



Report on Christmas Lighting contract and amendments to draft tender document.

Background

As councillors are aware, the Christmas lighting contract for Minehead expired in 2025. To ensure the town has Christmas lighting for 2026, a decision now needs to be made.

The Finance and General Purposes Committee received a report on Christmas light provision in February and agreed with the Clerk's recommendation to outsource the Christmas lighting as a contracted service. A draft three-year tender document was presented alongside this report and the Committee agreed that councillors would review the draft and provide feedback before the end of February.

Feedback was subsequently received from Councillors and this report provides a brief summary of the changes made. Most comments related to clarity, wording and punctuation; therefore, the majority of suggestions have been incorporated to an appropriate extent.

Summary of Changes

1. Introduction clarified - The updated draft now explicitly states that the previous contract has ended, that MTC funds the lighting and that a single organisation will be appointed for a three-year period.

2. Procurement dates adjusted - All deadlines have been updated to reflect the confirmed and realistic timetable for procurement.

3. Consistent terminology - Terminology has been standardised throughout. "Organisations" is now used consistently instead of alternate variations such as "tenders."

4. Updates to past practice and power supply position - References to MTC no longer providing shop-front trees have been removed as this is not relevant to the tender process.

5. Design theme strengthened - The draft now places greater emphasis on Minehead's Georgian character and its location within a Conservation Area. All proposed designs must therefore reflect this context.

6. Technical scope refined - Following discussion with St Andrew's Church, lighting for two birch trees has been removed from the specification. Similarly, 1m twinkling drops for the Wellington Square tree have been omitted, with only uplighting now proposed.

7. Responsibilities and ownership clarified - The draft now clearly states that the Council will supply baubles for the Wellington Square Christmas tree and the contractor will be responsible for their installation and removal.

8. Minor corrections and clarity improvements - General improvements have been made to the wording of submission instructions, call-out charges and other procedural details to ensure consistency and ease of understanding.

Timeframes

To ensure selection of a contractor well in advance of installation and subject to councillor approval of the tender document at this meeting, the following timetable is proposed:

- **Tender goes live:** Week commencing 23rd March
- **Tender closing date:** 12 noon, 24th April
- **Clerk's review and report:** Early - Mid May
- **Contract award (2026–2028):** 26 May (Full Council)

Financial and Legal Considerations

The 2026/27 budget allocates £25,000 for Christmas activities, covering both the Christmas lighting and the Christmas Light Switch-On event. The Switch-On event typically costs approximately £5,000, leaving around £20,000 available for Christmas lighting.

The previous lighting contract (2021–2023) cost £14,255.45 per year, covering installation and removal for Wellington Square, the Christmas tree, and Parade central motifs.

In 2024 and 2025, costs were reduced by splitting supply and installation, resulting in:

- Supply: £6,754.71
- Installation/removal: £6,200.71
- Total: £12,954.71 per year (fixed-price agreements)

Given inflation and the potentially expanded expectations of the new specification, a maximum annual budget of £20,000 is considered appropriate.

Town and Parish Councils may provide Christmas lighting under Local Government Act 1972, Section 144.

The Procurement Act 2023 requires transparency, equal treatment and objective evaluation. Although the contract value does not exceed thresholds requiring publication on the central digital procurement platform, the Council must still meet the Act's core principles, including open advertisement, fair evaluation, a clear specification, and auditable decision-making.

Recommendation

That councillors:

Review the amended tender document and delegate authority to the Clerk to initiate the Christmas lighting tender process, working to the timetable set out above and to compile all returned tenders for presentation to Full Council in May together with an accompanying report.

Ben Parker
Town Clerk
March 2026