

FAQs – Streetlights – Proposed Transfer from South Norfolk Council to Costessey Town Council – 06.03.18

1 Who manages streetlights in Costessey?

In Costessey most of the street lights, especially those on main roads and junctions, are managed by Norfolk County Council (NCC). However, on some older residential developments South Norfolk Council (SNC) has been managing and maintaining what they refer to as “Footway lights” since the 1960s and 1970s. SNC levy a Special Expense (SE) charge of approx. £5 to residents for 225 lights in Costessey alongside their council tax.

2 What is changing?

There is an increasing trend for the County and District Councils to try to pass services and facilities on to local councils to reduce their own budgets, often with no monies attached. This financial year alone, town & parish councils in South Norfolk district have been asked to take on grit bin filling (which was reversed when Costessey Town Council complained), public toilets, street lights and management of a country park.

County & District Councils want to reduce their spending to keep their Band D Council Tax rate down and see the transfer of the services / facilities to the local councils as an easy way to solve their own budget problems.

This is not sustainable as there is always a cost to maintaining services. Any given amount may appear as a small percentage of a bigger council's large precept, but the same amount of money would be a huge percentage increase on a small local council's Band D rate and precept.

3 What does this mean for the streetlights currently maintained by South Norfolk Council?

SNC wish to pass the responsibility to Costessey Town Council (CTC), or only maintain the service in areas SNC deem ‘vulnerable locations’ using Police data to support their justification.

SNC intend to remove lights in areas they do not consider to be vulnerable. Provisionally these include West End Avenue, Tower Hill & Tower Close, Townhouse Road garages behind Hart pub, Line Tree Avenue, Greenhills Close, Highlands, The Glade, St Edmund's Close, Vicarage Close, Folgate Close, Sidney Road, Grovedale Close, Highlow Road, Gurney Close, Sunny Grove, Gurney Road, Gunton Lane, Glenda Close, Kabin Road, Hawthorn Road, Ashtree Road, Hill Road, Hall Road, Woodlands Road, West Close, Hill Vue Close,

4 What are vulnerable locations?

Only the following have been deemed vulnerable locations by SNC under their criteria: Beechcroft, Tower Close, Linalls Drive & Grays Fair Court. These are basically areas around old people's complexes and GP's surgeries.

CTC has advised SNC that there are other locations they consider vulnerable with existing lights which should be retained. There are also children's homes and old people's homes which have not been taken into account. There are many streets of bungalows with elderly people living on their own and carers going in, plus people who

have moved to the area because they require one-level living. These have not been considered by SNC.

CTC has objected to SNC's "vulnerability" criteria and believes that if SNC wish to pass. SNC are unwilling to increase the locations deemed vulnerable UNLESS CTC has evidence for other roads housing vulnerable residents.

5 Will Costessey Town Council take on maintenance of these lights?

SNC has stated that the costs of maintenance are not covered by the special levy. IF CTC decided to take over maintenance of these lights, it could look at preserving the same amount of lighting with fewer lamp posts using LEDs with a wider light coverage. The Special Expenses Levy would be removed from the Council Tax bill, but the equivalent amount would probably be added to the CTC Band D rate to cover future maintenance.

Given the short timescale of the SNC's decision, which meant that no informed decision could be made by CTC before setting its budget for 2018-19 and the lack of detail about the costs involved, CTC decided that it would not consider taking on the lights until 1 April 2019 at the earliest, so that it had time to budget for any proposals which it might agree to.

6 Why are lights being cut down and capped?

Several columns have already been 'capped' as a recent inspection by SNC contractors deemed them 'safety critical' and more cuts are planned.

SNC also intends to cap lights in Ash Tree Road, Dereham Rd/Grays Fair Court, Glenda Close, Glenda Crescent, Grovedale Close, Gunton Lane, Gurney Close, Gurney Road, Hawthorn Road, Highlands, Hill Road, Kabin Road, Linalls Drive, Poplar Close, Ruskin Road, Sidney Road, Smithdale Road, Sunny Grove, The Glade, Tower Close, Woodlands

If SNC enforce their own "vulnerable" criteria these may never be replaced

7 Can we have our say?

SNC have asked CTC to make a case for other areas which might justify the lights being kept, based only on SNC's vulnerability criteria.

CTC is currently trying to compile a list of locations where lights ought to be kept, based on residents being for example, elderly, disabled, needing carers, footways being very steep or in a poor condition meaning residents cannot access local buses, shops or other services. Anti-social behaviour is also a factor.

Costessey TC has received two petitions and many letters of objection to the proposed removal of lights which we will compile into an "evidence" document and present to SNC

You could also contact your MPs: Richard Bacon e: richardbaconmp@parliament.uk for Old Costessey Ward and Clive Lewis clive.lewis@parliament.uk for New Costessey Ward.

Write to: Richard Bacon MP, or Clive Lewis MP, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

Contact your elected County Councillor Tim East e: tim.east.cllr@norfolk.gov.uk your elected district councillors John Amis e: JAmis@s-norfolk.gov.uk, Vivienne Bell VBell@s-norfolk.gov.uk Sharon Blundell SBlundell@s-norfolk.gov.uk and Andrew Pond APond@s-norfolk.gov.uk

Also contact John Fuller, Leader of the SNC JFuller@s-norfolk.gov.uk Cabinet Members Michael Edney MEdney@s-norfolk.gov.uk Barry Stone BStone@s-norfolk.gov.uk Yvonne Bendle YBendle@s-norfolk.gov.uk Lee Hornby LHorby@s-norfolk.gov.uk Kay Mason Billig KBillig@s-norfolk.gov.uk and copy it to Sandra Dinneen SDinneen@s-norfolk.gov.uk Chief Exec, and Bob Wade BWade@s-norfolk.gov.uk

Postal Address: South Norfolk Council, South Norfolk House, Cygnet Court, Long Stratton, Norwich, NR15 2XE **Tel:** 0800 3896109

8 What can we do?

You can collect signatures on a petition and send them to South Norfolk Council, but a petition is only likely to be counted as one objection, not by the number of people who have signed it. You can e-mail and write individual letters explaining why you believe streetlights in a particular street should be saved giving specific reasons.

SNC's consultation with the Town Council closes on 16 March. Please let us know of areas which house "vulnerable" residents and why they are vulnerable. (Not individual's names and address, just the street and a brief explanation of why the lights should be kept)