

CHIGWELL PARISH COUNCIL
OFFICER REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY SERVICES AND ASSETS COMMITTEE
CHRISTMAS LIGHTS

Date: 24 September 2026

Purpose of Report

This report has been prepared to assist Members in discussions regarding the future provision of Christmas lights across the Parish and to support forward planning as part of the Council's 2027/28 budget-setting process.

Background

At its meeting held on 27 August 2026 (Minute Reference FC055/26), Full Council received an update from the Community Services and Assets Committee. During discussion, Members considered the possibility of extending Christmas lighting provision within the Parish. It was noted that no formal proposal had been submitted and that no budget provision currently exists within the approved 2026/27 budget for additional Christmas lighting.

Members discussed both the costs associated with the Council's existing Christmas lighting arrangements and the principle of providing festive displays more widely across the Parish. The Clerk advised that any future proposal would need to be fully developed, appropriately costed and considered through the Council's established budget-setting and decision-making processes. No formal proposal was before the Council and no resolution was made.

The approved 2026/27 budget currently contains provision for the Station Green Christmas event only. However, discussions at both Full Council and Committee level have indicated a desire to explore whether festive lighting could, in future years, be expanded to other areas of the Parish, including Chigwell Row, Grange Hill and Limes Farm.

Whilst there is no proposal before Members at this stage, any future expansion would require considerable advance planning, budget provision and officer resources to ensure all legal, operational, financial and safety requirements are met. This report is therefore intended to support an initial discussion and assist Members in considering the practical implications of delivering an expanded Christmas lighting scheme as part of future budget planning.

Operational and Regulatory Considerations

The installation of Christmas lights on or over the public highway, including attachment to street lighting columns, requires approval from Essex Highways and compliance with a range of technical, structural and electrical requirements. Applications are generally required at least ten weeks before installation and must be supported by the relevant permissions, certifications and supporting documentation.

In practical terms, the delivery of a Christmas lighting scheme extends far beyond the purchase of decorations. Consideration must be given to the suitability of locations, power supplies, structural integrity, installation methods, ongoing maintenance, removal arrangements and long-term storage.

The type and location of any proposed display will also influence the level of traffic management required and whether additional permissions are needed from highway authorities, utility providers or third-party landowners.

Key Considerations

Should Members wish to explore the expansion of Christmas lighting across the Parish, matters requiring consideration are likely to include:

- Identification of suitable locations and display types.
- Essex Highways approvals and permissions.
- Public liability insurance requirements.
- Structural assessments and engineering certification.
- Electrical design, connection and certification requirements.
- Electricity supply arrangements, including any unmetered supply agreements.
- Traffic management during installation and removal.
- Appointment of suitably qualified and accredited contractors.
- Storage, maintenance and annual inspection of decorations.
- Installation and removal costs.
- Ongoing electricity consumption costs.
- Officer capacity to manage procurement, applications and project delivery.
- Future replacement and renewal costs associated with the displays.

Financial Considerations

Members are advised that the Council has recently received an electricity invoice from EDF Energy in the sum of £1,735 relating to the Station Green Christmas lights. Whilst officers are currently querying the invoice and seeking clarification regarding the charges, it nevertheless highlights that electricity consumption should be regarded as an ongoing revenue cost when considering any future expansion of festive lighting across the Parish.

In addition to the purchase or hire of decorations, an expanded scheme is likely to give rise to costs associated with:

- Specialist installation and removal contractors.
- Qualified electrical connection and disconnection works.
- Structural assessments and certification.
- Highway applications and permissions.
- Traffic management requirements.
- Annual maintenance and safety testing.
- Storage and replacement of equipment.
- Electricity consumption.

Members should therefore be mindful that the overall annual cost of a Christmas lighting scheme can be significantly greater than the initial purchase price of the decorations themselves.

Officer Capacity

Members are respectfully asked to consider the resource implications associated with developing and delivering any expanded Christmas lighting programme.

The Council continues to experience increasing operational pressures across a number of service areas. In particular, demand within the cemetery service has increased significantly, whilst officers are also managing an expanding programme of asset management, compliance and operational projects. Current staffing challenges have resulted in officers undertaking additional responsibilities and supporting workloads across multiple service areas.

Whilst officers remain committed to supporting the Council's ambitions and delivering services effectively, the introduction of additional Christmas lighting locations would require officer time to coordinate feasibility assessments, permissions, applications, contractor procurement, project management and ongoing administration. Members may therefore wish to consider any future aspirations in the context of the Council's wider priorities, available staffing resources and operational capacity.

Budget and Forward Planning Timetable

Should Members wish to explore further Christmas lighting provision in future years, the Council's budget-setting process provides the opportunity to identify priorities and allocate funding accordingly.

The current timetable is as follows:

- **22 October 2026** – Committees reminded to submit budget proposals and requirements.
- **1 November 2026** – Initial budget proposals considered by the Finance and Governance Committee.
- **26 November 2026** – Draft budget presented to Full Council.
- **17 December 2026** – Final budget considered by Full Council.
- **January 2027** – Approval of the budget and precept.

Forward Planning

This report is presented to support an initial discussion regarding the future direction of Christmas lighting within the Parish. If Members wish to pursue the expansion of festive lighting into areas such as Chigwell Row, Grange Hill and Limes Farm, early consideration through the budget-setting process will assist officers in assessing feasibility, identifying potential locations, estimating costs and ensuring sufficient time is available to secure the necessary approvals and arrangements.

Members are invited to discuss the opportunities, challenges and resource implications associated with any future expansion of Christmas lighting across the Parish as part of the Council's forward planning and budget considerations for 2027/28 and beyond.

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