED lanterns;
3. Defer a decision to implement part night lighting in general.
4. Approve the undertaking of part night lighting trials in specific areas over the next 12 months, as agreed with the Anti-Social Behaviour Team, to inform further impact assessment work.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

To enable some savings to be made to offset the large increases in energy costs, and to provide Members with more information on the impact of part night lighting.

Implementation of Decision:

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

Appendices:

Appendix A - Public Lighting Consultation Questionnaire

Appendix B – Analysis of Consultation Response

Appendix C – First Stage Screening Integrated Impact Assessment

List of Background Papers:

None.

Officer Contact:

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