

**Delegated Decisions by Deputy Leader of the  
Council with Responsibility for Climate  
Change, Environment & Future Generations  
Thursday, 14 November 2024**

**ADDENDA**

**3. Petitions and Public Address** (Pages 1 - 14)

Written statements by speakers attached.

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# Agenda Item 3

## **Dark skies – street Lights**

*Thank you for letting me speak, I have re-written my original statement as I was conscious that people like .. Lisa Ward whom will speak more eloquent and be more evidence based facts from people from lived experience.*

*After substantial backlash from our local communities and community groups, Oxfordshire Labour councillors and MPs, and Thames Valley Police, charities & voluntary sector, university & colleges, I'm pleased you have deferred making this decision on [their proposal to turn out street lights across the county at 11pm](#). This comes after you – the Green / Lib Dem run County Council attempted to make a decision at just a week's notice to the general public, this has caused an outcry from residents across Oxfordshire, including many women who are already concerned about their safety late at night. It would also unfairly disadvantage shift workers who would have to travel to and from work in darkness.*

*Well-lit streets are a key component to our community safety, security, and well-being, taking this away restricts women's freedom of movement.*

*Although Oxfordshire County council conducted an Equality impact assessment, you have failed to address how this policy will impact women specifically, from the violence against women and girls agenda. This proposal does not consider safety to the public, in particular females, irrespective of whether it is a real or a perceived risk. You've not even consulted Oxford City Council's Safer Streets lead, who leads on the Safer Streets initiative set out by the Government, this proposal appears to go against the aims of Safer Streets and the outcomes the Government are expecting*

*The Policy lacks detail on how it has worked in other areas, and therefore it is difficult to have a full understanding of the impact of Part Night Lighting (PNL).*

*Also points 72 and 73 say that a consultation is not needed as there is sufficient precedent across the country for this scheme, No, no, no. Partnership working, co-production, consultation should always be part of the policy making.*

*Now... May I ask that a meaningful face to face workshop - consultation to take place, with the relevant organisations, whom many are here or have spoken out about this policy to have a real understanding to what your trying to achieve, nether less I am completely against this ill thought out policy.*

*Thank you.*

**Cllr Mark Lygo.**

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Cllr Trish Elphinstone – Dark Skies Statement

Keep the lights on. Keep Residents safe.

There is an old saying if it ain't broke don't fix it'.

The prospect of switching off the lights is causing great anxiety for many. An elderly resident called me as they were worried about facing a blackout.

I have emails from women and girls who would feel intimidated in going out after dark.

Where is the consultation here? What about residents having their say?

Many people have jobs where they return home late. Or get up very early in the morning. We need our lights on in residential areas for safety and reassurance.

A blanket 'dark nights' policy may leave decisions to switch lights off in the hands of people who don't understand how women and girls feel going home in the dark.

It creates more risk of violence and contradicts the policies to light areas for safeguarding.

It will be a gift to those lurking in the shadows and would like to see us under curfew

There may well be consideration for non-residential areas to reduce light pollution- but that does justify turning the lights off in our streets?

Some of the areas in my division of Littlemore - like the bus stop on Sandford Road are rural - it would mean people getting off the bus after a shift into the pitch black.

Safety and common sense should come first

Keep our lights on. Keep our residents safe

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Cllr Sudbury I speak today to express the serious concerns of myself and residents of the proposal to dim street lights and restrict the hours of operation.

I try and use my car as little as possible we are a one car household and I regularly catch the train and walk a lot. I have to say if I get the early or late train it's often dark and it feels unsafe I regularly phone my husband on the walk to feel safer. If the street lights were to be switched off which would be during the train times in Bicester I personally would not feel safe and would have to consider driving to and from the station which would be directly against your climate emergency objectives. I would certainly not be alone in my change of behaviour.

I am shocked to see that in the equalities impact statement sex was marked as no impact.

Data shows that

- One in two women felt unsafe walking alone after dark in a quiet street near their home, compared to one in seven men.
- One in two women felt unsafe walking alone after dark in a busy public place, compared to one in five men.

Women have listed poor lighting as the primary factor influencing their perception of safety in the public realm.

A survey commissioned by ITV News revealed that 81 per cent of young women aged 18-25 feel unsafe walking home in the dark.

This proposal has a huge impact on Women.

A large number of residents have expressed their concerns of safety to me especially for shift workers who do not travel at common hours.

Residents are also concerned about crime there have been recent reports of car door handles being tried at night if there were no street lights this would only favour the perpetrators.

Many roads in Bicester do not have safe crossing points many of the crossings we do have are already badly lit.

From talking to residents they have suggested that alternative options should also be investigated such as street lights which come on with motion sensors, or a reduction in your proposed hours to not coincide with train, bus, pub and restaurant operating hours. I have been advised that there are other technologies which should be looked into, that technologies exist which could provide a safe option for all.

I read that police and Town/parish councils will be invited to comment and I notice that the PCC has already objected to the proposals. Also forgive me for having no confidence in this council listening to the views of my residents this morning saw a proposal approved despite over 77% of residents being against the proposals.

This proposal needs a huge amount of reconsideration and should not come back for decision with this current proposal as an option, the current form of this proposal is completely unacceptable.



## **Cllr Glynis Phillips – CMD Deputy Leader - 14 November 2024**

Thank you for deferring a decision about turning off street lighting between the hours of 11 and 6.30 in the morning.

However, it's difficult to accept your explanation that you thought this was a technical document and a framework document when the recommendation in the papers was 'approve the proposed Highways Street Lighting Profiles specifically with regard to operational hours and illumination levels.' The paper also estimated savings of approximately £400k. Where have these figures come from if you had not expected to roll out across the county? Not a technical framework document at all but specific costed and operational.

The lack of consultation with the District Councils, charities supporting women and girls, police and every individual who is afraid to walk in the dark is worrying.

I am also concerned about the governance of this decision. It is not right that one man is able to make a decision which affects every community in this county without having discussed the implications with those communities. It may be allowed in the Constitution but common sense should have said to you that one man should not make this decision, especially when the voices of vulnerable people especially women and girls had not been heard.

The residents of Oxfordshire are sceptical about whether you listen and act on what residents tell you and the outcry which this proposal has generated should be your wake-up call. You are a member of a minority administration representing a third of councillors and an even lower fraction of the population.

The opposition to this proposal shows that you are out of touch with residents. You got this badly wrong and Labour will continue to support 'keeping the lights on.'

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## Turn off most of the streetlighting at night?

I'm a great fan of dark skies – and very keen to reduce carbon emissions and encourage biodiversity. But Councillor Pete Sudbury has set this cause back many years by the clumsy way he has handled this issue. If we want to make a change like this, we need to try to take people with us.

The report which Pete was asked to approve (and astonishingly it was his decision alone) should never have been released for publication. There are lots of things wrong with it, for instance the fact that it doesn't mention women and girls once. Also, it claims that crime does not go up when the lighting is turned off. Of course it doesn't, because lots of people just stay at home when they don't feel safe out and about at night! Or they use their cars, instead of walking and cycling, as the Council would like us to.

Fortunately, public pressure has forced Pete to defer the decision on this and he has promised to provide a new report. He says now that he wants to consult people and listen to our views, so that the implementation of the policy can take account of "local requirements". The new report needs to explain how he proposes to do this. One of the things people were most angry about was that he was all ready to make a decision without listening to anyone. The enormous amount of money he plans to save is apparently already in next year's draft budget!

He wants to turn the streetlights off from 11pm to 6.30am. Does he not realise that there are thousands of people who come home late or have to go to work early? We don't all have the luxury of a nice 9 to 5 job, near where we live. In Oxford City there are of course often many people still around after 11pm and much later.

The way this has been handled has further eroded public trust in the County Council, just when councillors should all be trying to rebuild it. It's really disappointing.

***Cllr Susanna Pressel.***

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**City Cllr Christopher Smowton:**

Firstly, thanks for deferring this — I think there's both considerable confusion, as well as material problems with the policy, so I think it's right to take a step back and consider.

Secondly, we should consider the budgetary matters here: those councillors calling for the policy to be completely scrapped should bear in mind that £400,000 a year would need to be cut from somewhere else, and there are no "good" cuts available in the County's revenue budget.

With that said, there are both good things in the paper that are under-communicated, and things that need changing. For example, the paper talks about retaining lighting near licensed premises and on isolated pathways. Those are good things, but they're not at all recognised by the public presently and that's because they haven't been communicated: in whatever version of this comes back, please make sure to highlight these necessary carve-outs.

When it comes to things to change, firstly there's the hours of operation: I noted in Cllr Sudbury's email he expressed that the hours would vary across the county depending on local circumstances. The paper didn't give that impression at all, so if that is the intention please communicate it clearly. There are places like rural hamlets without licensed premises where an 11pm switch-off might be appropriate, but that's very different to a city where there's a lot of licensed premises, a lot of nighttime activity and a lot of people working shifts.

Finally, there's already excellent coverage in the paper about the actual crime impact when other councils have implemented part-night lighting, but I would want us to also address the issue of dissuasion: when lighting regimes change, are people less inclined to go out at night, less inclined to take late shifts, and similar issues. This is an impact that I expect will be most impactful on women and older people in particular, since they may be more reticent to go out in darkness.

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**STATEMENT TO THE OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL DECISIONS MEETING ON 14<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2024 ON THE PROPOSAL TO REDUCE STREET LIGHTING IN OXFORDSHIRE BY PATRICK COULTER CHAIR OF THE HEADINGTON NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM.**

I am Patrick Coulter Chair of Headington Neighbourhood Forum. The Forum aims to improve the quality of life for everyone who lives works or studies in Headington. All of these people will be affected by the proposal to substantially reduce our street lighting.

You are by now well aware of the concern about the impacts across Oxfordshire. My aim today is to ensure that there will be full and adequate consultation on the proposals **in accordance with your stated principles and policy for consultation.**

We have a legitimate expectation that you will adhere to these principles but so far that has not happened.

For a start **you state that “we consult widely to ensure that we understand the needs and views of local communities.**

Not just the major institutions and statutory consultees but local communities. You must talk to us in our local communities both young and old, men and women, workers and drivers and all those who move around in the hours of darkness.

**You state that consultation must be a time when proposals are still at a formative stage.**

I note the Chair has stated that people have misunderstood the current proposal to be an implementation plan - that's because it is an implementation plan! Please wind back and consult on an outline proposal.

**You state that there will be adequate time for people to consider a proposal, participate and respond. The length of time will be proportionate to the extent to the impact of the proposal.**

In this case as it will impact the whole population of Oxfordshire it will require a substantial length of time to complete.

**You state that full consideration will be give to responses before decisions are made and that there must be an audit trail to show this.**

We completely agree and look forward to seeing the audit trail in due course.

This is a very significant proposal which will affect us all. We urge the Council to meet our legitimate expectations and to carry out a comprehensive consultation on an outline proposal to include all members of our local communities **and fully in accordance with your stated policy and principles for consultation.**

Thank you.

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