

# Evidence, Engagement and Consultation Summary

Ref no. P3 Seek sponsorship for festive decorations

## Description of proposal

Title for consultation: Seek sponsorship for festive decorations

We are keen to retain festive lights including decorated Christmas trees across our Borough that we know our residents enjoy. This proposal means the council would no longer fund festive decorations across the borough. We will however work with local businesses and communities to try to secure sponsorship so that festive lights can continue to be displayed.

## Estimated Net Saving / new income 2025/26

£30,000

## Summary of evidence, engagement and consultation

75 people commented on this proposal. The proposal is supported but not without concerns:

- 47% fully support
- 24% support but with concerns / amendments
- 28% do not support
- 1% don't know.

Comments in relation to how the proposal might affect them included:

The proposal to seek sponsorship for Christmas lights has received a mix of positive and negative feedback. Some comments highlight the benefits of sponsorship, such as maintaining the festive spirit while saving money on decorations and electricity costs. Others believe that sponsorship could lead to better decorations and a more appealing town during the festive season.

*"Excellent idea - there may even be better decorations available this way."*

*"The decorations might improve with businesses paying for them because it's quite depressing as it is."*

However, there are concerns about the potential negative impact on high streets already under pressure from restricted road access and high parking charges.

*"Lack of investment on already under pressure high streets stifled by restricted road access and high parking charges. Will kill them off even more and can't see the benefit of making high streets even more empty and less appealing."*

Some comments express that the lack of festive decorations could diminish community spirit and negatively affect mental well-being. There are also worries that cutting funding for Christmas lights could be seen as dismissive of the holiday and the values of a Christian nation.

*"Without streetlights community spirit would be diminished."*

*"Christmas and other festival lights give an uplift to mental wellbeing and losing these festivities will definitely impact on people's mental health. Festive Christmas lights give cheer across a longer period of time during cold winter months and celebrates Christianity across most faiths."*

*"Christmas is an important holiday for all, by reducing the council's engagement with the funding of the holiday - feels dismissive. Are there any other holidays that have high funding levels which could be reduced across the board - not just Christmas."*

*“Christmas is an important time of the year for all who celebrate it and a council pulling the plug on a Christian celebration and disregarding our values as a Christian nation is not a good look.”*

*“Lack of festive decorations will have a very negative influence on community spirit and pride.”*

### **Alternative suggestions**

- Reuse and donations: Reuse lights and decorations from past years to save money and promote sustainability. Encourage people and large businesses to donate decorations they no longer use.
- Fundraisers and government action: Organise fundraisers throughout the year to cover extra costs and push central government to regulate power company pricing.
- Sponsorships and Community Contributions: Seek sponsorships from businesses like McDonald's and Coca-Cola, and encourage local businesses to contribute to decorations.
- Cultural and community adjustments: Cut funding for non-traditional cultural events, restrict festive lights to town centres, and consider partial funding from businesses and the council.
- Efficiency and cost-saving measures: Eliminate outdated benefits like lump-sum travel payments and long service awards, restrict callout and standby rates, and reduce base salaries for senior positions. Eliminate personal assistant roles with digital tools, limit meeting documentation to action items only, and restrict the number of meetings per day.
- Community engagement and support: Retain and expand Christmas lights to foster community spirit, and support independent traders in procuring their own carbon-friendly lighting.

### **Overall opinion from engagement and consultation**

Respondents support this proposal but have concerns.

### **Justifiable action from the evidence, engagement and consultation suggested in the Equality Impact Assessment**

A – No major change required

### **Mitigating actions required, if proposal approved**

NA

### **People potentially negatively affected, if proposal approved**

NA

### **Response from Walsall Council on Proposal Ref P3**

Following consideration of consultation feedback and equality impact assessment, Cabinet intends to implement the proposal.