ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY SAFETY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 35
Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject:		**Street Lighting: Querying performance and making recommendations**		
Date of Meeting:		**10 November 2008**		
Report of:		**Jenny Rowlands, Director of Environment**		
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Wards Affected:	All			

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

1.1 This report sets out the background, context and issues within the Street Lighting service.

1.2 The report also sets out Brighton & Hove's current actions and future plans for improvements within the service.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

2.1 To note the contents of the report and to make recommendations arising from consideration of the report.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

Background and general information

3.1 Brighton and Hove's street lighting stock has been in development for over a hundred years and this means we have a large variation in the types of streetlights across the city.

3.2 The City's current street lighting stock is in the region of 20,000 items. (See Appendix A). This does not include all the lit bollards and signs.

3.3 The City's heritage means that around 15% of the stock is in conservation areas, and we always endeavour to replace these like for like, with commissioned heritage columns. However, this does mean that the cost of replacement in conservation areas is extremely expensive, over 20 times the cost of a standard column elsewhere.

Maintenance

3.4 The maintenance needs of such a diverse stock have historically caused problems for Brighton and Hove, with the result that a large number of items were simply removed from the street scene or not brought back in to service because there were insufficient funds to replace them.

3.5 The regular maintenance regime has improved over the past few years, with the current contractor, Colas, providing a good and efficient service. This is a joint contract with East Sussex County Council. Routine maintenance ensures every item of street lighting stock undergoes routine checking and maintenance every four years. This proactive approach to maintenance ensures that every highway-maintained lamp in the city is replaced on a four year cycle, regardless of its function.

3.6 During this process, a basic visual inspection is also carried out and data collected to indicate the general condition of the stock. In addition to this a night time check is undertaken which looks at every lamp in the City on a two week rota, with lamps that fail before the cyclical maintenance, being replaced as required.

3.7 The Local Transport Plan (LTP) for 2005-2010 identified the need for a maintenance programme to tackle the backlog of street lighting problems. Over the past two years, using LTP maintenance funding, missing or out of service stock has been replaced, bringing the emergency maintenance up to date. This has been carried out in conjunction with the usual and ongoing maintenance programme

Issues

3.8 Repair times for faults can vary, with some very good turnaround times but also some faults that take longer to rectify. There are diverse reasons for the longer timescales, which include:

1) Conservation columns may need specialist parts which are not available "off the shelf" and therefore need to be ordered in.

2) More complex problems are encountered such as lack of access to the column (no doors), end of life wiring, unobtainable items or outdated designs. These cause Health and Safety issues and have to be addressed regardless of the cost implications.

3) Problems with tracing ownership – some lighting may belong to

housing associations, private landowners or to our own council housing. Sustainable Transport's maintenance funding can only support street lighting on the public highway or in areas where there is a specific agreement regarding ongoing maintenance. All highway street lighting is numbered on the columns and listed in our computer inventory so such lighting can be easily identified, particularly if the member of the public reports faults using the numbering and location. However, where the lighting is not maintained by Highways, this can delay repairs whilst the responsible agent is traced.

4) Listed lamp columns have to be maintained and must be renovated rather than replaced. This entails using specialist Contractors to dismantle the street lights and take them away for overhaul and eventual refitting. Costs in this case are greatly increased and can be hard to forecast due to the unpredictable nature of the works.

5) Stock that is off the public highway but within Street Lighting's maintenance remit has also proved problematic. Redesign of lantern types and column heights is needed due to increased use of public spaces and the damage occurring to the stock from various pressures, including delivery lorries, and vandalism. This is most apparent along the very busy and popular seafront area and again is often in conservation areas.

Day burning lamps

3.9 This is a problem that is very difficult to rectify.

3.10 The Distribution Network Operator (DNO), regulated by energy regulator Ofgem distributes electricity in the city. New regulations mean that the DNO must upgrade their supply network, changing from old cables to new automated standards. This is usually done as and when faults develop in the supply system. For Brighton and Hove, EDF is the DNO.

3.11 Most older Brighton & Hove street lights are run on old electricity circuits, with each light linked to a power supply that runs along whole streets. In these cases, it is the power supply that tells the lights when to switch on and off rather than anything in the individual columns.

3.12 However, the circuitry in the existing street lights cannot work with the new supply systems. Each old circuit within each street light then simply reverts to telling the lamp to go on and stay on.

3.13 In order to rectify this, BHCC must fit each lamp with its own individual timer or change the whole lamp entirely to ensure they work with the new supply system.

3.14 Despite public perception, this does not cost the authority more in energy bills as we are on unmetered connections and are charged per column rather than how long each light is on. There is also a debate about the extent of the environmental cost, as the low pressure sodium (orange)

take a large amount of energy to fire up, whereas burning consumption is reasonably low.

3.15 We have no control over when supply systems are upgraded and therefore cannot prepare for this. EDF are not aware which lamps have the old circuits and which do not, so cannot tell in advance that their works will cause day-burning lamps. Since much of the supply system updates are done in response to faults, there is not necessarily a programme for which streets will be changed.

3.16 EDF have agreed to notify BHCC of any day burning lights that arise from their improvement works, but fixing the problem will remain mostly reactive once the supply work is complete.

Performance Indicators

3.17 There are two types of Best Value Performance Indicators relating to street lighting. The first relates to repairs where BHCC is in control, and this is the best performing, having achieved the target during almost all the quarters. The second BVPI relates to repairs where the DNO (EDF) is responsible and this has been poor. This is a nationwide issue, so much so that the government regulator, Ofgem has established new standards for electricity suppliers.

3.18 Local authority performance has not gone down but in the last quarter of 2007-08, the authority's figures dropped against set targets. This was due to key staff leaving the organisation, resulting in incomplete reporting. This means that figures could not be fully or exactly substantiated. Analysis of the works ordering methods and reporting systems has been productive, however, because it has raised the need to make changes in the monitoring and tracking of works completed by our street lighting contractor. These changes are being put in place and will enable automated reporting in future.

BHCC Measures to Improve Future Performance

3.19 The Street Lighting service has been restructured and has moved into a new section where business processes will be amended in line with modern practices and standards. Following the departure of 2 out of the 3 permanent staff, staff structures are being reviewed in order to strengthen processes that will enhance the work of the team. This restructure concentrates on improving staff management and support, lighting design, contract management, system management and administrative support.

3.20 IT systems and reporting tools were in need of significant upgrade. This system is now being upgraded by Mayrise, the software supplier, and the key information is in the process of being checked and validated to enable better identification of maintenance needs and in the longer term, ensure

the authority is in a position to respond to government requirements in asset management and bids for capital funding. New methods of monitoring faults have been introduced which will improve performance monitoring and reporting when taken in conjunction with proposed improvements to the Term Contractor's working practices.

3.21 During the next period, we will run a more proactive programme with regard to essential maintenance. This requires a survey to clearly identify areas where replacement works are needed, and to draw up a programme based on priority need. This will include consideration of the oldest stock and the problematic stock such as those without doors. (See Appendix B).

3.22 A programme will also be developed to address urgent needs on feeder pillars citywide. These are on-street electrical connection points for street lighting items and are located within small posts. An example of the type of problem with feeder pillars is along Western Road in Brighton where many lighting units are bolted to the sides of buildings rather being on columns. The electrical supply to these lamps is run up the sides of buildings and therefore subject to the changes of fascia that shops often have. When a fault develops our Contractor will attempt to address this but often cannot locate the fuse box to disconnect the electrical supply to the lamp because the fuse box has disappeared underneath a new shop front. To access the fuse box would entail removal of the shop front and is expensive as well as time consuming. A better solution is to disconnect and install a new feeder pillar on the public highway which is always accessible and therefore under constant council control.

3.23 Corrosion inspection is an essential process in a city such as ours because we have a high number of items of plant in corrosive environments (by the sea). There has not been a regular proactive inspection regime in recent years, due to pressure from the emergency maintenance needs. It is intended to instigate a new regime for corrosion inspection once a schedule for testing has been created. Expert knowledge will be required and the current team management has interviewed local specialists in the street lighting field. Once this specialist is on board the inventory of existing stock can be examined and a programme of works created for the structural surveys. It is not known if current funds will be able to address the needs of the stock but once a full survey is completed, a report will be produced which will outline the size of the problem and also give the council an indication of the costs. These surveys need to be in place within a short timescale and must continue year on year to ensure stock safety and prevent issues arising from column failures.

3.24 Housing land has many lighting units and there is also a large amount of stock off the public highway where problems occur. Highways Street Lighting does not have the resources or responsibility to maintain these items and can only assist other teams with advice. Again specialist

consultants are the best answer to this issue, due to their immediate ability to give support and to meet all requirements. This is being explored currently. Our Term Contractor, Colas, has agreed to be called upon by other council sections for maintenance issues, particularly housing.

3.25 The Street Lighting team administrator will be working with the Standards & Complaints team to set up a system that will monitor complaints and their responses, and will provide better records with regard to the reasons for the problems. This will enable us to identify solutions and improvements where possible, and will properly reflect elements that are out of BHCC's control.

3.16 The street lighting team will continue to explore ways of saving energy resources, where funds permit. Much of this would require a "spend to save" investment, as there will be considerable outlay in adapting or changing our stock to more sustainable measures such as white lights rather than the old orange lights. However, where project funding is available, such as through the Local Transport Plan or new developments, we will trial innovative and sustainable lighting.

4. CONSULTATION

4.1 East Sussex County Council, West Sussex County Council (Halcrow) for comparative information and structures

4.2 Our current Term Contract Colas are specialists in the field of lighting maintenance and EDF have also been contracting in this function for many years so have a wealth of knowledge.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

5.1 Financial Implications:

Capital: There is LTP funding of £334,000 in 2008-9 which has been identified for Street Lighting.

Revenue: Lighting has its own designated revenue funding; with specific budgets set aside for general maintenance, £585,570 and corrosion inspection £234,960. Any changes to the maintenance regime will need to be managed within these constraints.

It is expected that the measures outlined in the report to improve performance will be contained within existing budgets.

The energy budget for the street lighting stock in 2008/09 is £672,000. The contract is jointly held with East Sussex County Council and is currently being retendered for one year. Due to the continuing rise in energy prices it is

expected that there will be a substantial rise in the contract price.

Finance Officer Consulted: Karen Brookshaw Date: 01/10/2008

5.2 Legal Implications:

The Committee is asked to note the report and to make recommendations in light of the content. The Committee has the following options:

(i) to appoint an Ad Hoc Overview & Scrutiny Panel to carry out a short, sharply focused piece of scrutiny, and report its findings to the Cabinet Member for Environment, including any recommendations requiring an executive decision;

(ii) to propose to the Overview & Scrutiny Commission a Select Committee review to carry out a more in-depth investigation. Such a proposal would need to be supported by recommended terms of reference, membership, scrutiny brief and resource requirement.

(iii) to keep a watching brief on the issue and review any need for involvement when the next set of performance indicators are published

Lawyer Consulted: Oliver Dixon Date: 22 September 2008

Equalities Implications:

5.3 There are no direct equalities implications although street lighting can enhance the quality of life for people using the public highway, especially those with visual impairment.

Sustainability Implications:

5.4 Street Lighting is part of the council's carbon management programme and new methods of conserving or reducing energy use will be explored. Any new lighting is installed with more energy-efficient lamps and longer lasting columns that require less maintenance (galvanised steel).

Crime & Disorder Implications:

5.5 Adequate lighting can reduce the perception and fear of crime.

Risk & Opportunity Management Implications:

5.6 There are continuing pressures on the budget because of the maintenance needs of the Street Lighting stock. Funds must be closely directed to minimise the risk of inadequate or dangerous columns.

5.7 Under new management, there is an opportunity for Street Lighting to develop further the proactive maintenance programme, supported by good management and IT systems.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

5.8 Street Lighting is an important part of the city's cultural heritage as well as providing a public highway amenity.

6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

6.1 This report suggests various improvements that are underway or planned for the Street Lighting regime. An alternative option would be to make no changes, but this would not address the requirements of the service.

7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 At the request of the Scrutiny Committee, the report outlines the current and proposed position for highway street lighting, in order for ECSOC to make recommendations on improving performance.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Appendix A – information on Street Lighting stock

2. Appendix B - Street Lighting stock maintenance needs

3. Appendix C – BVPI statistics

4. Appendix D – Complaints statistics

Documents In Members' Rooms

1. None

Background Documents

1. None

APPENDIX A

INFORMATION ON STREET LIGHTING STOCK

The age range of our street lighting stock can be broken down in to the figures below:

- 0 - 20 years of age - 34%
- 21 - 30 years of age – 34%
- 31 - 40 years of age – 8%
- Over 40 years old – 24%

This means that a significant proportion of the columns are over 40 years old.

The stock can again be sub divided in to column material as shown below:

- Aluminium columns represent 6% of the City's stock
- Cast iron columns represent 25% of the City's stock
- Concrete columns represent 12% of the City's stock
- Galvanised steel Columns represent 37% of the City's stock
- Steel columns represent 20% of the City's stock

Interestingly, the Hove area has more cast iron columns than Brighton and citywide 95% of these columns are over 40 years old.

The Brighton area has more columns which have no access doors in the base, which causes significant problems with repairs and maintenance.

APPENDIX B

STREET LIGHTING STOCK MAINTENANCE NEEDS

These are the type of problems that need to be analysed and programmed into a priority maintenance regime:

- Concrete columns, of which 65% are over 40 years old
- Steel columns, 80% of which are between 21 and 30 years old.
- Cast iron columns without doors. These number nearly 300, representing 6% of the cast iron stock. The likelihood is that all these columns will have to be replaced on a like for like basis whenever a fault occurs, as we are unable to work on these columns in their current format.