

REPORT TO: PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE
26 APRIL 2004 AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
10 MAY 2004

REPORT ON: ATTACHMENT OF CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS AND OTHER
FIXTURES TO LIGHTING COLUMNS

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION AND DIRECTOR
OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

REPORT NO: 73-2004

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report highlights the risks and possible consequences of attaching Christmas decorations and other fixtures to lighting columns. It also advises on ongoing work being carried out to find an alternative solution to this problem.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that Committee agree to continuation of this work and a future report being prepared by Director of Economic Development into possible solutions and the outcome of discussions with Local Traders.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

4 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The correct management of this risk will maintain public safety.

5 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no equal opportunity implications of relevance to this report

6 BACKGROUND

- 6.1 All street lighting columns used for the purpose of road lighting are designed and manufactured within the city to strict guidelines specified in BS5649 (soon to be superseded by EN40).
- 6.2 The lighting columns and brackets are, in the main, manufactured using galvanised steel and are structurally designed to meet compliance with design loadings and weather factors for this particular geographical area.
- 6.3 The calculations themselves are based on a 25 year design life in compliance with BS5649 Part 7, 1982 and BD26/99. Third party verification of the calculation are submitted as part of the column tendering process. In recent years, a considerable amount of work has gone into improving column specifications and it is accepted by all of the major column manufacturers that Dundee City Council specifications for lighting columns is one of the most comprehensive in the UK, to both maximise design life and provide Best Value, particularly against the limiting factor of corrosion.
- 6.4 Hanging baskets and Christmas decorations are now becoming more of an issue within the lighting industry following an incident in the City of Westminster where a lighting column with an attachment recently collapsed seriously injuring a member of public. The woman has subsequently been awarded damages of £3 million and £110,000 per year for the rest of her life.

- 6.5 Several authorities have now been instructed that their insurance policies will no longer cover column failure if additional structures are attached. Advice has also been sought from the Council's own Risk Manager who has indicated that if the technical advice now available is disregarded and a failure occurs leading to a serious injury, then criminal prosecution from the Health and Safety Executive may follow. Given that any such disregard to the information available would be likely to be seen as deliberate, the Executive may even consider a personal prosecution. This leaves the Council with three options to control the inherent risk:
- a Instruct that no baskets or decorations are fitted;
 - b Test all lighting columns with a company that can provide some form of Indemnity Insurance that can be used in conjunction with the existing Council policy; or
 - c Look for an alternative solution.
- 6.6 For the last three years dynamic structural testing has been carried out at sites where structures are to be attached to lighting columns. The cost of this work which gives a one year indemnity is in excess of £2,500 per annum. Even with the testing, there are still remaining inherent risks associated with abnormal weather conditions outwith the normal expected 25 year design cycle.
- 6.7 The clear message from both column manufacturers and specialised testing companies is that lighting columns should not be used to mount structures other than the normal traffic sign plates for which they are designed.

7 ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS BEING CONSIDERED

- 7.1 In order to deal with this risk and find a method of facilitating the erection of Christmas decorations, hanging baskets etc in district shopping centres such as Broughty Ferry and Lochee, officers from Planning and Transportation and Economic Development have been considering a number of options.

7.1.1 Option 1 - Replace Existing Lighting Columns

A possible solution would be to replace the existing lighting columns with suitably designed structures to accept Christmas decorations. This option has been investigated and costed, and the costs of some £2,500 per unit were identified. In addition, the physical appearance and proportions of these structures, particularly in conservation areas may not be in keeping with the general streetscape scene.

7.1.2 Option 2 - Removable Support Columns

An alternative solution would be to have removable structures which would be installed for the Christmas period. This option is, however, seen as both costly and technically difficult to achieve, due to the re-routing of underground services. It would also add clutter to an already crowded streetscape and would be an added hazard to the blind and partially sighted.

7.1.3 Option 3 - Support Brackets Attached to Buildings

One possible option would be to work with the shop owners to provide electrical supply points and attachments above the shopfronts. These attachments could then be used in the summer months for floral basket displays and Christmas decorations in the winter. Some doubts exist however over actual number of property owners who would consent to such a scheme.

7.1.4 Option 4 - Installation of Catenary Displays

Another option would be to provide a number of catenary displays attached to the buildings spanning the width of the street. The City Engineer's structural section are presently investigating the technical feasibility of such an approach. Permission to attach these structures to the building would again however involve obtaining owners consent. This option would not allow for the provision of flower displays but would allow for bunting etc in the summer months.

7.2 All of the above options are under active consideration and recent discussions on this matter have been held with the Broughty Ferry Traders Association. In Lochee, no similar such organisation exists although it is intended to consult with Traders and residents.

7.3 Ongoing development of these options will continue and a report brought back to a future committee. In the interim, it is recommended that the existing policy of testing be continued prior to the instruction of any additional fixtures to lighting columns.

8 CONSULTATIONS

8.1 The Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Support Services), Depute Chief Executive (Finance), and Assistant Chief Executive (Community Planning) have been consulted and are in agreement with the contents of this report.

9 BACKGROUND PAPERS

9.1 None.

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