

Harlow's street lights to stay on all night every night

Agreement has been reached between Harlow Council and Essex County Council to keep Harlow's street lights on all night seven days a week from 25 October 2015.

Essex County Council has accepted Harlow Council's offer to fund street lights staying on all night every night in Harlow starting from when the clocks go back this Sunday. In February 2015, Harlow Council agreed as part of its 2015/16 budget to increase its Council Tax by 1.5 per cent to pay to keep street lights on subject to Essex County Council's agreement.

The cost to Harlow Council will be just under £106,000 a year starting from 25 October 2015, and the costs will be reviewed annually at the end of October for the next four years.

The agreement between the two Councils will see Harlow Council pay for the additional electricity and arising CO2 emissions with Essex County Council continuing to be responsible for the maintenance of the lights. Harlow Council will also support Essex County Council on any initiatives to explore trialling the use of more energy efficient lighting to help reduce costs for Council taxpayers.

In Harlow, Essex County Council is responsible for 9,005 lights* with around 85% per cent being switched off overnight since March 2014 between 12midnight to 5am under its part-night street lighting policy. The County Council's policy was amended across the County in March 2015 with lights switching off between 12midnight and 5am one day a week and from 1am to 5am six days a week.

Councillor Jon Clempner, Leader of Harlow Council, said: "This is very good news for residents and businesses and the continued partnership working between the two Councils. I would like to thank the Leader of Essex County Council, David Finch, for his help with this issue, and I look forward to working with Essex County Council on other issues of local democracy, accountability and responding to local priorities.

"Keeping Harlow's street lights on responds to the genuine concerns of the community and businesses, and takes into account Harlow's needs as a urban town. Many shift workers walking to or cycling to and from work want to see where they are going and that is the same for the many people returning home from a night out leading up to or during the weekend. We know this will have a positive impact on businesses and that the fear of crime, particularly at night, will reduce for some of our older residents.

"I apologise to residents and businesses for the time this has taken to resolve. Harlow Council pursued what the public had told us they wanted and I am delighted that agreement has now been reached. Our financial offer to Essex County Council, funded by a small Council Tax increase of around 7p per week per household, is not just a one-off that some other Councils have offered, but can be maintained in the future. Now the final detail has been resolved, this will be taken into account for next year's budget (2016/17) to ensure that the keeping on of street lights overnight is in our budget in the long term. We will also fully support Essex County Council on initiatives like trialling the use of LED street lighting to help reduce this cost."

Essex County Council Leader, Cllr David Finch said: "I am pleased to share this announcement today with the residents of Harlow. I have worked closely with the Leader of Harlow Council and thank him for the joint approach to identify a suitable way forward. I have carefully reviewed Harlow's plan to finance the streetlights to remain on at night for at least the next four years. This is a good example of devolution in practice, where the county council is listening to local communities and identifying ways to devolve responsibility to district partners."

Essex County Council's Cabinet Member for Highways Delivery, Cllr Eddie Johnson said: "This is a great example of collaborative working with Harlow Council to meet local priorities. This announcement is important for Harlow - it will see the lights turned back on and the county council still delivering savings for taxpayers."