

Summary of written comments made during consultation process (as at 8 September 2009)

Copies of all letters and e mails received are available for inspection by Members of the Committee. All Members have received, direct, correspondence from Mr C March.

The following general and specific comments have been raised.

IN FAVOUR OF TURNING OFF STREET LIGHTS

- Has not led to any increase in levels of crime or number of violent incidents.
- Has created savings by using less energy and has lowered level of carbon emissions.
- Has led to less light pollution and an opportunity to see the starlit sky.
- Many rural areas have no street lighting in any case and do not feel disadvantaged by that.
- There are adverse effects from artificial lighting on sleep patterns and health.
- There is no evidence that having premises lit up is a deterrent to burglars.
- In a number of areas in the past it was normal practice to turn off lights during the night and this had no impact on crime levels or inconvenience to local residents.
- People who live in the countryside should not, and do not necessarily, expect street lighting to be provided.

IN FAVOUR OF KEEPING STREET LIGHTS TURNED ON

- There is a fear of crime levels increasing. In some areas this has happened.
- Certain groups, particularly the elderly, young people and females, feel particularly vulnerable in unlit areas.
- Turning off lights has led to an increase in anti social behaviour and vandalism.

- There are concerns at road safety being compromised, particularly at junctions.
- Individual residents will feel obliged to provide their own external lighting, increasing their own costs and negating any overall savings and carbon reductions.
- By using energy saving bulbs, costs could be reduced without the need to turn off lights.
- There is no evidence of savings either actual or projected, being used to cut the level of council tax and the Council could face extra costs by leaving itself open to legal actions should death or injury be caused in an area where lights were turned off.
- Whatever the Council's best intentions, the contribution towards cutting global warming is minimal.

SPECIFIC ISSUES

- Could every alternate/third/etc light be switched off, retaining some light but still cutting costs and emissions?
- Will any savings be reinvested in specific schemes or just returned to general funds?
- Could the time lights are turned off be made later (say 1 or 1.30 am) as midnight seems too early?
- Could there be a flexible turn off time – in some urban areas establishments are open until past midnight whereas in many rural areas none would be open after 11 pm? Are timers reliable enough to guarantee that defined turn of times can be kept to?
- Estates in a number of areas were specifically designed with internal alleyways and walkways which would remain lit throughout the hours of darkness.
- Some areas are on either the main line railway routes or Underground routes and have large numbers of people arriving after midnight.
- In some areas there are a large number of people who need to rise early because of work commitments (the area near Stansted Airport was mentioned specifically).

- Will different criteria be applicable to areas without footpaths, which might be considered to be more dangerous if not lit up?
- Can or should the County Council seek to encourage other organisations to follow a similar policy to itself? Examples are the number of retail and commercial premises that are lit up all night but are not open for business. Is the Council working in a concerted manner?
- Is the Council content that whatever policy it adopts meets all legal requirements about the highway being lit? Does the Council have any proposals to turn off traffic lights at night?
- It is important that the exception criteria are clear and fair. There are many individual circumstances which need to be taken into account and a blanket turn off policy seems unfair and unworkable.
- A number of parish councils pay for and operate a number of their own street lights. In these cases the Council will have to agree the overall policy for that area – e.g. it would be unreasonable to have lights on in 75% of a village and not in the other 25%. If the parish council is the main operator would it make sense to transfer all lights to the parish council's ownership and allow a local decision on the level and hours of lighting?
