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Briefing Note

Sayers Common Christmas Tree

For Community Engagement Committee 14 November 2024

Recommendation:

For the reasons outlined in the summary below, the recommendations are that Committee:

1. **NOT AGREE** to the installation of additional festive lighting at this time for the reasons outlined in the briefing note below.
2. **AGREE** to revisit the proposal depending on the outcome of the District Plan and potential development of a new “village centre” within Sayers Common

Summary of findings

A lighting installation of some description at the requested site is feasible; however a potentially large quantity of new housing in the area, as contained within the District Plan, and uncertainty over the future “centre” of the village, there is financial risk to undertaking expensive works at a site which may not be suitable in the future.

Option 1: A like-for-like feature would require the installation of a flagpole, at considerable expense, and lacking flexibility to relocate the display if it causes glare for motorists or generates complaints from residents. Power can only be taken directly from a streetlight for any display **directly affixed to it**, so this option would also necessitate costly groundworks for Enerveo to install an underground power cable and feeder post.

Option 2: A freestanding frame with lights, to provide a similar effect to the flagpole tree was considered but is not recommended by our contractor due to its vulnerability to weather and vandalism. The same power constraints as in Option 1 would apply.

Option 3: Tree shaped motifs affixed directly around the streetlight provide flexible, straightforward and cost-effective alternative to create a tree-like effect. The Committee should note that this would need to be installed at a minimum height of 3.5m comply with licencing requirements. There are already 9 festive motifs attached to streetlighting throughout Sayers Common, and this solution is not at all like the feature originally requested.

1. Purpose of Report

Members are asked to consider a report on the possible options for the installation of a lit Christmas Tree feature in Sayers Common.

2. Background

2.1 At the 9 November 2023 Community Engagement Committee Meeting, residents requested a “Christmas Tree” like the one added to the flagpole in the Village Garden, Hurstpierpoint each year:



2.2 Councillors Highlighted that the existing 2023 Festive Lights costs, including for the 9 streetlight decorations installed in Sayers Common each year, had already been subject to significant cost increases and so any additional lights would be logistics and costs dependant. It was agreed that the Assistant Clerk would liaise with the Sayers Common Village Society to ascertain exactly what was being requested and where and, together with the Estates and Facilities Manager, put together a report and appropriate recommendation to Committee.

3. Location

3.1 The location proposed by the Sayers Common Village Society is the corner of Berrylands Farm and the junction of the B2118 (London Road) as shown. It was suggested that a streetlight at the location could provide the necessary power requirements.



3.2 Photographs and a brief outline of the proposal have been sent to WSCC who responded as follows:

“The large verge area seems suitable at this location. Depends on the size of the tree & illumination proposed and would need to be set back from the road.

Care must be taken so that visibility for is not obstructed for drivers emerging from the nearby junction at Berrylands Farm.”

3.3 It should be noted that work is planned to improve the pond area, and as such undertaking significant groundworks for the installation of a flagpole (see 4.2) or a feeder post for power (see 4.5) is not recommended at this time.

4. Option 1: Like for like installation.

4.1 Cost of lighting (2024 pricing):

Item	Cost
Base structure, upper crown and LED Lighting	£2760 + VAT
Install and remove on an annual basis	£525 + VAT
Power (see 4.5 below)	In excess of £1000 + VAT

4.2 There is no flagpole currently located at Sayers Common so one would need to be purchased and installed at the proposed location. **Approximate** costs follow:

Item	Cost
8 Ft fibreglass flagpole	£250 + VAT
Internal rigging locking door	£100 + VAT
Concrete flagpole base	£200 + VAT
Installation cost (estimate only)	£850 + VAT

4.3 Comparative cost for the Hurstpierpoint Village Garden project 2020 (flagpole and power already in situ):

Item	Cost
Base structure, upper crown and LED Lighting	£2445
Install and remove on an annual basis	£375

4.4 The Committee should also note that planning permission would be required for the flagpole, there is no additional charge for this under the current MSDC processes, however this does generate additional administrative work.

4.5 Power: Our contractor advises licences to take power from a streetlight are only granted for displays which are affixed to it, and following appropriate structural tests. To run power to a display attached to a flagpole would therefore require Eneveo to lay an underground cable, including associated groundworks, and the installation of a “feeder post”:



Estimated cost exceeding £1000 + VAT

4.6 There would be no flexibility in the future as to where the feature is installed.

5. Option 2 – A Temporary frame and lights

5.1 Research was conducted into a temporary structure with lights which could be fully dismantled and stored such as:



5.2 This option is not recommended by our contractor as:

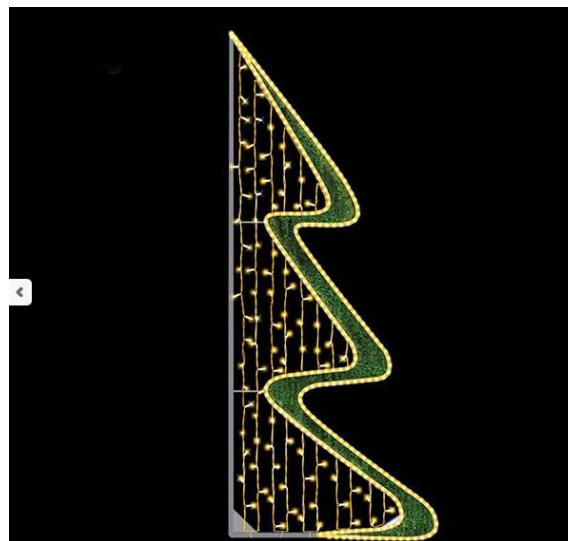
- a) These structures are not viewed as stable enough for commercial use. They are vulnerable to weather, which could pose a risk to passing motorists and pedestrians, and vulnerable to vandalism.
- b) It would still not be straightforward to relocate due to the requirement to install a feeder pillar for power, as per paragraph 4.5 above.

5.3 Approximate costs:

Item	Cost
4m Outdoor Starry Night Light Tree, 640 LEDs	£209.99
Install and remove on annual basis	Not available from current contractor
Power solution	In excess of £1000 +VAT

6. Option 3 – Christmas Tree “motif” lights affixed to a streetlight

6.1 The recommendation from our contractor of the most cost effective and straightforward solution would be to affix 4 half Christmas Tree motifs to the streetlight, such as the photograph below:



6.2 This would negate the requirement for expensive ground works to install an electricity supply. Subject to the necessary structural tests, the display could be moved to any suitable streetlight.

6.3 There is a requirement for a 3.5m clearance from ground level, so this would not provide a similar display at all to that on the Village Garden.

6.4 Approximate Project Costs have been requested from Merlin but have not been forthcoming as they are extremely busy with this year's displays.

6.5 Committee are asked to note that Sayers Common already has festive lit motifs attached to streetlights

7. Financial Implications

7.1 Depending on the decision made by Committee, the project will substantially impact on the festive lights EMR and/or budget for 2025/2026 and future years.

7.2 Should the location prove unsuitable, relocating any infrastructure would incur significant additional costs.

8. Implications on Crime and Disorder

8.1 The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (Section 17) requires a parish council to consider the crime and disorder implications of any decision. There is a potential that a smaller temporary tree frame could be vandalised, but the risk is assessed as low.

9. Health and safety

9.1 The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 Section 3 requires that parish councils do not put contractors, volunteers and the public at risk.

9.2 The risk of option 1 is considered low, but there is the potential that glare or distraction from the display may impact motorists turning out of Berrylands Farm onto the London Road.

9.3 The risk of option 2 is considered high as, should the structure fail due to weather conditions, it could put passing pedestrians and motorists at risk of serious harm.

10. Implications on Biodiversity

10.1 The Natural Environment and Communications Act 2006 (Section 40) requires parish councils to consider the impact any decisions will have on biodiversity.

10.2 Light pollution: although light pollution is proven to have adverse effects on many species, the proposed location is already well lit and therefore the impact/risk is assessed as low.
