

South Norfolk Council
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Ms J Punt
Clerk to Gillingham Parish Council

17th January 2018

Dear Ms J Punt, Clerk to the Council,

Further to our recent correspondence you will be aware that South Norfolk Council's (SNC) Cabinet considered a report on the future management of footway lighting at its meeting on 8 January 2018, which Cabinet endorsed. This comes after a previous report to Cabinet on 17 July 2017.

Following Cabinet's decision, we are committed to engaging with your Town /Parish Council (TPC) and through it the local communities it serves.

We manage lights in nine of our 119 towns and parishes and we will work with those Town and Parish Councils to agree local footway lighting needs. (Note – lights that are not managed by us, including highway lights managed by the County Council and any other lights provided by housing associations etc. are not included in the Cabinet report).

As the Cabinet reports outline, the review of footway lighting is founded on key issues and principles:

- At a time when public sector finances are stretched all local authorities are faced with making hard decisions. As our footway lighting has been identified as coming to the end of its useful life we should prioritise services to communities which are needed and we are always aware of the need to help alleviate the financial burden on residents.
- The social, environmental and technological context has moved on significantly since the 1970s when many of the footway lights were first installed, and as such it is important that we understand what level of service is relevant today. To do this we need to engage with TPCs, recognising the vital role they play in their communities. This will ensure that the footway lighting we continue to provide is both agreed and evidence based.

Hours of opening: Monday to Friday 8.15am to 5pm
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- The provision of street lighting across the district is very mixed with a number of councils involved in its provision, including a number of TPCs. SNC believes that footway lighting is best managed as local to the community it serves as possible.

1. Our assessment of footway lighting 'needs'

You will see from the reports (web site links at foot of letter) that the need for footway lighting has been assessed on a number of factors:

- An investigation carried out by the police on the actual incidence of crime, anti-social behaviour and road traffic collisions.
- Identification of areas where there is a high concentration of particularly vulnerable residents.

This assessment has identified 2 locations in your area where we feel that footway lights are still needed. **A map is attached to this letter showing this information.**

As part of our engagement and recognising that TPCs have a close understanding of their communities we would like to seek your feedback, as to where there might be vulnerable communities who will continue to need footway lights that have not been included in the assessment.

It is important to note that 'need' requires there being a justifiable and evidenced based aspect of vulnerability. A 'want' to keep lights does not justify as a need. If SNC continues to manage footway lights in your TPC area, it will only be on the basis of justified 'need'.

We have attached a **proforma questionnaire** to help identify and justify any added lighting locations 'needed' in your area due to vulnerability.

2. Stock condition

As outlined in the Cabinet reports, we have undertaken a survey, in line with industry best practice, into the structural and electrical condition of the managed stock. As a result of this report, we have identified lights which are near the end of their useful life (red).

It is SNCs intention, on a precautionary basis, to 'crop' these 'red' lights by mid-February. This is to ensure that columns do not continue to deteriorate to a state where they present a safety risk to residents. This will affect no lights in your council area, and any cropped light will be fully reinstated if we establish that the light is 'needed'. The 'red' lights are shown on the maps and mentioned below.

We recognise that this may raise local concerns and would appreciate your help in communicating this process to your residents and supporting our dialogue – we have also created a webpage at <https://www.south-norfolk.gov.uk/footway-lights> which explains our actions.

In terms of condition, you will see from the information that there are a number of lights that are structurally in an 'amber' condition (need inspecting again by April 2019) and 'green' condition, (need inspecting again by April 2022).

A map of the condition of all the lights is attached along with a spreadsheet. This should be viewed in the context of the 'needed' lights and our proposed future management arrangements detailed in 4. below.

3. Finances

At the moment, special expenses are collected by SNC directly from precept payers in those nine TPC areas where we manage footway lights. By providing only those lights that are needed the burden on tax payers should reduce.

The last Cabinet report contains a full breakdown of current and possible future cost of footway lights for your consideration, as well as a breakdown of the cost make up of footway lights.

4. Future management Arrangements

As the Cabinet report outlines, across the district there are many TPCs who currently manage their own stock of footway lights. There are only nine TPCs where SNC manages the lights on behalf of local residents and funded by a special expense collected by us. SNC believes that, as a local service footway lights are best managed at the most local point, by TPCs. However, we also recognise that your Council may not wish to take on the management of an asset, and/or may not have the infrastructure to do so.

We would like to understand your view on potentially taking over management of the footway lights in your area, and in doing so SNC would look to support you in the following ways:

- a) We will provide all the necessary information on current condition, cost and issues around the management of local lighting
- b) We will provide information and support in relation to contracts with competent companies in the maintenance and replacement of lighting.

If you, as a TPC, assume management responsibility for the lights in their area, instead of special expenses being collected by us your local precept can be adjusted to reflect the actual costs of footway lighting.

We are mindful of the precept making process and the need to allow sufficient time to consider this so would only look to commence this arrangement in 2019/20, continuing to raise funding through special expenses in 2018/19.

In the attached proforma we are asking you also to indicate provisionally what additional lights (beyond those we agree are 'needed') you would be wishing to manage from 19/20.

We will fund future replacements of 'needed' lights in full.

For lights beyond those that are 'needed' that you want to retain and manage, we will pay you the equivalent of the decommissioning cost to help you pay for replacement

when the time comes. If you take on more lights than we agree ‘as needed’ we will transfer all ‘non-needed’ lighting for you to manage. Thus, if you want more lights than we agree as ‘needed’ we would expect you to take over all the agreed ‘needed’ lights plus any additional you want to manage. Beyond that we will have to decommission.

Please be aware that we (SNC) will not be able to manage any lights beyond those we have agreed as ‘needed’ (as per our timetable) beyond the financial year 18/19. In the absence of you taking over management of these lights will be decommissioned (removed) by the autumn 2018.

5. Summary of Next Steps

In summary, we would like to engage with you on the following matters – to this end in preparation we would ask that you complete the attached proforma.

The key requests are outlined in the table below:

Issue	What is requested of you	Request timing
Ensure that the number of needed lights, justified by vulnerability is correct	TPCs to review the ‘needed’ lights on the maps and identify any areas missed	Meetings as needed between SNC and TPC commencing asap. Complete the proforma and return by 16 March 2018
View on additional lights beyond those identified and agreed as ‘needed’	TPCs to indicate what additional lights they wish to manage beyond those ‘needed’ and identify given maps and information.	Meetings as needed between SNC and TPC commencing asap. Complete the proforma and return by 16 March 2018
Some ‘red’ lights have reached the end of their useful life and will be cropped by SNC	TPC communities need to be aware of these changes. Highlight website information to local communities and collate/translate responses to us	On receipt of information from SNC

Note -

1. Any additional lights you feel are necessary in your area beyond our assessment of 'needed' footway lights. This will be based on the town/ parish council taking on the management of all extra lights from, at the latest, 2019/20.

As outlined above, we will support the Town / Parish Council in assuming responsibility for additional lights in terms of any technical and financial information you need. Any lights which we jointly agree as not 'needed' will be decommissioned unless you want to take them over, in which case we will provide funding for replacement equivalent to the cost of decommissioning.

2. Given the structural condition of a proportion of lights (red condition in our report) we will 'crop' these lights, pending further discussions with the Town / Parish Council on their 'need'.

Those red locations already identified as needed by us in our assessment will be replaced with new, more efficient LED lighting schemes given our timetable below. Any new scheme will not necessarily mean the same number of lights as the old but light coverage will be equivalent.

3. **In terms of our timetable for decision making this is laid out below:**

Crop all red condition lights by mid-February

Replace all needed red condition lights by end of May

Agree future management of street lights with TPC for remainder of stock – to allow for TPC budget making and precept setting. Inspect lights where appropriate.

Request TPCs indicate their level of future provision by end of March 2018 with final agreement by end of May 2018 for final transfer by end of March 2019. Return of proforma requested by 16 March 2018. Beyond this SNC will assume that the TPC will not be involved in future management of local lighting.

Decommission of all not needed lights by end of October 2018

We would like to arrange an initial meeting with you before the end of January and would therefore ask that you let us know by return that you are happy to commence discussions. We hope that we have provided you with sufficient information by way of:

1. Map – provisional map of 'needed' lighting locations and those not.
 2. Map – map of lights including their condition and location.
 3. Spreadsheet including the data for the maps.
 4. The proforma questionnaire.
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The Cabinet report and the minutes of the meeting can be found on our website at www.south-norfolk.gov.uk/committee/cabinet and further information can be found <https://www.south-norfolk.gov.uk/footway-lights>

We appreciate your support and cooperation on our proposals.

Should you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'B. Wade'.

Bob Wade
Head of Environmental Services

1. Map showing provisionally assessed 'needed' lighting locations and those not.
 2. Map showing lighting locations against condition of lights.
 3. Spreadsheet list of all lights with condition, 'needed' assessment, etc
 4. Proforma questionnaire
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