



Portfolio Holder Report

The portfolio holder will make a decision on this item after seven days have elapsed (including the date of publication).

Report of:	Portfolio Holder	Date of publication
Sarah Palmer, Director of Transformation and Change	Cllr Michael Vincent, Leader of the Council	08 November 2024

Festive Lighting Grant Support

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 To agree to an increase in grant support for festive lighting / displays for 2024/25 to account for increased costs caused by inflation.

2. Council priorities

- 2.1 Develop Wyre's town centres to be thriving and welcoming places to live, work and visit.
- 2.2 Support and champion Wyre's growing tourism economy by promoting our coast to countryside offer, tourism businesses, attractions and events.
- 2.3 Build pride in our borough by ensuring our town centres and neighbourhoods are clean, attractive and well looked after.

3. Recommendation

- 3.1 That the revised festive lighting grant scheme be approved to account for take-up across the town centres, high levels of inflation and the rise in costs since the previous allocations were agreed.

4. Background

- 4.1 The council's original aim when agreeing to provide grants for festive lighting was to encourage local sponsorship and promote economic vitality in Wyre's Town Centres.
- 4.2 The contribution has been paid to a recognised body in each town who decides how the grant will be spent. A Portfolio Holder Report dated 31

May 2018, set out the existing allocated amounts for the below town centres, which are:

Area	2018/19
	£
Fleetwood	3,200
Cleveleys	1,000
Thornton	2,300
Poulton	3,200
Hambleton	2,300
Preesall with Knott End	3,200
Garstang	3,200
Total	18,400

- 4.3** The allocations were based on applications received during a trialled bidding scheme in 2016/17 and 2017/18. However, the current distribution of funds no longer aligns with the initial allocations as some towns have increased the amount they spend on festive lights.
- 4.4** For example, Cleveleys had their base allocation increased to £2,000 several years ago whereas Hambleton have not claimed any of their allocated fund for the past two years. The current reality can be seen in the table at 5.4. This includes an unallocated sum which has been used to top-up festive lighting grants in exceptional circumstances including to offer additional support to reflect the impact of high inflation.
- 4.5** The previous Portfolio Holder Report required each of the seven areas to submit evidence demonstrating that match funding had been provided prior to receiving their grant. Following the pandemic this requirement was lifted to encourage the take up of grants and to reduce the administrative burden. Despite this, the council continues to encourage match funding from organisers.
- 4.6** The previous Portfolio Holder Report set out that the application process was open to constituted groups which were associated with the seven town centres, this included but was not exclusive to parish and town councils. Applicants had to have public liability insurance of £10 million pounds in place before funds could be released.

5. Key issues and proposals

- 5.1** The previous decision which allocated the amount of grant support was made in 2018/19. Since then, we have had high levels of inflation and an increase in operating costs.
- 5.2** The new amounts will provide a baseline which will be reviewed in line with the September consumer price index annually. This will ensure that funding continues to keep pace with costs.

5.3 It is recommended that the festive lighting grant support is rebased to reflect 2023/24 actuals and current inflation. This will support active town centres to continue to promote economic vitality and increase footfall during the festive period.

5.4 The previous two years' actuals and current budget versus the new allocations are shown in the table here:

Area	2022/23 Actual	2023/24 Actual	2024/25 Original Budget	2024/25 Proposal
	£	£	£	£
Fleetwood	3,200	3,900	3,200	4,000
Cleveleys*	3,415	3,900	2,000	4,000
Thornton	2,300	2,750	2,300	3,000
Poulton	3,205	3,900	3,200	4,000
Hambleton	0	0	2,300	3,000
Preesall with Knott End	3,200	3,900	3,200	4,000
Garstang	3,200	3,900	3,200	4,000
General unallocated fund	0	0	2,840	6,000
Total	18,520	22,250	22,240	32,000

*2022/23 and 2023/24 actuals adjusted for £1,415 that related to 2022/23, invoiced late in 2023/24.

5.5 There will be an expectation that match funding will be sought and this will be communicated to organisers in the application form for the grant. However, this will not be an essential requirement for the base budget allocations, recognising that it is not always possible on that scale for every town centre. The application process will remain open to constituted groups associated with the seven town centres. Applicants will continue to need to have public liability insurance of £10 million pounds in place before funds can be released. The organisers will also be required to provide the council with evidence of relevant spend prior to release of the funds.

5.6 The general unallocated fund will be made available as top-up funding to the seven areas. This will require evidence of match funding from the organisers as an essential criteria. Those areas which have been allocated £4,000 in 5.4 will be able to apply for up to £1,000 in additional funding and those which were allocated £3,000 may apply for up to £500. The same requirements around insurance and evidence of spend will apply.

6. Delegated functions

6.1 The matters referred to in this report are considered under the following executive function delegated to the Resources Portfolio Holder (as set out in Part 3 of the council's constitution): "To determine payment of grants to outside bodies within the Council's scheme and budget".

Financial, Legal/MO and Climate Change implications	
Finance	The proposals outlined in this report require a budget increase of £9,760 which will be drawn from general balances and for the budget will rise in line with September CPI annually.
Legal/MO	The Council has powers under section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 and the overarching well-being power contained in Section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000 to incur expenditure to promote or improve the economic, social or environmental well-being of its area. There is no statutory provision to provide such funding, i.e. it is a discretionary service therefore must be exercised reasonably. Organisations will need to be properly constituted and ensure that they have public liability insurance of £10 million pounds in place before the funding can be released.
Climate Change	This report has an overall negligible impact on climate change due to the narrow impact of the decision. The report does encourage the installation of lights which will increase energy demand. However, this is for a brief period of time and is limited to a small area of our town centres. The decision may have consequences past 2030, subject to any revisions to the scheme.

Other risks/implications: checklist

If there are significant implications arising from this report on any issues marked with a ✓ below, the report author will have consulted with the appropriate specialist officers on those implications and addressed them in the body of the report. There are no significant implications arising directly from this report, for those issues marked with a x.

risks/implications	✓ / x
community safety	x
equality and diversity	x
health and safety	x

risks/implications	✓ / x
asset management	x
ICT	x
data protection	x

Processing Personal Data

In addition to considering data protection along with the other risks/ implications, the report author will need to decide if a 'privacy impact assessment (PIA)' is also required. If the decision(s) recommended in this report will result in the collection and processing of personal data for the first time (i.e. purchase of a new system, a new working arrangement with a third party) a PIA will need to have been completed and signed off by Data Protection Officer before the decision is taken in compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018.

report author	telephone no.	email	date
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List of background papers:		
name of document	date	where available for inspection
None		

List of appendices

None