

Scrutiny Review: Impact of the Part Night Street Lighting Policy

Date: **24 January 2018**

Subject: **Other Local Authorities Part Night Lighting Arrangements**

Summary:

A national research project in October 2014 identified that 48% of lighting authorities that responded had instigated some part-night lighting. It would be a fair assumption that this figure has risen as revenue pressures have increased and the energy usage of street lighting has come under greater focus.

1. Background

The experience of other authorities has been canvassed through established contacts and professional technical groups. They are presented in no specific order.

Cambridgeshire

In April 2016, Cambridgeshire commenced conversion to part-night any of its 58,000 streetlights that are in residential areas. However, by December 2016 the Council had voted to reverse this. There was no empirical data to suggest that crime or accidents had risen and the timescale in which the decision was reversed would not have allowed relevant data to be gathered. This decision appears to have been made based on perception only, with complaints from elderly people and shift workers being cited in the debate.

During the brief time that part-night lighting was in place, Cambridgeshire operated a policy whereby parishes or District Councils could pay for lights to remain on all night; Cambridge City Council paid to keep all lights on within the City Boundary from the start.

It is worth noting that Cambridgeshire operate a Central Management System (CMS), meaning that changes can be implemented cheaply and quickly.

Nottinghamshire

Nottinghamshire started introducing part-night lighting in 2010 but, despite having consulted on this in advance, found that they received many complaints and petitions as it was rolled out. An election campaign in which safety and fear of crime featured as significant issues led to a change in administration in 2013. The new administration reversed the policy and Nottinghamshire have decided to replace all lighting stock with LEDs, dimmed during the early hours.

Nottinghamshire does not have a CMS, so they would have incurred significant costs in implementing this reversal.

Derbyshire

Derbyshire has limited part-night lighting, with around 8000 out of 90,000 lights converted between 2012 and 2015. This has reduced to around 7355, with those that have been reversed being done so through discussion with the Community Safety Team. In addition, when the fittings on part-night lights were converted to LED, they were also returned to being on all night; this is no longer the case so that part-night lights remain as such when changed to LED.

The feedback from officers is that residents who experience a theft tend to attribute this to part- night lighting rather than their own security provisions and that it is fear of crime rather than actual data which has led to reversals.

Derbyshire do not have a CMS, so there is a cost in reversing any part-night operated lights.

Leicestershire

Since 2010 almost 55% of Leicestershire's 68,000 lights have been converted to part-night operation. By the end of the current financial year all lights within Leicestershire will also be LED and controlled through a CMS; however, part-night lighting will be retained where it has been implemented.

The only reversals of part-night lighting in Leicestershire have been done in conjunction with the police, mainly in response to specific spates of crime. One such area saw an increase in vandalism to cars, perceived as being due to part-night lighting. However, another area had experienced a burglary spree for two weeks prior to the introduction of part-night lighting, which continued after its introduction, resulting in selective reversal in the area.

The most significant area for partial reversal is the Oadby suburb of Leicester with around 23,000 inhabitants. They had experienced a spate of at least 27 break-ins over a matter of weeks in autumn 2017. Utilising the CMS, the Police asked for the street lights to be turned back on across Oadby until the end of January 2018 after which the situation is due to be reviewed with the possibility of reverting to part-night lighting. It is worth noting that additional crime-reduction measures have also been taken such as increasing police patrols.

Warwickshire

Warwickshire has roughly 50,000 street lights with part-night operation currently on 32,166. This phased operation began in December 2012, and has been implemented through a CMS.

The Principal Lighting Engineer has confirmed that there have been no reversals other than those which were overlooked as meeting the exception criteria for the project.

He also states that complaints regarding part night lighting are now at a low level indicating that part-night lighting has largely been accepted within the County.

North East Lincolnshire and North Lincolnshire

Neither of our neighbours to the north appears to have implemented any part-night lighting at this stage, although both have installed or are in the process of installing LED replacements to the majority of their stock. However, we have had enquiries from them about how we managed the implementation of part-night lighting, indicating that they are giving it some consideration.

Norfolk County Council

Norfolk has implemented a large scale part-night lighting programme on a large percentage of their 53,000 street lights. This has been implemented in full consultation with Norfolk Police and any reversals are required to be agreed and instigated by the Police.

To date, they have temporarily reversed a handful of lights using their CMS. This has been in response to specific incidents whilst the Police have undertaken inquiries. All of these have returned to being part-night operated following the completion of the Police investigations. To date therefore there have been no permanent reversals due to crime or other incidents.

Kent County Council

Kent is one of the largest lighting authorities in the UK with 118,000 street lights. In 2014 60,000 of these were converted to part-night operation. Subsequently, a consultation process was instigated which included workshops, focus groups and a public survey. As a result it was decided (in February 2016) that the savings to be made by installing LEDs and dimming could allow the restoration of all night lighting as and when the LEDs are installed, which is to be over a 14 month period.

The Authority recently awarded a 15 year contract whereby all street lights will be converted to LED and a CMS installed. It should be noted that there is no information to suggest that this reversal was in any way linked to an actual increase in crime but as a response to the consultation.

Suffolk County Council

From their website, it is known that Suffolk has part night operation of 73% of their 55,000 lighting stock, implemented using a CMS. Nothing in the public domain has suggested any reversal of the part-night strategy at Suffolk.

2. Conclusion

There is no evidence to suggest that actual crime rates have resulted in decisions to permanently reverse part-night lighting, with fear of crime and the perception of an unsafe environment being the significant drivers for reversal.

Authorities that have introduced a CMS are able to relatively quickly and cheaply reverse any part-night operation. However, the initial investment for a CMS and the annual running charges are significant across a large lighting stock.

Where reversal is combined with the introduction of LED lighting and dimming, energy savings can be maintained, although the initial investment to do this is significant across a large lighting stock.

There is also evidence to suggest that Part Night lighting does become more accepted by the public the longer it is in operation.

3. Background Papers

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

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