

**LETCHWORTH COMMITTEE**  
**19 JUNE 2019**

**\*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

**TITLE OF INFORMATION NOTE CHRISTMAS TREES IN LETCHWORTH**

INFORMATION NOTE OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR - RESOURCES

EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

PRIORITY: ATTRACTIVE AND THRIVING

**1. SUMMARY**

The Council has historically provided two Christmas Trees in Letchworth, one on Broadway Gardens and one at the Garden House Hospice (as well as one in each of Baldock, Hitchin and Royston). This involves arranging and paying for the supply, installation, lighting and removal of the trees. This has generally worked out at about £2k per tree.

This information note presents some alternative options that could be considered. The Committee may want to comment on the options presented.

**2. STEPS TO DATE**

Following a request from the Town Centre Manager in Hitchin, the Council agreed to provide grant funding of £2k to enable the Town Centre Manager to arrange the tree directly. This enables it to be co-ordinated alongside the other festive decorations. We have also been informed by our current supplier that they will no longer be able to supply trees to us, and initial market research suggests that there are a limited number of suppliers around. As a result we are reviewing whether there might be better options for the other trees.

**3. INFORMATION TO NOTE**

Tree at Garden House Hospice

The history of this tree seems unclear, but it has been provided by the Council over a number of years. Therefore an expectation has been established that it will continue to be provided. The Council does not provide trees to any other charities within the District. For this year (December 2019) the hospice are having building works taking place and would be looking to have a smaller tree than usual. They are also planning that their annual "Lights of Life" event will take place at Broadway Gardens, and have made an events application for this.

Tree at Broadway Gardens

The tree at Broadway Gardens does not act as the centre point of the Christmas light switch on and is away from the town centre. The Letchworth BID, Heritage Foundation and Garden Square Shopping Centre arrange their own decorations and events for the town (usually including two other Christmas Trees). There is therefore a question as to the value that the tree provides and whether the funding could be better used for a similar but alternative use.

For this year, this is complicated by the fact that the Hospice would like to use the tree. In the past their event has included individuals providing a donation to dedicate a light on the tree. It is unclear how this would work on a tree that is not directly theirs, including a tree on Broadway Gardens, but this can be discussed subsequently.

#### **4. NEXT STEPS**

In relation to the Christmas tree at the Garden House Hospice, the Committee may want to provide a view on:

- Whether you agree the Council should fund the smaller tree at the Hospice for this year? If so, we can discuss with the Hospice whether the Council provides this directly or see if they can arrange and have the costs reimbursed through a grant payment.
- Whether the Council should review the arrangements in relation to the Christmas tree from December 2021 onwards? This could include providing grant funding so that the Hospice can arrange it directly, reducing funding for the tree or indeed ceasing funding for the tree.

In relation to the Christmas tree at Broadway Gardens, the committee may want to provide a view on:

- The principle of whether the Council should continue to provide a tree at Broadway Gardens or whether the funding could be better used for an alternative festive use?
- If an alternative is proposed, whether this should be from this year, or delayed until 2020? This would (subject to other applications and events licenses) allow the hospice to have their event this year?

#### **5. APPENDICES**

None

#### **6. CONTACT OFFICERS**

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#### **7. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None