

EXETER CITY COUNCIL**SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – ECONOMY
7 MARCH 2013****CHRISTMAS LIGHTS TASK AND FINISH GROUP****1. PURPOSE**

- 1.1 At its meeting on 17 January, Economy Scrutiny Committee agreed to establish a Task and Finish Group to look at the future funding of City Centre Christmas Lights. This brief report sets out the suggested scope for the Task and Finish Group.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Christmas Lights project was historically delivered by the Exeter City Centre Consortium (disbanded in 2007). The City Council has taken the lead for delivering the Christmas Lights project since 2007.
- 2.2 Business funding for the Lights project has gradually reduced over a number of years – with the trend of a decline in funding starting whilst the City Centre Consortium was still leading on the Christmas Lights project. Christmas Lights were only delivered in 2011 and 2012 due to private sponsorship deals.
- 2.3 The area covered by Christmas Lights has gradually reduced, with the core area now lit being limited to Princesshay (funded through the Princesshay service charge), Guildhall Shopping Centre (funded through the Guildhall Centre service charge) and High Street. Some Christmas Lights have also been delivered in areas such as Fore Street and Castle Street (funded by local businesses).
- 2.4 Cowick Street businesses have worked together to deliver St Thomas Christmas Lights in both 2011 and 2012.

3. PROPOSAL

- 3.1 To seek a resolution on the identification of a sustainable model for future Christmas Lights funding a Task & Finish Group is now proposed, with the key issues needing to be addressed as follows:-
- Identifying the case for Christmas Lights – do they deliver an economic benefit?
 - Review of mechanisms for delivering the City Centre Christmas Lights project during the last decade – identifying weaknesses in the process.
 - Identifying funding vehicles used for support Christmas Lights projects in other towns & cities – and considering practicalities of such funding mechanisms for Exeter.
 - Identifying role played by Business Improvement Districts in supporting Christmas Lights projects.
 - Examining opportunities – and means of delivery – for major corporate sponsorship of elements of the Christmas Lights display.

- Making recommendations on a way forward for the Christmas Lights project in 2013 – and during the lifespan of the draft City Centre Strategy.

3.2 It is proposed that the Task & Finish Group should conclude its work by end April 2013, with a report on outputs to be submitted to the 30 May meeting of Scrutiny Committee – Economy.

3.3 It is proposed that Task & Finish Group membership should be as follows:-

- Cllr Tyna Crow (Group Chair & Chair, Scrutiny Committee – Economy).
- Cllr Rosie Denham (Portfolio Holder – Economy & Tourism).
- Cllr Paul Bull (Labour Group representative).
- Cllr Percy Prowse (Conservative Group representative)
- Cllr Stella Brock (Liberal Democrat Group representative).

Officer support will be provided by the City Centre Manager.

3.4 It is proposed that a range of expert witnesses will be called and views will be canvassed from Exeter Chamber of Commerce, City Centre Management Partnership, key retailers and City Centre businesses.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 To be identified through Task & Finish Group recommendations.

5. RECOMMENDATION that:

5.1 Scrutiny support the proposals on Task & Finish Group scoping and membership set out in paragraphs 3.1 to 3.4 above.

RICHARD BALL
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR ECONOMY

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)

Background papers used in compiling this report:

None