

ARRANGEMENTS FOR CHRISTMAS LIGHTS IN HEREFORDSHIRE**Report By: Head Of Economic And Community Services****Wards Affected**

Countywide

Purpose

1. To outline to Members the arrangements for Christmas Lights and associated events in Herefordshire.

Financial Implications

2. The report is for information.

Background

3. To meet the financial challenges of the Council and specifically the Economic and Community Services Division, it was decided by the Cabinet Member to withdraw the grant to market towns for Christmas lighting from 2008 giving over a years notice to the affected towns. This amounted to £3,000, divided between Bromyard, Ross on Wye, Ledbury, Leominster and Kington who each received £600.
4. Historically, before the Unitary Authority came into existence, the Christmas lights and events were funded in a variety of ways. In the Market Towns budgets generally comprised contributions from the relevant Town Council, the local Chamber of Trade or Chamber of Commerce, and also private sponsorship. In Hereford City, the City Council contributed funding with money also coming from the then Chamber TEC. At local government reorganisation none of the outgoing district councils provided the market towns with any revenue funding towards Christmas lights or events. Therefore, the only budgetary provision for Christmas lights and events transferring from the outgoing authorities to the Herefordshire Council was the Hereford City contribution.
5. In October 1998 it was decided that Herefordshire Council should continue supporting the City in the same financial and maintenance role that it had been used to under the outgoing Hereford City Council. It was also acknowledged that the new unitary authority was operating on a county basis, and despite no budgetary provision being available from the outgoing authorities, a decision was made to support the lights and events in the market towns. It was agreed that a maximum grant of £500 be offered to each market town. Over the years, this has increased marginally and for 2007 was £600. The £600 was a small part of the cost for operating Christmas Lights and associated events in the market towns, for example in Leominster the costs of Christmas lights is £16,000.
6. There is a different arrangement for Hereford City in that the finance for fixtures, fitting and operational equipment is met by Herefordshire Council to the cost of £10,650. This is a direct expenditure from Highways and Transportation, rather than a grant. Hereford City Council now pays for the lease of the Christmas Lights and this is managed by Hereford City Partnership at a cost of £47,000 in 2007/08. In addition the City Council gave £1,000 in grants to local retailers to improve the Christmas illuminations in their areas and this amount is expected to increase year

on year. The level of subsidy to Hereford City Council reflects the number of illuminations in Hereford. Being the county town the city has a high population base and is the focus for visitors and shoppers during the Christmas period from throughout the county and beyond.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the report be noted.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- None identified.

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