

Northampton Borough Council Overview and Scrutiny



Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: 28 January 2014

Briefing Note: Northampton Borough Council Street Lighting

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The current responsibility for street lighting within the Borough is split between the County (mainly street lighting adjacent to the public highway) NBC Corporate Assets funded from the General Fund (mainly street lighting in Parks or within the boundary of the Councils buildings such as the Guildhall, Community Centres, Library's, etc) and street lighting on Council housing land funded from the HRA.
- 1.2 As the question of street lighting from this committee has been directed to the Head of Landlord Services this briefing note focuses on street lighting located on Housing Land.

2 Context

- 2.1 Historically, all street lighting within the Borough was the responsibility of the Borough Council. At this time, repairs of these lights were organised through the County Council under a County wide agreement with East Midlands Electricity.
- 2.2 Those arrangements changed around the early 1990s which resulted in the County becoming responsible for all street lighting, including lighting on land associated with Council Housing, parks and other corporate assets.
- 2.3 A further change occurred around 2003 when the County outsourced the installation, replacement and maintenance of all street lighting to WS Atkins and then to May Gurney. More recently street lighting under the County Council's responsibility has been contracted under a PFI scheme with Balfour Beatty.
- 2.4 It is at this time that the ownership responsibility of street lighting has become blurred with what appears to be a split between Northamptonshire County Council, Northampton Borough Council Corporate Assets and Northampton Borough Council Housing Department.

Northampton Borough Council

Overview and Scrutiny

3. Current Position

3.1 Investigations carried out in recent months reveal that due to the number of changes of responsibility over the years a comprehensive inventory of all street lights installed within the Borough is no longer in place.

3.2 Notwithstanding the above the County possess a GIS mapping system of the street lighting that they believe falls under their responsibility. In the main those lights are located next to the public highway.

3.3 Knowledge and the records of the location of lighting on council housing land is restricted to individual Borough Council staff members. This was identified as an unsatisfactory state of affairs during the middle part of 2013. Consequently, work has been on-going to capture that knowledge and the records held by individual members of staff onto the Borough's GIS mapping system and at the time this paper was prepared was almost complete.

3.4 The next steps are as follows:

- An exercise to compare data held on the County Council's GIS system with the records held by the Borough Council will be carried out and any duplication of records will require subsequent discussion regarding ownership with the County.
- Identification of the lights for which the Borough council has responsibility which are on Housing land and those which are not and therefore those which are the responsibility of the Council's Corporate Asset Management Team and those which are the responsibility of Landlord Services.
- A lighting location verification survey is to be included in regular and planned Estate Walkabout Surveys to determine the accuracy of each individual record and to record the existence of lights that have not previously been recorded.
- The new data is to be recorded on the Borough Council's GIS System and recorded on to the Housing Service's Asset Database.
- The future responsibility of NBC's street lighting on Housing Land will be included in discussions regarding the management arrangements between the Council and the ALMO; the Council may decide to retain responsibility for all street lighting, including lighting located on Housing Land, to avoid the risk of service failures due to split responsibilities.

The above action will ensure the records held will facilitate the future timely repair, maintenance and replacement of street lighting on Council land.

Northampton Borough Council

Overview and Scrutiny

4. Conclusions

- 4.1 The creation of an accurate database of all street lighting in the Borough and the identification of the body responsible for maintenance and replacement will take approximately 12 months to complete.

5 Recommendations

- 5.1 That the report be noted.

Report Author: Richard Birchett, Head of Landlord Services

Date: 13 January 2014