

Meeting about Street Lighting

18th June 2018, Grange-over-Sands

Present

David Peters, District Association Chairman (CALC) & Natland parish chairman
Amanda McCleery, District Association Secretary (CALC)
Lyn Prescott, Lower Holker parish clerk
Claire Benbow, Grange-over-Sands town clerk
June Lee, Staveley-with- Ings parish clerk
Graham Dalton, Dent parish chairman
Janey Hassam, Sedbergh parish clerk
John Scargill, Beetham parish clerk
Martin Curry, Levens parish clerk

Lighting in Parishes Present

Grange-over-Sands town council – It has 133 lights but unclear where and not on town council's asset register. It doesn't know if it owns these lights or not. It is only told amount by SLDC once council tax letters have been issued to residents and after town council has set its budget. This amount increased considerably 2 years ago. It was explained that this would be under "special expenses" (see Appendix 1).

Beetham parish council - 20 lights are owned by parish council and 20 lights are owned by SLDC. Parish council is told in January each year what it is going to be charged for the energy supply of parish lights and so sets the precept with that in mind.

Lower Holker parish council – 11 lights owned by parish council and it knows where they are. SLDC are not involved. Parish council receives a bill from CCC for maintenance and the energy supply from ENW is unmetred.

Staveley-with-Ings parish council – 28 lights are owned by parish council and 13 lights are owned by SLDC. SLDC does charge parish "special expenses" and this does get added onto the parish element of the council tax bill to residents. Parish council received a schedule of lights from SLDC Finance Officer, Claire Read. There is a set fee that CCC charge each year from maintenance (of £23.89 per light) but it is unclear what that covers or who is responsible for sorting out lights belonging to the parish.

Sedbergh parish council – Parish council pays CCC direct for maintenance and Eon direct for power supply, so SLDC is not involved. All street lights are numbered individually. Occasionally parish council sorts out an electrician if the street light is in an alleyway and CCC cherry picker is too big.

Natland parish council – of 19 footway lights, 7 are owned by SLDC and the rest by the parish council.

Dent parish council – there are 20 lights owned by the parish council, including some that are mounted on houses (homeowners can ask for removal). There are no CCC or SLDC-owned lights, except 7 road lights of CCC where a road was adopted as part of new housing. The electricity comes direct from Electricity North West (ENW), at a cost of £10 per annum per light based on estimated usage of electricity. There is not a lot of maintenance but a local qualified electrician is paid for if needed and there is someone to change any bulbs. All lights are LED (which saves on electricity) and about 15 years ago the parish council (as customer) got CCC (as contractor) to fit all the lights with magic eyes so that come on at dusk and off at dawn.

Levens parish council – parish council own 14 lights on columns and SLDC own 22 lights (on columns or telegraph poles). The parish council has a useful schedule of lights and there have been surveys of condition in the past but charges for maintenance or power supply are unclear.

Parish Concerns

Resident confusion over “special expenses” – residents find it confusing that “special expenses” do not form a separate line in the council tax bill so that they can understand that it is about lights owned by SLDC and the money does not go to the parish council. Grange-over-Sands town council has asked SLDC to make the council tax bill clearer but Head of Finance, Helen Smith, refused.

Insurance & asset register – there is variation amongst parishes. Some parish councils list lights on a parish asset register and include them in parish insurance. Other parish councils do not as they assume that the lights are insured by SLDC.

Lack of detailed breakdown of costs from SLDC – parish councils are just having to pay what SLDC demand. Parishes don't know how it is broken down. Most parish councils are told that costs (whether maintenance or energy) are divided up between the parishes according to the number of lights in each parish, yet Grange-over-Sands town council was told that its demand from SLDC was increased a lot 2 years ago because of additional costs associated with lights in that particular town. Each parish would like more detailed breakdown of costs.

No update on ENW project – a few years ago ENW said that all street lights needed to be removed from its poles for health and safety reasons. Some parish councils investigated the purchase and installation of new street light columns and this was about £1,200 per column. There was talk of SLDC receiving a grant from ENW to help parishes to take on lights but it is unclear if SLDC did receive such money and/or whether it was passed on to parishes.

Actions

1. Staveley-with-Ings to find out where to go if footway lights are out. Meeting believes it will be Highways Information Management System/Highways Hotline.
2. Sedbergh to contact Dent for contact at ENW as it wants to save on energy costs.
3. Grange-over-Sands to get schedule of lights from SLDC Officer, Andy Vickers, and to obtain detailed breakdown of costs from SLDC Head of Finance, Helen Smith.

4. Amanda McCleery to write up notes, distribute to all clerks and put on District Association page of CALC website.
5. Amanda McCleery to investigate if SLDC ever received a grant from ENW and if so, was any of the funding passed onto parishes? Post meeting note: Amanda contacted Andrew Vickers at SLDC who confirmed that SLDC had received funding from ENW to install new street lighting columns (as a result of ENW removal of lights from its poles). Where affected lights owned by a parish council, SLDC worked with the parish to get the replacement column installed and all works paid for out of ENW fund. Parishes did not have to make an application to the fund.

Appendix 1 General Information

SLDC contracts – Currently SLDC has contracted maintenance and repairs to CCC and energy use to Electricity North West (ENW). CCC bills SLDC annually for its maintenance costs. ENW bills SLDC monthly or quarterly for its energy costs. Total costs are then reportedly divided up amongst parishes according to the number of lights in each parish.

Special expenses – street lighting money is taken by SLDC from parishes under “special expenses” if the lights are owned by SLDC. It is separate from the parish precept (ie. it is not paid for by the parish council) but it does not appear on the council tax bill of residents as a separate item. Instead, it is included in the parish part of the bill which causes confusion for residents. What if the lights are actually owned by the parish council? This is not “special expenses”. Instead, SLDC charge the parish council. The parish council then gets this money back from residents through its precept. In terms of administration for a parish council, “special expenses” are on the left hand side of the precept form, whereas costs for lighting owned by the parish council are on the right hand side of the precept form.

Types of public street light – there are road lights which have to be owned by CCC and there are footway lights which can be (and in South Lakeland are) owned by parish council or district council. Confusingly, “footway lighting” means not “lighting of footways” but lighting of any public road or place by standards (columns I presume) 13 feet high or less, or between 13 feet and 20 feet with a gap of more than 50 yards between at least one pair of standards.