

## **Item 9**

### **Policy & Resources Committee**

**Date: 20<sup>th</sup> July 2026**

**REPORT SUBJECT: Christmas Light Switch On**

**REPORT BY: Pippa McPherson – Projects Officer**

#### **1.0 Purpose of Report**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise Members of the Policy & Resources Committee of the proposal for the Christmas Lights Switch On in November 2026.

#### **2.0 Background**

2.1 Representatives from Otley Town Council, Otley BID, and community fundraising team—have been working on improving the decorations in the Market Place as the centerpiece of the display.

2.2 The Members of Policy & Resources Committee (20<sup>th</sup> July 2026) will receive a paper regarding the upgraded lights and insurance.

2.3 Otley Town Council are historically responsible for the festive lights display in Otley, the Christmas Lights switch-on event and the Christmas Tree in Market Place.

2.4 Following a period of staffing changes, a new Projects Officer joined the Council on 15<sup>th</sup> June.

2.5 The handover notes from the previous Executive Officer state that the date for the Lights Switch on in 2026 is Monday 23 November.

2.6 The Members of Policy & Resources Committee (14<sup>th</sup> July 2025) resolved, following a recommendation from the previous Project Officer, to move the Christmas Lights Switch On from a Monday evening to a Sunday.

2.7 The agreed budget for the 2026 Christmas Lights is £30,000, of which £22,862 is paid to Leeds Lights for the hire of the lights. The additional one-off costs for 2026 have been taken from Reserves.

#### **3.0 Christmas Lights Switch On 2026 Proposal**

3.1 To defer the move from Monday evening to Sunday until 2027, using the Otley 800 Celebrations as a platform to develop the event, possibly in conjunction with other local groups (for example, Otley BID and the Victorian Fayre organisers).

3.2 The proposed programme for 2026 would remain broadly similar to 2025, with the following potential changes:

- To invite Kop Cat (the Leeds United FC Mascot) and the Leeds United FC Foundation to the event, with a stall to promote their programmes at the Community 3G pitch. This would have no cost (Ronnie the Rhino is £45 an hour). Kop Cat is unavailable on Sundays but is available on Monday 23 November.
- To approach Otley Town FC to run an activity with their girls' teams (for example, a keepy uppy competition with a football as a prize) and for representatives of the teams to join the parade to switch the lights on.
- To approach the organiser of the Otley Common Varieties to see if they would be happy to work in partnership with the Switch On to provide a short family friendly stand up or a compere, to promote their variety programme.
- To purchase an OTC branded Christmas Lights Switch On photo frame which people could use to take photos/selfies with Kop Cat or the Snowman (or each other).
- To purchase OTC branded holographic stickers to hand out at this event, with any residual stickers being used at future OTC events.
- Let's Light Up Otley have asked to run a mulled wine stall as part of their promotion. They will apply for a licence to do so, if agreed.
- To ask for a donation to Let's Light Up Otley from commercial stall holders at the event (for example food concession, coffee concession).

#### **4.0 Legal and Financial Implications**

4.1 The options above would be covered by the existing budget for the Christmas Lights and Switch On.

#### **5.0 Sustainability**

5.1 The contents of this report are compliant with Aalborg.

#### **6.0 Recommendations**

6.1 Agree to defer the move of the Christmas Lights Switch On to Sunday until 2027.

6.2 Agree a date of Monday 23 November 2026 for this year's Switch On.

6.3 Agree to allow the Projects Officer to explore the partnerships outlined above and purchase the branded merchandise.

6.4 Agree to allow Let's Light Up Otley to run a mulled wine stall.

6.5 Agree to ask for a donation to Let's Light Up Otley from commercial stall holders at the event.