

**CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS, TRANSPORT AND WASTE – CLLR BRIDGET WAYMAN**  
**HIGHWAYS, TRANSPORT AND WASTE SERVICE**

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**BANNERS AND OTHER ATTACHMENTS TO STREET LIGHTING COLUMNS**

**Purpose of Report**

1. To:
  - (i) Update the guidance for the attachment of banners, signs and hanging baskets in the highway.
  - (ii) Approve the application process for considering requests for the installation of banners, signs and hanging baskets on street lighting columns in the highway.

**Relevance to the Council's Business Plan**

2. The proposed scheme helps to meet two priorities of the Wiltshire Business Plan, they are as follows:
  - Growing the Economy. (Making our town centres and villages more attractive for visitors businesses.)
  - Strong Communities. (Creating community events and getting residents and businesses involved.)

**Background**

3. Banners and hanging baskets add greatly to the appearance of towns and villages. They can play an important role in community life. However, installing or attaching banners, decorations and hanging baskets to street lighting columns needs to be done safely and it is necessary to get permission.
4. Many of the county's lighting columns are old and are reaching the end of their life. They were not usually designed to take banners and fixtures, which can exert considerable additional weight and wind loading, potentially resulting in catastrophic failure with consequent damage to property or injury to the public.
5. The condition of the Council's lighting columns is monitored, and those most at risk are tested annually. In some cases where there is a concern about their safety they may need to be removed immediately for replacement later.
6. For many years the Council has had a procedure for approving applications for fixing decorations to lighting columns, and enabling electrical connections where needed. In most cases this has worked well, but in some places this has not always been followed. As a result town and parish councils could be putting the public at risk, and could be leaving themselves open to prosecution or legal action.

7. In September 2018 a number of highway policies were reviewed and updated following consideration by Cabinet. Authority was delegated to the Cabinet Member, Highways, Transport and Waste and Director, Highways and Transport to make any appropriate and legally necessary amendments to those policies.
8. Last year the procedures in connection with attaching festive lighting and decorations to the light columns were reviewed, and a revised approval process was introduced. This report considers the matter of attaching banners and hanging baskets to the Council's lighting columns, and proposes to apply similar procedures.

### **Detail**

9. The guidance and approval processes have been developed to ensure they are appropriate, not too onerous, and conform to current standards. The proposed guidance is generally consistent with those applied by other local authorities.
10. The new guidance (**Appendix 1**) sets out the steps that an organisation will have to follow to attach banners, signs or hanging baskets to street lighting columns. The intention has been to keep the process as simple as possible, whilst still ensuring that the safety and legal requirements are met.
11. The applicant will have to provide information on the banner or item to be attached on the same form that is currently used to approve festive lighting, which is available on the Council's website, with a link provided in the guidance.
12. Where decorations or banners are over the highway there is a need to get separate approval from the highway authority under Section 178 of the Highway Act 1980. In order to simplify this process a form is also available on the Council's website to make this application.
13. Town and parish councils are encouraged to put up decorations, and the application process is being made as simple as possible. Approval can expect to be granted provided the basic safety measures are followed, and there is no doubt about the ability of the column to take the additional loading.

### **Main Considerations for the Council**

14. It is important that town and parish councils can erect banners, decorations, signs and hanging baskets where appropriate, but it is also important to ensure public safety. The attachments may be temporary in nature, but they are in place in all weathers, including torrential rain and high winds. They can also be prone to damage through accident or vandalism.
15. The weight of hanging baskets can be considerable and the sail effect of signs and banners, especially those mounted high up a column, can put severe strain on columns.
16. There is a real risk of columns failing if they are subjected to excessive loadings. The safety of the public has to be a priority, and it is important to be aware of the potential legal and financial implications for organisations in the event of an incident.
17. The proposed guidance, approval process and conditions, will help ensure that the town and parish councils meet the safety requirements and their legal obligations.
18. Most town and parish councils have been complying with the proposed standards for many years, and there have been few incidents. Fortunately, those that have occurred have not so far resulted in fatalities, injury or serious damage, but the safety risks associated with structural and electrical equipment need to be acknowledged and safeguards put in place.

19. Where prior approval has not been obtained the Council will have to remove banners or decorations on lighting columns, so it is important that town and parish councils make the necessary arrangements in plenty of time.

### **Overview and Scrutiny Engagement**

20. There is none for this proposal.

### **Safeguarding Implications**

21. None.

### **Public Health Implications**

22. There are public safety implications of electrical equipment in the highway, and in connection with banners and hanging baskets over footways and carriageways. The proposed guidance and approval process should reduce these risks.

### **Corporate Procurement Implications**

23. There is none in this proposal.

### **Environmental and Climate Change Considerations**

24. The banners and decorations are generally temporary in nature and should not affect the appearance of the area in the longer term. Promoters will need to give consideration to the appearance of attachments and will need to consider whether planning permission or other approvals are required.

### **Equalities Impact of the Proposal**

25. There is none in this scheme.

### **Risk Assessment**

26. There are serious risks associated with the use of electricity in public areas, and it is important to ensure the structural stability of the lighting, decorations, lighting columns and street furniture. The proposed approval process should significantly reduce the risks to the safety of the public.

### **Financial Implications**

27. Some authorities charge for approving and inspecting attachments to street lighting columns, or are considering doing so. It is not proposed that Wiltshire Council should do so under the current guidance as it is important to ensure that town and parish councils are encouraged to follow the correct procedures and obtain the necessary approvals.

### **Legal Implications**

28. There is a requirement under Section 178 of the Highways Act that approval is obtained for any banner or decoration over the highway. There are also legal requirements in connection with the safety of electrical equipment. Failure to ensure the safety of banners, decorations, lighting columns and associated equipment could result in prosecution or legal action. The proposals will help reduce the risks to town and parish councils.

### **Options Considered**

29. To:
- (i) Implement the proposals.
  - (ii) Not implement the proposals.
  - (iii) Implement the proposals with amendments.

### **Reason for Proposals**

30. Banners, decorations and hanging baskets can add greatly to the appearance of towns and villages, and are encouraged as they can play an important role in community life.
31. Installing or attaching banners, decorations and hanging baskets to street lighting columns needs to be done safely, and it is necessary to obtain permission from the owners. The proposed guidance and procedures will significantly reduce the potential risks associated with festive lighting.

### **Proposals**

32. That the application process for considering requests for the attachment of banners, signs and hanging baskets to street lighting columns in the highway be adopted.

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**The following unpublished documents have been relied on in the preparation of this Report:**

None