

# RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

## REPORT TO COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

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meeting date: 24 AUGUST 2021  
title: LIGHTING OF CLITHEROE CASTLE  
submitted by: JOHN HEAP DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES  
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### 1 PURPOSE

1.1 To determine a response to the numerous requests received for the lights at the Castle to be coloured to commemorate/celebrate events or causes.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities

- Community Objectives – Raise awareness of specific events or causes.
- Corporate Priorities – To ensure a well-managed Council providing efficient services based on identified customer need.
- Other Considerations – Recognition of the historical importance of the Castle.

### 2 BACKGROUND

2.1 The Council receives several requests annually from individuals and organisations to light Clitheroe Castle a particular colour. The effect achieved by placing coloured sheets over the white lights that normally light the Castle through the hours of darkness.

2.2 To date, the decision to agree or not requests have been taken by CMT, based on the following criteria:

- The request must come from a public body
- No political affiliation
- It should be a commemorative anniversary
- It is a national campaign involving other public buildings

Agreement to lighting the Castle does not have to meet each of these criteria, though it is expected a request would meet at least one to be considered.

For example, in support of the NHS or for the Census. Other requests have been turned down, such as a commercially based request. In the week leading up to Remembrance Sunday, the image of a single poppy has been projected in recent years and more recently, festive images have been cast at Christmas time.

2.3 It can be a very emotive issue for the people or organisations making a request, because the cause they are supporting generally has a personal connection. For example, a charity which is seeking to raise awareness of a particular illness, which has resulted in a personal loss to the individual requesting the Castle to be lit up with a certain colour.

### 3 ISSUES

- 3.1 Ordinarily the Castle is illuminated at night with a plain white light and on the occasions, it has been changed for a specific reason e.g., supporting the NHS, the impact locally is noticeable.
- 3.2 Council staff must be involved in ensuring the lights are not damaged when a coloured sheet is used. The sheets need to be correctly attached and the material of sufficient quality to prevent temporary or permanent damage to the light fitting. This is a cost which the Council bears for the national campaigns that have led to the Castle being lit in a different colour. Working out of hours for a member of staff will incur an additional cost. Although it has happened in the past, allowing an individual or group to carry out this work has implications from an insurance perspective for personal injury or if the lights were damaged.
- 3.3 If the Castle is lit regularly with different colours the likely outcome is a dilution of the impact that occurs now where changing the light colour is limited.
- 3.4 If anyone could ask for the Castle to be lit, there would need to be some form of allocation mechanism to enable competing requests to be determined.
- 3.5 Allied to this would be the need for criteria to establish which requests can be accepted, for example a person requesting lighting for a specific charity event/cause or someone wanting it for special birthday etc.
- 3.6 Currently because the lighting is done for National Events/Causes, which are requested of the Council as a public body, the Council covers any related costs. If it were opened to lots of other causes however laudable they might be, the issue of cost would need to be addressed. Often when organisations or people are involved for charitable reasons the assumption made is that whatever costs the public purse faces, it should be given free of charge for the organisation/individual. Clearly that option is not available to the Council with a limited budget for carrying out this work.

### 4. OPTIONS

Committee are invited to consider three options. It is recommended that whichever option is chosen, if the request is granted for something other than a National directed initiative from the Government then a charge is levied. The Council already makes a charge for Charity events, for example at the bandstand or stalls at the food festival, so it would be consistent to conclude that it would be inappropriate that the cost of lighting the Castle for a charity, individual or group is borne by the Council taxpayer.

The options are:

- a. To maintain the current arrangement whereby CMT decide on the request based on the criteria that has worked well to date. Committee may wish to include a limit of 3 non-Government campaigns and approval for one year does not guarantee an annual approval for the same cause or group.
- b. Limit the lighting of the Castle to National Events of significance which are directed by the Government, plus the Remembrance poppy and the Christmas image.
- c. Allow any individual or group for a fee to ask for the lighting to be changed to celebrate/commemorate a date or cause.

### 4 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 4.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications.

- Resources – Officer time to install and remove the coloured sheets on the lights, with current arrangements this is modest and met from existing budgets but expanding the practice will increase the cost in proportion.
- Technical, Environmental and Legal – The Council owns the Castle and the lighting installations, there is no planning implication for changing the light colour.
- Political – None arising from the report.
- Reputation – The Castle is a focal point for the town and how it is managed can be a very emotive issue for some individuals and groups, which impacts on the Council's reputation. This is less of an issue for residents outside Clitheroe, although any significant cost may then come into focus.
- Equality & Diversity – without some form of control on how the Castle is lit, the Council could face complaints from specific groups that they were not able to access the option for having the lighting changed in support of their cause.

## 5 **RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE**

- 5.1 Determine which of the options outlined should be applied for the future lighting of the Castle.
- 5.2 Consider the introduction of a charge for installations other than Government or Council initiatives.

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