

STREET LIGHTING PRIVATE FINANCE INITIATIVE IMPLEMENTATION

To: **Cabinet**

Date: **22nd May 2012**

From: **Enterprise, Growth and Community Infrastructure Overview and Scrutiny Committee (ECGI OSC)**

Electoral division(s): **All**

Forward Plan ref: **N/a** *Key Decision:* **No**

Purpose: **To set out the comments and recommendations from the ECGI OSC in relation to the implementation of the street lighting Private Finance Initiative (PFI).**

Recommendation: **Cabinet is recommended to:**

- 1) Ensure that the general public and local Councillors from all tiers of local government are consulted appropriately about changes to local street lighting provision prior to works taking place**
- 2) Develop a communications protocol between the Council and the Service Provider so that there is clarity about communications roles and responsibilities**
- 3) Undertake public consultations in order to gauge public satisfaction with new street lighting, particularly in terms of optimum levels of dimming and perceptions about white light emissions.**

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Enterprise, Growth and Community Infrastructure Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on 30th March 2012 to review the progress of the street lighting PFI contract. The Committee questioned:
- Councillor Steve Criswell, Cabinet Member for Community Infrastructure
 - County Council Officers: John Onslow and Chris Capps
 - Service Provider representative: Pat Walsh, Balfour Beatty General Manager.
- 1.2 The purpose of the street lighting PFI contract is to replace all County Council street lights which will be beyond their design life at the end of the contract plus 5 years and to maintain all the street lighting, illuminated road signs and bollards so that within three years, 99% of the stock is always in illumination. The contract was awarded to Balfour Beatty and commenced on site on 1st July 2011.
- 1.3 A full record of the discussion is recorded in the Committee minutes, which are available from the Scrutiny and Improvement Officer. However, Members had concerns about the adequacy of local consultation activity in relation to changes to street lighting provision and decided to raise these for Cabinet's attention. The Committee also agreed to recommend that public consultations should be conducted to enable the Council to determine the optimum brightness of street lights across the county.

2. LOCAL CONSULTATION

- 2.1 The Mayor of Whittlesey, Councillor Kay Mayor, addressed the Committee in order to express her dissatisfaction, and those of local residents, with the lack of community consultation about changes to street lighting provision in Whittlesey. Councillor Mayor advised that there had been no consultation with Whittlesey Town Council prior to the street lighting works taking place and that some of the changes had not been satisfactory. This had resulted in complaints to the Council, who had referred the complainants to the Service Provider, who had referred them back to the Council. Councillor Mayor advised that she had sent letters to the Council and sought the intervention of her local MP and that this had resulted in a site visit from the Council which had led to improvements in the allocation of street lighting columns. However, Councillor Mayor felt the process had been inconsistent and poorly managed.
- 2.2 The Chairman invited County Councillor Fred Brown to address the Committee as he wished to raise concerns about the levels of community consultation in his division (Littleport). Councillor Brown advised that street lighting changes were in train in Littleport and that he was dissatisfied with the levels of community consultation in the local area, and stated that he had not been made aware of the proposed changes. Councillor Brown stressed the criticality of consultation with communities and local Members and stated that the existing contract was flawed as it did not make this mandatory. Councillor Farrer also expressed strong concerns about the lack of consultation in his division (St Neots, Eaton Socon and Eynesbury) and reiterated the importance of Member involvement at an early stage.

- 2.3 In response, the Cabinet Member and Officers apologised for the lack of community consultation and involvement in Whittlesey and Littleport and stated that they were committed to ensuring that communities would be fully involved in future. They emphasised that a review had been undertaken in relation to the community involvement aspects of the initiative and that all the recommendations from this review would be implemented. A dedicated communications resource had now been allocated and the Committee were assured that lessons had been learned from the very early stages of the PFI project.
- 2.4 The Committee concluded that the original consultation with local communities about changes to street lighting provision had not been well managed. However, it was accepted that these issues had been recognised by the Cabinet Member and Officers and that improvements were being made for the future.
- 2.5 Nonetheless, the Committee wished to stress the importance of local consultation. Members also agreed that further improvements would be made by ensuring that there was a protocol in place between the Council and the Service Provider so that there would be no repeat of the situation described by Councillor Mayor.

3. DETERMINING OPTIMUM BRIGHTNESS OF STREET LIGHTS

- 3.1 The Committee noted that the contract will provide modern and energy efficient street lights that emit white light (which produce a greater level of light (lumens) than the higher wattage 'orange' lanterns) which can be dimmed by 40% overnight.
- 3.2 The Committee discussed these changes and felt that it would be important for consultations to be conducted regarding public satisfaction with the white lights so that, for example, there is a greater understanding about whether the new lights reduce 'glare' (a visual sensation caused by excessive and uncontrolled brightness, which can be disabling or uncomfortable). It would also facilitate greater understanding about the optimum levels of dimming across the county.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 Cabinet is recommended to:
- 1) Ensure that the general public and local Councillors from all tiers of local government are consulted appropriately about changes to local street lighting provision prior to works taking place
 - 2) Develop a communications protocol between the Council and the Service Provider so that there is clarity about communications roles and responsibilities
 - 3) Undertake public consultations in order to gauge public satisfaction with new street lighting, particularly in terms of optimum levels of dimming and perceptions about white light emissions.

5. ALIGNMENT WITH PRIORITIES AND WAYS OF WORKING

- 5.1 The following bullet points set out details of implications identified by the Scrutiny and Improvement Officer:

Developing the local economy for the benefit of all

- No significant implications identified.

Helping people live healthy and independent lives

- No significant implications identified.

Supporting and protecting vulnerable people

- No significant implications identified.

Ways of working

The Committee anticipates that the implementation of the recommendations will strengthen 'working at the local level'.

6. SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

Resources and performance

Finance

- 6.1 The implementation of recommendation 1 could result in additional costs to support community involvement, but it is anticipated that these would at least be offset by the reduction in costs involved in handling complaints.

Performance

- 6.2 No significant implications.

Statutory, legal and risk implications

Key risks

- 6.3 No significant implications.

Statutory

- 6.4 No significant implications.

Equality and diversity implications

- 6.5 No significant implications.

Engagement and consultation

- 6.6 The Committee anticipates that the implementation of the recommendations will strengthen local engagement and consultation.

<u>Source documents</u>	<u>Location</u>
Enterprise, Growth and Community Infrastructure Overview and Scrutiny Committee minutes and reports from the meeting held on 30 th March 2012	Shire Hall Room 116 Contact Robert Jakeman 01223 699143