

Amenities, Leisure and Community Services
Thursday 10th September 2026
The Trinity Centre
18:00pm

Present:

Cllrs Clarke, Fieldhouse, Horrocks, Hunt, Pawson, Wood and Yip.

In Attendance:

Olive O'Sullivan – Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Jessica Johnson (JJ) – Project Manager Communities.

12 Apologies for Absence

Apologies received from Cllr Sam Ward.

Resolved to accept the apologies.

13 Declarations of Interest

Cllr Wood declared a non-pecuniary interest as an allotment plot holder at the Boulevard Allotments.

Cllr Clarke declared a non-pecuniary interest as an allotment plot holder at Falcon Lodge Allotments and Chairman of Falcon Lodge Allotment Association.

14 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting of the Amenities, Leisure and Community Services Committee held on 14th July 2026 be signed as a true record of the meeting.

15 Matters arising

None.

16 Questions from Members

Cllr Fieldhouse asked if there was scope to review the process for providing feedback to unsuccessful grant applicants, particularly in relation to the role that ward councillors could play.

The Chair replied that there are two key roles of ward Councillors in relation to the Community Grant Scheme. Firstly, to raise awareness of the Grant Scheme itself and then to provide context and knowledge at the Grants Panel.

As Councillors are decisions makers, giving feedback directly to applicants could be seen as a conflict of interests and it therefore should be officers that guide applicants through the process and provide feedback.

Cllr Hunt asked if there was an appeal process for unsuccessful applicants.

The CEO replied that applicants receive an outcome letter and if the grant is declined, the reasons for this are set out. Whilst organisations cannot reapply for a project that has been declined, they may wish to apply for a different project. Additionally, as set out in the Town Council's Standing Orders, a decision cannot be revisited within a six month period and it cannot be reversed.

The CEO added applicants are encouraged to have pre application discussions with officers, who can support applicants throughout the application process.

Cllr Wood commented that having a representative from each ward at the grants panel was important to share their thoughts on the applications, as well as for other ward Councillors to share their feedback with the ward representatives to raise at the Grants Panel.

17 Minutes of the Sutton Coldfield Allotment Sub Committee

The CEO reported it had previously been agreed by Council that the annual rent increase for allotment plots in the Town Council's allotment sites, would be set in line with the Birmingham City Council (BCC) allotment rent rates until all the Allotment sites in Sutton Coldfield are transferred from BCC to the Town Council.

Birmingham City Council historically increased the rents based on the published Retail Price Index as of 1 August of the previous year, which is published mid-September, adding that the new rates would be shared with the Allotment Associations for them to inform plot holders in time for the 30 September deadline for the notification of rent collection.

Committee noted that the Sub Committee had received an update on health and safety inspections and that this year's visits are scheduled throughout September.

Cllr Wood commented that drought resistant measures were discussed and that this was also pertinent to the maintenance of the Town Council florals.

The CEO replied that Town Council officers were reviewing the specification for next year's florals to ensure climate resistant plants are used.

Resolved to note the minutes.

Resolved to recommend to Strategy and Resources Committee that Sutton Coldfield Allotment Rents and Fees Charges for the Allotment Year 2027/2028 be set in line with the BCC rent increases which in previous years was based on the published Retail Price Index (RPI) as of 1 August 2026, which will be published in mid-September 2026.

18 Festive Lights

The CEO presented the Festive Lights report and outlined the new delivery arrangements. The report details the costs of the 2026 Christmas Tree and Festive Lights Scheme as £86,317; however, updated figures have since been received from the contractors at a value of £86,939.

In previous years, the Town Council commissioned Birmingham City Council to provide the festive lights scheme which was delivered by Wyrley M & E, BCC's preferred contractors. This year new arrangements have been put in place by BCC so the scheme can be commissioned directly through Wyrley M & E, who would be responsible for Highways permissions and licences, the proper installation, inspections, maintenance and removal of the lighting features in line with relevant safety standards.

The contractors, under the new arrangements, would be responsible for providing risk assessments and method statements to BCC for approval.

The current scheme was purchased in 2022, with an estimated life span of five years.

Under the new arrangements there is an opportunity to go with an alternative provider, who would then be responsible for obtaining the necessary approvals from BCC.

Cllr Pawson asked if there could be additional features in Banners Gate and a Christmas Tree in Boldmere.

The CEO replied that it will not be possible to add to the scheme in the current year but additional locations could be looked at when procuring a new provider. The question of a Christmas Tree on Boldmere High Street had previously been raised on a number of occasions, however, it had not been possible to identify a suitable location as the electrical supply must come from a lamppost and the tree must not obstruct the highway.

The Chair commented that when looking at the new scheme, it would be helpful to understand how locations for motifs and trees are selected and any safety requirements needed for them to be installed.

Cllr Wood asked if the new scheme would be installed in 2028 or in 2027 as the lead in year for the quincentenary.

The CEO replied that whilst there may be options to incorporate some features relating to the Quincentenary, the scheme would need to last five years and hold a resale value.

Cllr Hunt raised questions on liability and responsibility if there were to be an incident involving the festive lights or Christmas Trees.

The CEO replied that she had met with the contractors to discuss this.

Wyrley would be responsible for the proper installation, inspection, maintenance and removal of the temporary decorative lighting features. Therefore, if an incident were found to have resulted from a feature not having been properly installed or secured, this would fall within Wyrley's area of responsibility as the installation contractor and would be considered in the context of Wyrley's Public Liability Insurance. It is important to note that any well-meaning third parties, i.e. the town council, residents, community groups trying to fix any issues with the features themselves, could potentially invalidate this cover under Wyrley's Public Liability Insurance.

If a third-party vehicle struck and damaged a highway lighting column and this subsequently caused a lighting feature to fall, the circumstances would be different. The cause of the incident and the respective responsibilities of the parties involved would need to be established. This could potentially involve the vehicle driver/their insurer and the Highway Authority as owner and maintainer of the highway asset.

In relation to high winds and severe weather, there are a number of controls built into both the installation and ongoing management of the programme. Each column-mounted decorative feature is secured using a minimum of two fixings. The features are also of an open construction rather than being solid panels, which allows wind to pass through them and reduces the wind loading on the feature and its fixings.

Weather conditions and weather warnings are monitored by the contractors during the operational period, and inspections undertaken where appropriate during periods of adverse weather.

Wyrley have delivered these installations over many years, and BCC did not experience decorative features falling from lighting columns as a result of high winds, heavy rain or snow. In stronger winds a feature may move by a few degrees depending upon wind speed and direction, but this does not in itself indicate that the feature or its fixings have failed.

The method by which the features are installed and secured forms part of the Risk Assessment and Method Statement submitted to Birmingham City Council Highways. The proposed locations, relevant highway assets, contractor insurance and supporting documentation all form part of the Highways Change Notification Process (HCNF) process before the installations are authorised.

In terms of the Town Council's position, the Town Council is the participating client commissioning the Christmas lighting scheme; it is not undertaking the physical installation or maintenance of the features. Those operational responsibilities sit with Wyrley as the principal installation contractor, while Birmingham City Council retains its responsibilities as Highway Authority for the underlying highway assets.

It would not be possible to give an absolute assurance that the Town Council could never be involved in any claim, as liability can only properly be determined from the circumstances and cause of an individual incident. However, the delivery arrangements are specifically structured so that the installation and operational responsibilities do not transfer to the Town Council.

Members asked what the process would be for reporting any issues or faults.

The CEO replied that any issues or concerns with the Festive Lights and Christmas Trees should be reported directly to the Town Council Offices. Officers will then report this to the contractors for the contractors to rectify. It was stressed that any well-meaning third parties, i.e. the town council, residents, community groups, should not try to fix the issues themselves.

Cllr Hunt asked when the Christmas Lights are installed and switched on.

The CEO replied that the lights would be installed in October with the lights switched on around 19 November. The lights, using timed switches are on until 6 January, with the deinstallation of the scheme taking place over the following six weeks. The Town Council will organise communications/social media to promote the scheme.

Resolved to recommend to Full Council that Wyrley M&E Ltd be commissioned to deliver the 2026 Christmas Tree and Festive Lights Scheme at a cost of £86,939 from the festive lights annual budget.

19 Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting will be 10th November 2026, 18:00pm, Trinity Centre

The meeting ended at 19:13 pm

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Signed

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Date