

Communities, Housing and Environment Committee

17 November 2015

Is the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting?

Yes

KCC Street Lights consultation

Final Decision-Maker	Communities, Housing and Environment Committee
Lead Head of Service	Angela Woodhouse
Lead Officer and Report Author	Roger Adley
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. That the Committee considers comments from Councillors and Heads of Service and supports Option 1, Part Night Lighting – ‘what we have at the moment’ - subject to:
 - Maintaining the current summer and winter hours of operation
 - Maintaining the current all night operation in:
 - busy main roads,
 - town centres,
 - places where the police say it may lead to more crimes,
 - places with sheltered housing and where vulnerable people live,
 - places with emergency services, hospitals and nursing homes,
 - pedestrian crossings, subways and alleyways that go to an all-night lit road,
 - where there are speed humps, roundabouts and traffic islands,
 - roads that have local authority or police CCTV cameras and
 - footpaths that may have or might be unsafe next to roads.
 - All night lighting being extended to areas where there is high public demand for it, and in densely populated urban areas on the outskirts of Maidstone, and in rural areas where there are train stations or other transport or employment hubs.
2. The Committee supports the dimming of lights between Midnight and 5am to reduce light pollution and save energy. It does not support dimming lights at other times because of the needs of commuters and shift workers.
3. The Committee requests that KCC undertakes ongoing monitoring of the statistical linkage between accidents and reduced/dimmed lighting – particularly in the pre-dawn period in winter months, and reviews lighting arrangements accordingly.

This report relates to the following corporate priorities:

- Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all
- Securing a successful economy for Maidstone Borough

Timetable

<i>Meeting</i>	<i>Date</i>
Communities, Housing and Environment Committee	17 November 2015

KCC Street Lights consultation

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Kent County Council is switching to LED street lights and wants views on street lighting options across Kent.
 - 1.2 The consultation closes on 29 November and the Committee is invited to consider comments received from Councillors and Heads of Service before submitting the Council's response to KCC.
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2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 There is no law to say KCC must provide street lighting but if it does it has a duty to make sure it works properly.
 - 2.2 Between December 2013 and autumn 2014 KCC converted approximately half of Kent's street lights to part-night operation; these lights are located mainly in residential areas and minor roads. This is currently saving about £1m each year.
 - 2.3 In 2016 KCC will be changing all of its street lights to LEDs which use less electricity, are better for the environment, and are more reliable.
 - 2.4 LED lights are easier to control and it is easier to detect faults. By controlling the lights better it can also save more money.
 - 2.5 It will also be possible to dim the lights to save even more money. KCC says this would only be done when it is quiet and that it would make sure there is enough light for people to see their way around.
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3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

3.1 Option 1, Part Night Lighting - what we have at the moment

- 3.2 Street lights are switched off in the winter between 12 midnight and 5.30am in the morning. In the summer time the street lights are switched off between 1am and 6.30am in the morning.
- 3.3 This would be done in residential areas and on quieter roads. It would not be done in:
 - Main routes with a significant night-time traffic record between 12.00 midnight and 05.30am
 - Town centres
 - Areas identified by the police as having an existing record of crime or having the potential for increased crime levels if the street lighting is changed

- Areas with sheltered housing and other residences accommodating vulnerable people
 - Areas with operational emergency services sites, including hospitals and nursing homes
 - Formal pedestrian crossings, subways and enclosed footpaths and alleyways where one end links to a road that is lit all night
 - Where road safety measures are in place on the highway, such as roundabouts, central carriageway islands, chicanes, speed humps, etc.
 - Roads that have local authority CCTV or police surveillance equipment
 - Sites with existing or with potential road or footpath safety concerns
- 3.4 KCC has been working very closely with Kent Police. They have told KCC they have found no link between crime and changes to street lighting.
- 3.5 This option would save £5.2 million and cut down on light pollution.
- 3.6 **Option 2, All Night Lighting**
- 3.7 This option would save £4.8 million but KCC says it would have to find £400,000 to keep the lights on all night and this might mean cuts to other services.
- 3.8 **Dimming lights**
- 3.9 KCC also wants views about dimming lights when roads are less busy - Late evening, e.g. 8pm to midnight, Overnight, e.g. midnight to 5am, Early morning, e.g. 5am to 8am, if dark.
- 3.10 This could also help to save money.
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4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The majority view from Councillors and Heads of Service is in favour of part night lighting however important reservations have been raised about the effect on crime in densely populated urban areas on the outskirts of Maidstone, our night time economy, commuters and shift workers.
- 4.2 The Committee is therefore recommended to support 'Option 1 – Part Night Lighting', subject to the hours and areas of operation listed in KCCs consultation, and to all night lighting being extended to areas where there is high public demand for it, and in densely populated urban areas on the outskirts of Maidstone, and in rural areas where there are train stations or other transport or employment hubs.
- 4.3 The Committee is also recommended to support dimming of lights but only between Midnight and 5am due to the number of people travelling in the early morning and late evening and to provide sufficient lighting for council and other workers.
- 4.4 In addition the Committee is recommended to request that KCC undertakes ongoing monitoring of the statistical linkage between accidents and

reduced/dimmed lighting – particularly in the pre-dawn period in winter months, and reviews lighting arrangements accordingly.

- 4.5 This is recommended because of the latest RoSPA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents) advice. In its report Street Lighting and Road Safety, August 2015, it states that: "The latest evidence concluded that there was no evidence of an association between reduced lighting and night-time collisions across England and Wales. However, previous research has concluded that there are positive safety benefits. Surveys have shown that the public are in favour of street lighting as a way of improving road safety and that, if anything, it needs to be improved in some areas.

"There are economic and environmental reasons why some organisations may wish to reduce the amount of lighting. However there are safety reasons why lighting needs to be available.

"In some locations, a reduction in lighting quality may not increase the risk of an accident. However, there is the danger that an unconsidered removal or reduction in quality could actually increase accidents and their severity.

"Therefore, when considering removal or dimming of lights, location based traffic and accident evidence should be assessed. Accident rates should be monitored to ensure that sacrificing the quality of lighting does not unduly increase the risk. Increases in risk may ultimately lead to lives being lost."

- 4.6 These recommendations take account of the following views.

In favour of part Night Lighting

Cllr Matt Boughton

We have to accept that due to budgetary constraints tough decisions need to be made. One of which would be to use part night lighting in areas where the demand is not as high as other areas

James Bailey, Development Manager

From a planning point of view, I would support the part-night lighting initiative currently in operation with the special dispensation given to those areas as set out in the consultation document. It is important that lighting is provided to these areas which are regarded as sensitive or heavily trafficked. Otherwise, in terms of reducing light pollution and the reduction of energy consumption, the part night lighting initiative (if continued) would be in accordance with the aims and objectives of the NPPF.

John Littlemore, Head of Housing and Community Services

I am not aware of any empirical evidence that removing lighting during these periods has resulted in an increase in criminality in our area. There is the obvious perception issue that is raised by members of the public (that crime increases) but again I have not seen any objection that directly relates to streets in our borough. As long as KCC continues to employ the current caveats listed in the consultation document I would not have an objection from a community safety point of view.

Sarah Robson, Housing and Communities Manager

Although there can be a public perception that areas are not safe and crime (e.g. burglary, theft of or from a vehicle, robbery, violence and sexual assault) or road traffic collisions (RTCs) may increase, reduced street lighting in Maidstone has not shown any associated issues with either. As long as risks are carefully assessed, street lighting can be reduced without an increase in RTCs and crime.

In favour of All Night lighting

Cllr Marion Ring

My response is that the lights should be on all night, the crimes in my wards from residents' gardens and sheds are on the increase. Also damage to parked cars is causing great stress to people in York Road and other roads in my ward. And I am sure this crime increase is due to streets being in the dark overnight.

Cllr Paul Harper

I think we should oppose the concept of turning street lights off at night, we pride ourselves on a night time economy and we need the streets lit for people returning in the early hours. Also for shift workers they need the street lit for getting home and going to work. There is also the issue of general community safety.

Dimming Lights

Cllr Matt Boughton

I would only support this between midnight and 5am due to the number of people travelling in the early morning and late evening.

John Littlemore + Sarah Robson

From an environmental point of view I would support the dimming of lights during the quiet period suggested by KCC, as this reduces both light pollution and assists with energy conservation.

Further comments

Cllr Matt Boughton

The solution should be creative and policy makers unafraid of going to part night lighting – particularly between midnight and 5am. However what is right for one area is not the same for another area and we need to assess the need based on crime figures, proportion of elderly residents, and transport links. Furthermore, within this consultation should be provision that on certain residential streets, we should have all lights operating at a similar brightness to each other – too often certain streetlights are turned off when one 50 metres down the roads is left on.

Cllr Louise Brice

In many ways many residents support some form of turning off the lights overnight. However we have had many requests to make the dimming of the lights take place at a slightly later time – say after 1-1.30am, or after the last train. In Staplehurst our estates get extremely dark, and making your way home after the last train in pitch black is now very intimidating. I was also told by KCC that they were liaising with the police to understand if the light

switch-off would have any impact on crime rates. However, when I asked the police what reporting mechanic there was to monitor this, it was not clear exactly who would be looking into this. So it would be reassuring to understand how this is being monitored, and on what basis.

Andy Bell, Interim Head of Environment and Street Scene
 Part night lighting should not present operational problems for Maidstone’s workforce given KCCs assurances about hours and areas of operation but the council should request ongoing monitoring of statistical linkage between accidents and reduced/dimmed lighting – particularly in the pre-dawn period in winter months.

Maidstone Town Centre Management
 TCM will respond directly to the consultation and will be emphasising the importance of lighting for effective CCTV coverage.

5. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 5.1 Maidstone Borough Councillors and Heads of Service have been consulted and asked to submit their views for inclusion in this report. These are set out above.
- 5.2 The council has also encouraged its staff to take part in the consultation and Maidstone residents generally through social media.

6. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 6.1 The Committee’s decision will be communicated to KCC as the council’s formal response to the consultation.

7. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all – LED lights can reduce light pollution as well as energy consumptions Securing a successful economy for Maidstone Borough – Adequate street lighting is needed to support economic activity. 	Head of Policy and Communications
Risk Management	The council has consulted its	Head of Policy

	Councillors and Heads of Service, and publicised the consultation to encourage Maidstone Borough residents to take part in the consultation, to ensure their views are taken into account.	and Communications
Financial	None	[Section 151 Officer & Finance Team]
Staffing	None given the hours of lighting proposed.	Head of Policy and Communications
Legal	None	Deputy Head of the Legal Partnership
Equality Impact Needs Assessment	N/A – KCC has completed an Equality Impact Needs Assessment	Policy & Information Manager
Environmental/Sustainable Development	LED lighting uses less electricity, are better for the environment and can be controlled better to save money and reduce light pollution.	Head of Policy and Communications
Community Safety	None – Lighting will not be turned off in places where the police have said it may lead to more crimes.	Head of Policy and Communications
Human Rights Act	N/A	Head of Policy and Communications
Procurement	None	Head of Policy and Communications
Asset Management	N/A	Head of Policy and Communications