

MIDDLEWICH TOWN COUNCIL
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Dear Councillor

You are summoned to attend the Five Hundred and Twenty third Meeting of Middlewich Town Council on **Friday 25th September 2020 at 7.15pm**. The Meeting will be held using Zoom Video Conferencing. Councillors will receive an email invitation to join the meeting.

The public can join the meeting <https://bit.ly/2ZSleWk> password: MTC250920 or watch live on Facebook at www.facebook.com/middlewich.towncouncil.3

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lisa Benskin".

Lisa Benskin
Town Clerk

AGENDA

1. To receive and approve Apologies for Absence
2. To note any Declarations of Members' Interest on any agenda item
3. Public Participation: To consider any questions raised by members of the public at the meeting.
A period not exceeding 15 minutes for members of the public to ask questions or submit comments. If wishing to speak during this section of the meeting, please ensure you join the meeting via Zoom using the details above.
4. To consider the options for the provision of Christmas Lights 2020 and agree the party to whom the Contract should be awarded **(to follow)**
5. To note the date of the next meeting – 19th October 2020

Report to: Full Council

Report Ref: F2030
Meeting Date: 25th September 2020
Agenda Item: 4
Prepared By: Town Clerk



Subject: Christmas Lights 2020

1. BACKGROUND

The Town has always been decorated with lights for the Christmas period, all along Wheelock Street, the Bull Ring and Leadsmithy Street and up Lewin Street including a tree on the Bull Ring. The Victoria Building has also been decorated in previous years, by way of a lighted arch on the front door and icicle lights off the building. As it currently stands the Town Council are now out of contract with the previous Christmas Light supplier – Christmas Decorators.

The budget available for this year's Christmas Lights under nominal code 4401 is £14,000.

It is noted that there may be some budget left from budget line 4305 Christmas Event due to the proposed Virtual Switch on and Winter Windowland trails being less expensive than the usual market and light switch on. It should be noted however that costs are still being sourced for these proposals to be brought to the External Committee Meeting on 8th October.

I am advised that ordinarily that the purchase, installation and removal of the large 30ft Christmas Tree and fencing in the Bullring would usually also come from the 4401 budget line. However, to provide as much flexibility as possible I would suggest the Christmas Tree comes from the 4305 budget for this year. Cost received so far for the tree is £1300 from the Council's usual supplier. A comparative quote is currently being chased from ANSA.

Provided at **pages 7 to 8** of this Agenda pack are some maps showing the installation points available for the lights.

2. WORKING GROUP

The working group of Cllrs Bulman, Perez, Orme and Hunter was tasked at the Full Council meeting on 18th May to:

- a) obtain a new Christmas Lights supplier to work within the budget set of £14000.
- b) The Terms of reference for the Working Group should include;

- to review the contract/purchase options and prices available and make recommendations to Council as to which provider they would recommend entering a contract with.
 - that the possibility of a sponsor or sponsors for the Town Tree and/or some elements of the lights should be considered.
 - that the group should consider the Town Council purchasing their own Christmas lights and obtaining a contractor for installation and maintenance
- c) That authority to enter into and complete the new Contract should be delegated to the Town Clerk once a decision has been made by Council.

The Working Group contacting several companies to source new quotes, under difficult circumstances considering the Covid 19 Pandemic. During this time, several potential contractors have advised they could not take up this work at this time but would like to be considered for the future. As a result the Administration Assistant and Town Clerk have assisted in the obtaining of additional quotes to enable the Council to review all available options.

3. OPTIONS

The main options with Christmas lights are;

- 3.1 To purchase the lights and then arrange for their installation, maintenance, removal and storage.
- 3.2 To go with a full-service company who you hire the lights from on an annual basis, usually on a minimum of a three year contract and then also install, maintain, remove and store the lights as part of the annual cost.

Clearly there are pluses and minus with both options, option 3.1 generally means a larger cost in the first year but then only installation, maintenance, removal, and storage costs for another 2/3 years. Plus you own the lights and they may last longer, a customer of one of the suppliers Lite advises some of their lights are still operational 7 years on. It can however become costly if there are multiple failures and breakdowns as visits to site to fix these can result in additional costs. Christmas Lights generally only come with a 12 month guarantee.

Option 3.2 provides you with a certainty of price for a 3 year period, but as you always hire as oppose to own the lights – so have ‘less to show’ for the money invested. This approach does mean that you can change the scheme every 3 years or new contact term if you wish. The repair and maintenance of breakdowns is built in so as a result there is less of a budgetary concern if multiple failures take place.

The Working group preferred the purchase and install option, so as can be seen below in item 4 there are more quotes for this option.

4. PURCHASE AND INSTALLATION

4.1 Christmas Plus

Christmas Plus are based in Yorkshire and have put together a colourful, child friendly package of both ex exhibition and newly made lights (are produced to order).

Due to the cost of the package part of Wheelock street beyond Nationwide would not have cross street lights and the lit Christmas trees would only extend as far as the St Luke's hospice shop.

Full costings of the package proposed, and images of the motifs are provided at [pages 9 to 14](#) of this Agenda Pack.

Christmas Plus have indicated that they would be willing to provide the lights for the Christmas Tree and one tree in the Churchyard with payment being made for those items on the 21/22 budget provided a purchase order is received.

4.2 Lite Limited

Lite are based in Lancashire and come highly recommended by Northwich Town Council who have used them for a number of years and install their products as part of their own and other Council's festive displays.

The package available from Lite due to the timescale available for lights to be obtained is all ex hire stock which is refurbished and tested and comes with a 12-month guarantee.

The package that the Council could obtain within budget from Lite would include 5 cross street motifs and enough column motifs to cover the full length of Wheelock Street, as well as the usually lit section of Lewin Street, one or two trees in the Churchyard and the frontage of the Council offices.

The full details, prices and images of the options available are provided at [pages 15 to 21](#) of this Agenda Pack.

4.3 A Combined approach - Christmas Plus & Lite

Councillor Bulman asked if it would be possible to produce a scheme using the ex-exhibition lights from Christmas Plus and some of the other available ex hire lights from Lite.

That proposal, again with costings and pictures is available at [pages 22 to 30](#) of this Agenda pack.

4.4 Gala Lights

Gala lights are based in Kent, and have also put together a package for purchase, images and costings of which are provided at [pages 30 to 31](#) of the Agenda pack.

The costing provided with this option, is sadly over budget before factoring in installation costs.

4.5 Installation - Duttons

Duttons are a Middlewich based contractor who carry out a lot of highways maintenance and repair work for Cheshire East Council. They are new to Christmas lights but have been very helpful and amendable during the quoting process.

They have provided based on the larger scheme as envisaged by the Combined or Lite Ltd scheme, alongside a per night rate for any fixes required.

Their quote is provided at [pages 32 to 33](#) of the pack.

4.6 Installation - Northwich Town Council

Northwich Town Council as well as being NALC Council of the year in 2018, and a local government neighbour install hundreds of Christmas lights each year for both Northwich and other Cheshire Town and Parish Councils.

Their quote is based on a larger scheme such as the Lite or Combined scheme and included all maintenance required whilst the lights are in place.

It was highlighted during their visit to quote for the installation works that the brackets on Wheelock street, as well as being tested, should have a secondary bracket installed in case of a failure of the main bracket for Health and Safety reasons, to avoid the lights falling into the street and causing injury and damage.

Their quote is provided at [pages 34 to 35](#) of the pack.

5. FULLY SERVICED CONTRACT

5.1 Blachere

Blachere are a well know full-service Christmas Lights company and one of the market leaders.

Whilst they do also offer a purchase option the costs of this were significantly above the £14,000 budget and so their hire offering is included in this report, along with images of the scheme proposed at [pages 36 to 40](#). This price is based on a three year contract but does not include installation. The Town Clerk will endeavour to obtain a quote for installation by Blachere in advance of the meeting.

5.2 Christmas Decorators

Christmas Decorators are based in Knutsford and held the contract with Middlewich Town Council from 2017-2019. They have advised they can offer the same provision as last year (minus St Michaels Way which needs re assessing by CEC due to faults) for the same contract price as 2017. This is based on a contract for this year only and includes hire of the lights and installation.

Their proposal with costings and pictures is available at [pages 41 to 55](#) of this Agenda pack.

6. DECISIONS REQUIRED

- 6.1** Members should decide, which supplier(s) they wish to contract with for the provision of Christmas Lights
- 6.2** Members should decide depending on the choice of supplier which additions to any basis schemes they may wish to make - e.g lights in the Churchyard or at the front of the Council offices.
- 6.3** Members should then provide delegated authority to the Town Clerk to enter into and complete the new Contract once a decision has been made by Council.