

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1.	Meeting:	Cabinet Member for Lifelong Learning, Culture and Leisure
2.	Date:	28 November 2006
3.	Title:	Christmas Illuminations Scrutiny Review – Final Draft
4.	Programme Area:	Chief Executive's

5. Summary

The review sets out the findings and recommendations of the Scrutiny Review Group who looked at the current service provision for Christmas Lights and Trees, both in Rotherham Town Centre and in the Districts. The review looks at budget and funding issues, where the responsibilities for this service lie and what can be done to enhance Christmas Illuminations in the Borough of Rotherham. Performance and Scrutiny Overview Committee commissioned Regeneration Scrutiny Panel to undertake the review following a 'call in' on 22 August 2006..

The Review was endorsed by the Regeneration Scrutiny Panel on 3 November 2006 and PSOC on 10 November 2006. PSOC resolved to add one recommendation to the review as follows:

- That consideration be given to including strategic lighting as part of the tourism/renaissance agenda.

On 14th November 2006, the Cabinet Member for Lifelong Learning, Culture and Leisure considered the review at a delegated powers meeting. Further clarification of the recommendation reference 6.1.1 was requested. This report seeks to clarify this recommendation.

The recommendations from the review are attached as Appendix A.

6. Recommendations

1. **That the Cabinet Member for Lifelong Learning, Culture and Leisure forward the report to Cabinet for their comments.**

7. Proposals and Details

i) The review identified a number of areas for action including:

- the spread of responsibilities for the management of Christmas Illuminations in Rotherham and where budgets are held to fund Christmas related activities;
- Creating an equitable approach to Christmas Illuminations;
- Actively seeking sponsorship to fund Trees and Illuminations;
- Using the Gateway Improvement Plan to light Rotherham at Christmas time;
- Ensure that diversity issues are accounted for as part of an annual programme of town centre events.

ii) Recommendation 6.1.1 – Single Events Budget for Christmas Activities

6.1.1 - Christmas Trees, Illuminations, Events and Activities should be funded by the Council from a single Special Events budget.

The review sets out the current arrangements for budgets and funding for Christmas trees, lights, switch on night, events and activities.

These are that funds are currently held across three budgets – Town Centre Management, Ground Maintenance and Culture and Leisure/Christmas Carnival Group.

Accordingly, the review also identifies that a range of tasks relating to the production of 'Christmas across the Borough' is also split between Services.

The recommendations, taken as a whole, are designed to pull the Councils responsibilities for Christmas into one programme area – namely, those functions relating to the town centre and the sites identified for the Gateways. As stated in the review, it is suggested that responsibility for funding district trees and lights etc, will pass to the Area Assemblies, albeit supported by council officers.

The review group considered that it would be logical for funds to be held in one place. The review proposes that town centre Christmas tree's, lights and decorative illuminations, events and activities could be co-ordinated more effectively if managed from a Special Events Budget held by EDS. The recommendations propose that EDS take up responsibility for the provision of Christmas Illuminations in the Town Centre and on Gateway sites.

It is possible that the components of this service provision could exist under a budget heading for 'Christmas', funding Christmas Trees and Lights, Town Centre Illuminations and Town Centre Christmas Events & Activities and the 'Switch-On' evening being the key elements. In addition a parallel budget would show income contributed from sponsors, off setting the agreed percentage of the budget.

In terms of where this budget should sit, the review group considered that the Town Centre Management function would be the best placed to oversee the budget funding Christmas, given that much of the expenditure will relate to Town Centre Activities. However, the review

group acknowledge that funding for the Gateway site illuminations may have to be held separately.

Although the wider remit for Town Centre Events was not within the scope of the scrutiny review, in considering their recommendations, the review identified the obvious link between Town Centre related Christmas Activities and other events organised throughout the year. The review group suggested that Christmas should be one part of an annual programme for the Town Centre along with celebrations/events for other religious festivals.

The review group acknowledge that the placing of budgets and functions in this regard is complicated and would invite the Cabinet Member for Lifelong Learning, Culture and Leisure along with the Services Area's to consider how best this recommendation is implemented.

8. Finance

Further investigation by CMT is needed in respect of potential sponsorship arrangements in addition to consideration of how current budgets can be organised to produce effective management of funding available for Christmas illuminations.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

The review identifies a risk for 'gaps' across the Borough where sponsorship cannot be raised to fund Christmas trees and lights.

Failure to address the issue of Christmas Illuminations may lead to further negative public perceptions of the Council.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

Community Strategy 2002 - 2007

One of the four priorities set out by the Community Strategy seeks to 'stimulate a culture of learning and development to ensure maximum benefit for local people and businesses.

Corporate Plan 2005 - 2010

- Rotherham Alive – Rotherham will be a place where people feel good, are healthy and active and enjoy life to the full.

A key objective is to increase the number of adult and young people participating in cultural activity who feel it improves their quality of life – the target is to achieve the national average by 2010.

- Rotherham Proud – Rotherham people, businesses and pride in the Borough are at the heart of this vision. The Borough will have a positive external image.

Promote the Borough to increase economic activity from tourism – the next economic impact assessment is to be carried out in 2008

11. Background Papers and Consultation

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