

**Report of a Scrutiny Panel on the topic:**

**SCRUTINY REVIEW OF THE COST OF CHRISTMAS  
DECORATIONS/ACTIVITIES IN HYNDBURN**

**(An in-depth examination of the cost  
of Christmas decorations/activities,  
including procurement and storage)**

**As agreed by the Resources Overview and Scrutiny  
Sub-Committee at its meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> January,  
2008**



**Panel Membership:**

**Councillor G Jones (Chair)  
Councillor Pam Barton  
Councillor K Pratt  
Councillor S Horne**

For further information on this report please contact:  
Paul Preston, Overview and Scrutiny Officer, Hyndburn Borough Council  
Tel No. (01254) 380129

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## **1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1** A Scrutiny Panel was set up in November, 2007 with the remit to undertake a scrutiny review of the cost of Christmas decorations/activities (an in-depth examination of the cost of Christmas decorations/activities in Hyndburn, including procurement and storage), to be referred to as a 'scrutiny review'. Its findings would be reported to the January 2008 meeting of the Resources Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee<sup>1</sup>.
- 1.2** Members felt that by reviewing Christmas decorations and activities, including procurement and storage, a better understanding could be gained of the current position regarding costs and financial implications. The scrutiny review would also enable the Panel to gain a clearer insight as to the festive decorations provided in each area and by whom; how resources were currently distributed, and to be made aware of any other health and safety and/or cost implications involved in the procurement, provision and storage of Christmas decorations.
- 1.3** The scrutiny review, as part of its remit, also gave consideration to any future issues that could impact on resources and undertook comparisons with the working practices undertaken on Christmas decorations and activities by Pendle and Rossendale Borough Councils.
- 1.4** The Panel comprised of a politically balanced membership of two Conservative Members (Councillors Horne and Pratt) and two Labour Members (Councillors Pam Barton and Jones). Councillor Jones was appointed Chair at the Scrutiny Panel's first meeting.
- 1.5** Scrutiny Panel Members received a Project Plan in December, 2007 including the terms of reference; objectives; information and timescales for the scrutiny review. Prior to the first meeting of the Panel, Members also received a briefing pack, prepared by the Overview and Scrutiny Officer, containing a draft Modus Operandi for the scrutiny review and some background research/information documents.
- 1.6** The Panel met on four occasions. This final report outlining the Panel's findings and detailing their recommendations was then produced.
- 1.7** A summary of the main findings of the Scrutiny Panel, based on the evidence, verbal submissions and research information received, is included in Section 3 of this report.
- 1.8** Section 4 of the report explains the key factors emerging from the witness, documentary and research evidence considered by the Scrutiny Panel during the course of its work.
- 1.9** The Panel's final recommendations are set out at Section 5 of the report.

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<sup>1</sup> The Council's Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules – Paragraph C17 allows for each Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee to appoint up to one Scrutiny Panel at any one time (a time limited Task and Finish Group) and may determine the Panel's terms of reference, size, membership and duration (provided that the composition of the Panel is the same as the political balance of the Sub-Committee which appointed it).

## **2. INTRODUCTION, TERMS OF REFERENCE AND METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1 Background to the Review**

- 2.1.1** The need for such an in-depth review first arose at the meeting of Resources Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee held on 19<sup>th</sup> March, 2007, when the Sub-Committee received a report from the Leader of the Council in relation to Christmas decorations/activities. The report asked Members to consider and comment on any methods the Council currently operated or could improve. in respect of procurement, or where costs could be reduced and any other cost efficiency measures. The Sub-Committee, having considered the Leader of the Council's report, felt that the issues raised would benefit from more in-depth consideration by a Scrutiny Panel, to be undertaken during the festive period and resolved "That, as part of its Work Programme for the 2007/08 Municipal Year, the Resources Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee give consideration to the appointment of a Scrutiny Panel to undertake an in-depth examination of the cost of Christmas decorations and activities in Hyndburn, including procurement and storage".
- 2.1.2** The Resources Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee included this scrutiny review topic in its 2007/2008 Work Programme, and resolved to appoint a time limited scrutiny review Panel at its meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> November, 2007.
- 2.1.3** By making recommendations as appropriate, the aims and outcomes would be:-
- to advise the Council and the Cabinet in the development of future strategy, in relation to the cost of Christmas decorations and activities, including procurement and storage;
  - to conduct research, community and other consultation in the analysis of the current situation regarding Christmas decorations and activities, including procurement and storage and possible options;
  - to consider any future issues which may impact on resources; and
  - to consider any 'green' issues in relation to the current and future provision/procurement of Christmas decorations.

### **2.2 Terms of Reference**

- 2.2.1** The meeting of the Resources Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee held on 13<sup>th</sup> November, 2007 agreed the terms of reference of this Scrutiny Panel as follows:-
- To undertake an in-depth examination of the cost of Christmas decoration/activities, including procurement and storage.
  - To present a report on the Scrutiny Panel's findings to the meeting of the Resources Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee to be held on 29<sup>th</sup> January, 2008.

## **2.3 Establishment of Scrutiny Panel**

**2.3.1** It was decided to establish a Panel of four non-Cabinet Members to carry out this scrutiny review and report back its findings and recommendations to the January, 2008 meeting of the Resources Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee.

**2.3.2** The Scrutiny Panel was also politically balanced, as required by Hyndburn's Constitution.

## **2.4 Meetings of the Scrutiny Panel**

**2.4.1** The Panel met on four occasions between December, 2007 and January, 2008.

**2.4.2** At the first meeting of the Scrutiny Panel held on 10<sup>th</sup> December, 2007, as part of their Project Plan, the Chair, together with other Panel Members agreed the Modus Operandi they would adopt for the scrutiny review, namely:-

- an agreement that Panel Members would not aim to apportion blame for decisions made in the past. The aim of the Panel was to learn from the past, but with a view to improving things for the future;
- an agreement that the Panel would avoid political debate during the duration of the Scrutiny Panel; and
- an agreement the Panel would make evidence based findings and recommendations on this topic at the conclusion of the work of this time limited Scrutiny Panel.

**2.4.3** The Panel received verbal 'witness' contributions from three Council Officers, the Leader of Hyndburn Borough Council, a Councillor and Officer from Pendle Borough Council (information gathering interviews were held at meetings on the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> January, 2008). At that meeting written information was also tabled by the Town Centre Manager (Hyndburn Borough Council) and correspondence circulated from a member of the public that was received in response to the Panel's consultation.

**2.4.4** The Scrutiny Manager and the Chair of Pendle's Scrutiny Review of Festive Decorations Panel (Pendle Borough Council) accepted an invitation to attend the Panel's meeting, held on 14<sup>th</sup> January, 2008. At that meeting they informed the Panel of the methodology, findings and outcomes of a similar review they had recently undertaken in the Borough of Pendle. Rossendale Borough Council provided the scrutiny review with written information giving a breakdown of their Christmas Lighting budget. (Appendix A lists all the witness submissions/evidence considered by the Panel).

**2.4.5** The Overview and Scrutiny Officer acted as Clerk to the Scrutiny Panel and provided research support. Lianne Williams, Member Services Officer further assisted the Panel in this scrutiny review, particularly with the Christmas questionnaire survey exercise and the analysis of the findings.

**2.4.6** The Scrutiny Panel, at its fourth and final meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> January, 2008 assessed all the information received, reached its conclusions and formulated its recommendations on this scrutiny review topic.

## **2.5 Thanks**

**2.5.1** The Scrutiny Panel would like to record its thanks to all the Council Officers, Members, external colleagues and the Hyndburn public who took part in the consultation on this scrutiny topic and in particular, expresses its appreciation and thanks to the undermentioned individuals who contributed their time and expertise during the information gathering stage of the process:-

Councillor Peter Britcliffe, Leader of the Council, Hyndburn Borough Council.

Bill Huntly, Town Centre Manager, Hyndburn Borough Council.

Kevin Leadbitter, Engineering Manager, Hyndburn Borough Council.

Steve Watson, Area Council Manager, Hyndburn Borough Council.

Lianne Williams, Member Services Officer, Hyndburn Borough Council

Kath Haydock, Scrutiny Manager and Councillor Margaret Bell, Pendle Borough Council.

Pat Couch, Scrutiny Officer, Rossendale Borough Council.

## **3. THE PANEL'S MAIN FINDINGS**

### **3.1 Local Context - Evidence Considered**

**3.1.1** Scrutiny Panel Members attended a number of Christmas Lights switch-on events throughout the Borough during December, 2007 and also viewed many of the Christmas decorations in Hyndburn to gain a better understanding of which decorations were provided by whom and how the displays in the various towns and areas compared.

**3.1.2** As part of their research on this scrutiny review topic, the Panel formulated a short consultative questionnaire, circulated in early December, 2007, which sought the views of persons who lived, worked or visited Hyndburn on the cost of Christmas decorations/activities in the Borough. The questionnaire was placed in the main reception areas at the Council Offices, Scaitcliffe House and the Tourist Information Centre at the Town Hall, Accrington and widely circulated via e-mail.

**3.1.3** The existence and remit of this scrutiny review panel was also publicised in articles published in the local press (Accrington Observer on the 14<sup>th</sup> December, 2007 and 4<sup>th</sup> January, 2008 and the Lancashire Telegraph on 21<sup>st</sup> December, 2007 and 2<sup>nd</sup> January, 2008).

- 3.1.4** The Scrutiny Panel interviewed, for comparative purposes with another Local Authority, Kath Haydock, Scrutiny Manager and Councillor Margaret Bell, Pendle Borough Council. Councillor Bell had chaired a Scrutiny Panel which had reviewed the Festive decorations in Pendle and which had published a report on its findings in March 2007. Councillor Bell and Kath Haydock gave 'witness' evidence to the Panel, on the remit, findings and conclusions of the work undertaken by Pendle's Scrutiny Panel on festive decorations, and answered Members' questions.
- 3.1.5** The Panel also received written information from Rossendale Borough Council which detailed the Council's lighting budget and explained how that Local Authority's budget was divided into two parts. Monies for testing, installing, commissioning, switch-ons, maintaining, repairing, vandalism and taking down, and electricity costs (amounted to £18,600 for Christmas 2007) was managed by a Technical Officer; whereas monies for new works (which could only be used if it was match funded by other community groups, Town Councils, Chamber of Commerce, local businesses etc) amounted to £9,300 for Christmas 2007. The Christmas lighting was controlled by a 'Christmas Lighting Group', which met every month from March to October and consisted of Elected Members, members of Community Groups (representing different areas), along with an Administration Officer and a Technical Officer.
- 3.1.6** The Scrutiny Panel interviewed the Town Centre Manager; the Engineering Manager; and the Area Council Manager, Hyndburn Borough Council, in relation to their roles in the provision of Christmas decorations and/or activities, and/or procurement, and/or storage, in order to assess the extent to what involvement they had and to ascertain what future actions, if any, were required.
- 3.1.7** Councillor Peter Britcliffe, the Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Area Councils was also interviewed as a witness. Councillor Britcliffe had originally submitted a report to the Resources Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee at its meeting held in March, 2007 on the cost of Christmas decorations/activities in the Borough. Members of the Sub-Committee had been asked to consider any methods the Council currently operated or could improve in respect of procurement and to examine where costs could be reduced and consider any other cost efficiency measures, in respect of Christmas decorations. The Sub-Committee had resolved at that time, because of the in-depth work that would be required on this topic, the work would be best carried out by a Scrutiny Panel, and this led to this scrutiny review being undertaken.
- 3.1.8** The Panel also received and considered further written evidence provided by the Town Centre Manager on spend on Christmas activities (Accrington Town Centre), which gave a breakdown of the costs of the Christmas lights switch-on/promotion of late night and Sunday Opening, £7,500 from the Council's Accrington Town Centre budget; Christmas lights switch-on/promotion of Late Night and Sunday opening (Arndale Contribution £34,000); and detailed Services given for free.
- 3.1.9** A resident from Clayton-le-Moors also wrote to the Panel congratulating the Council on some of the Christmas decorations in the Borough, namely the lights in Accrington Centre and the Arndale Centre, and also the lights on the trees in Clayton opposite the Hare and Hounds and the bottom of Dill Hall junction. The resident had some suggestions for 2008, and commented that on entering Accrington, down Manchester Road, the festive decorations did not look very

appealing and that the tree opposite the Tesco garage in Accrington had for the past three years looked flimsy and in need of improvement, either with a bigger tree or to have rope lights put on it. Other suggestions included a request for the reintroduction of the Snowmen and Father Christmas festive decorations previously displayed in Clayton Square in 1999/2000 and more use of Rope Lights.

#### **4. FACTORS EMERGING FROM THE WITNESS/DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE CONSIDERED BY THE SCRUTINY PANEL**

**4.1 A number of factors emerged from the Panel's deliberations. These are discussed below. The Panel's recommendations are summarised in section 5 of the report.**

**4.1.1** The Panel noted the cost and breakdown of spend (from the Council's Accrington Town Centre budget) on Accrington Town Centre Christmas lights switch-on event, and the marketing link in promoting the late night and Sunday opening Christmas shopping programmes. Members also recognised the financial contribution made by the Arndale Centre towards marketing, fireworks and decorations. It was also noted that services provided for free, included advance publicity by the BEE radio station, and all policing, and that other activities generated token income for the event, such as mobile food units and children's rides.

**4.1.2** At the commencement of this scrutiny review topic, as part of their research, the Panel formulated a questionnaire on the cost of Christmas decorations/activities in Hyndburn which was publicised and circulated in early December, 2007. The views of persons who lived, worked or visited Hyndburn were sought on which town centre/area they visited most frequently; how they described the decorations in that area; what they felt the level of spending on festive decorations should be; and any additional comments they wished to put forward. A total of 54 responses were received, 44 of which related to Accrington and the remainder related to outer areas of the Borough. The responses to the survey are attached as Appendix 2 to this report. One of the key findings to emerge was that the majority of respondents (90.7%) felt the level of spending by the Council on Christmas decorations/activities should either stay the same (44.4%) or be increased (46.3%).

**4.1.3** The Panel also considered the information provided by Rossendale Borough Council on the operation of their Christmas lighting budget, and felt there was merit in exploring new and innovative ways of improving the current delivery of festive decorations and activities in Hyndburn. It was suggested that the Area Councils Panel through the establishment of a 'Hyndburn Christmas Lighting Group' could play an important and prominent role in this regard. The Panel also felt that the Vice-Chair of each Area Council could lead on 'championing' festive matters by serving as Members of such a Christmas Lighting Group, and that the Group would benefit from the inclusion of other stakeholders, from the private and voluntary sector.

**4.1.4** The Panel felt that whilst the Council provided significant support towards the festivities at Christmas, there was still a further need to encourage businesses, community groups, the Chamber of Commerce and other interested parties to provide additional support in enhancing the festive appearance of the Borough.



The Panel felt that sponsorship or award schemes for festive displays should be pursued as a way forward.

- 4.1.5** Sustainability – the Panel received information from the Engineering Manager in relation to 'Green Festive Initiatives' in the Borough. The Panel was informed that this year the Council had trialled, in conjunction with the manufacturing company Phillips, 100 LED low energy bulbs (1.4 watt) on Blackburn Road/Union Street. The main issue identified with the green LED low energy bulbs was the actual cost of each bulb (currently £5 each) as opposed to the cost of a normal bulb (15 watt at 30p each).
- 4.1.6** Procurement - The Panel was informed that a Lancashire based company, LITE (Lighting and Illumination Technology Experience Limited), of Nelson, was now the United Kingdom's largest owned manufacturer and supplier of illuminations and supplied or refurbished Christmas decorations for the Council. LITE Ltd. had over 100 years of combined experience in the design, supply and manufacture of Christmas and Seasonal displays. LITE Ltd, on their website, state they take environmental responsibility very seriously and strive to minimise their carbon footprint by proposing products to their clients that use the very latest in LED technology, constantly reappraising and amending where appropriate their manufacturing methods. They also wherever possible, utilise locally based accredited installation crews for all on site installation work, thus minimising travelling distances, whilst at the same time offering a more responsive service to their customers.
- 4.1.7** Procurement – Christmas Trees – the Engineering, Design and Contract Manager reported that the contract for the provision of Christmas trees in the Borough was subject to a tender process. The Panel was concerned at the comments received from respondents to the Christmas questionnaire regarding the poor specimens of Christmas tree they felt were provided this year in Great Harwood and Dill Hall Lane (Church)<sup>2</sup>.
- 4.1.8** Area Councils – the Panel noted that in the last Municipal year (2006/07) only Oswaldtwistle (£5,200) and Church and Milnshaw Area Councils (£5,000) had allocated budgets for Christmas decorations. (The final figures and costs of all Area Council allocations for 2007/08 are awaited). The Panel felt that as Christmas was an important time of the year, both socially and economically, Area Councils should take a lead in supporting not only festive activities in their areas, but the provision of Christmas decorations as well.
- 4.1.9** Budgets – The Panel found there was an urgent need to review budgets to ensure some form of central co-ordination of the main Hyndburn Borough Council decorations and trees budget. The Panel felt that to have a main central pot for funding was correct, but that it currently had significant identified weaknesses in its expenditure. An example of this was that the budget for the work undertaken by the Engineering Manager (Planning and Transportation section) for the installation, inspection and dismantling of the Christmas decorations was actually held by the

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<sup>2</sup> Note – The Christmas tree at Dill Hall Lane was a 'living' tree purchased by Church and Milnshaw Area Council in the 2006/07 financial year and was not part of the contract for the supply of procured 'cut' Christmas Trees in the Borough.

Area Council Manager (Legal and Democratic Services Section). There was also no rolling plan, little forward planning, no contingency for replacement/refurbishment of decorations and there appeared to be some difficulties with communication and co-ordination at Officer level, which needed to be urgently addressed.

- 4.1.10** Storage - The Panel was informed that Christmas decorations were stored at the Willows Lane depot, currently at no charge to the Council. However the storage area was not ideal and quite cramped. The safe and careful storage of cribs and other festive decorations, and the minimisation to the risk of accidental damage were also identified as an important issue for the Panel to consider, and was emphasised by the responses to the questionnaire.
- 4.1.11** Decorations/Activities – Festivals/Events – In undertaking this scrutiny review it was noted that the terms of reference were very specific, in that the Panel should examine and report back on the cost of Christmas decorations and activities in the Borough, including procurement and storage. The Panel however acknowledged and recognised that there were other faiths who also celebrated festivals/events throughout each year, but that these did not form part of the remit of this Scrutiny Panel's work.

## **5. THE SCRUTINY PANEL'S RECOMMENDATIONS / FINDINGS**

### **Recommendation 1**

**That consideration is given to the development of a long term strategy for the management and delivery of Christmas decorations and activities, including procurement and storage in Hyndburn.**

### **Recommendation 2**

**That consideration is given to linking the Accrington Town Centre Christmas activities with those of adjoining areas, through liaison with adjoining Wards via the Area Councils.**

### **Recommendation 3**

**That consideration is given to the establishment of a 'Hyndburn Christmas Lighting Group' via the Area Councils Panel. It is suggested that the Vice-chair of each Area Council could be the appointed as a lead Member of such a 'Christmas Lighting Group'. It is also suggested that such a Group meet three times per year (March, Summer and October) and include a membership with private and voluntary sector representation and the Chamber of Commerce.**

### **Recommendation 4**

**The Panel feel that in future years, to enhance the festive appearance of Accrington, increased emphasis should be given to improving the Christmas decorations and activities in the Manchester Road, Abbey Street (Church Street/Warner Street) and the little Blackburn Road areas of Accrington.**

### **Recommendation 5**

**That to refresh/enhance Christmas displays, Area Councils be asked to liaise with each other and consider the possibility of rotating the decorations displayed in the different areas of the Borough on a programmed basis.**

### **Recommendation 6**

**That a review of the organisation and administration of budgets relating to the provision of Christmas Festivities and Decorations, including procurement and storage be undertaken.**

### **Recommendation 7**

That having taken account all the information received as part of this scrutiny review, and an analysis of the findings of the Scrutiny questionnaire, the sense of direction identified was for the level of funding to stay the same or be increased for the provision of Christmas Decorations and activities in the Borough. All Area Councils are recommended to consider whether they would like to see some increase in spending for Christmas decorations/activities, and if Area Councils are so minded, to provide some additional funding from their budgets to promote this economically and socially important time of the year.

### **Recommendation 8**

That there needs to be better central co-ordination of the budget. The Panel feel that to have a central pot for funding is correct, but that there are currently significant identified weaknesses in the expenditure from this budget.

### **Recommendation 9:**

That there is no rolling plan / little forward planning / no contingency for replacement / refurbishment of decorations and the Panel recommends that there is an urgent need for improvements in communication and co-ordination at Officer level in this regard.

### **Recommendation 10:**

The Panel recognise that one of the challenges facing Area Councils is that they are keen to invest in Christmas events/activities, but issues regarding revenue costs such as electricity and putting up/taking down decorations impacts upon what can be delivered. The Panel therefore recommend an increase in (Area Council) revenue budgets of 20% per annum to allow for a 5 year rolling investment programme.

### **Recommendation 11:**

That in view of the above recommendations and the budget setting process, that Cabinet be requested to provide an interim response to these recommendations at the Cabinet meeting to be held on 6<sup>th</sup> February, 2008 and a more detailed report back to the Resources Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee, upon progress made in achieving the above recommendations within six months from the date this report is considered by Cabinet.

### **Finding 1**

**That the importance of having Christmas decorations and activities in the outer Towns and Areas of the Borough are appreciated and supported, particularly the Christmas lights switch-on events, which encourage community involvement, particularly with schools and children having the opportunity to be involved.**

### **Finding 2**

**The Panel felt that there was no need for an emergency contingency fund with regard to Christmas decorations (any requirements should come from the Council's reserves)**

### **Finding 3**

**The Panel noted the Rossendale Borough Council Christmas Lighting Budget and its 'Christmas Lighting Group' and the totally devolved budgets at Rossendale; and for comparison purposes, looked at how Pendle Borough Council provided its festive decorations throughout the Borough either via Borough Council funds or Town and Parish Council funding. Pendle Council's central budget was also supplemented by capital funding allocated as seen fit by its individual Area Committees.**

### **Finding 4**

**The Panel feel that central budget should continue to be provided as the funding source for Hyndburn Borough Council's main decorations and trees budgets and that the Council's budgets are not all devolved to Area Councils for the purposes of providing Christmas decorations/activities, including procurement and storage.**

### **Finding 5:**

**The Panel feel that there could be better use made of the Private Sector (1) through Sponsorship and/or (2) Individual responsibility of retailers (for example, the Bronze, Silver and Gold Award Sponsorship Schemes to be introduced by Pendle Borough Council has its merits).**

### **Finding 6:**

**Sustainability – the Panel acknowledges and appreciates the Council's responsibility and efforts in reducing the carbon footprint and welcomes for example, the pilot LED bulb scheme being trialled in part of the Borough**

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**LIST OF EVIDENCE CONSIDERED BY THE PANEL**

**Written/Research evidence:**

1. Member Briefing Pack – incorporating background information letter to Scrutiny Panel Members: draft Modus Operandi; Scrutiny Panel Project Plan; Resources Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee on the cost of Christmas Decorations/Activities and minute relating thereto; Scrutiny Review of Festive Decorations report (March 2007) and Review Plan; Canterbury City Council Scrutiny Review Panel report – 2003).
2. Background information provided by the Town Centre Manager on Spend on Christmas Activities – Accrington Town Centre (excluding Christmas decorations/Planting/Trees/ Lights etc) - tabled at Panel meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> January, 2008.
3. Written response (undated) from a resident of Clayton-Le-Moors tabled at the Panel meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> January, 2008 congratulating the Council on some of the Christmas decorations, namely the lights in Accrington Centre and the Arndale Centre, also the lights on the trees in Clayton opposite the Hare and Hounds and the bottom of Dill Hall junction and outlining some suggestions for 2008.
4. Written information received from the Scrutiny Officer, Rossendale Borough Council on that Council's Christmas Lighting Budget.
5. Scrutiny Panel - Cost of Christmas decorations/activities questionnaire survey results. (see Appendix B).

**Verbal evidence:**

The Panel considered verbal evidence from the following witnesses:-

1. Councillor Peter Britcliffe, Leader of the Council, Hyndburn Borough Council.
2. Bill Huntly, Town Centre Manager, Hyndburn Borough Council.
3. Kevin Leadbitter, Engineering Manager, Hyndburn Borough Council.
4. Steve Watson, Area Council Manager, Hyndburn Borough Council.
5. Kath Haydock, Scrutiny Manager and Councillor Margaret Bell, Pendle Borough Council.

**Questionnaire Results**

<i>Which town centre/area do you visit most frequently?</i>	<i>How would you describe the Decorations?</i>	<i>Do you consider that the level of Council spending on festive decorations should be....?</i>	<i>Further comments/suggestions</i>
Accrington	Fair	Increased	
Accrington	Good	Stay the same	I live in Rossendale and work in offices in Accrington so the town centre I am able to provide an opinion on is Accrington. I think the illuminations for Accrington are adequate, quite pleasant and suitable for a small town centre. Are there any Ex-Blackpool illumination stock for sale at reasonable cost that could be used across the Borough if other townships felt left out and funds are limited.
Accrington	Good	Stay the same	
Accrington	Fair	Increased	I think it is important to have a good display in the principal shopping areas of the Borough. It is important not only for residents but for people coming into the Borough to spend
Accrington	Good	Increased	New lights for Accrington's tree, possibly LED.
Accrington	Good	Stay the same	

Accrington	Fair	Increased	Festive decorations and festive activities should be seen as an important contributor to the economic health of the town centre on important festive occasions. More thought and money should be given to activities which enhance the festive season and create attractions which draw residents and visitors into the town centre on important cultural occasions, e.g. Dickensian themed choirs and street theatre for Warner Street area over Christmas to enhance the character of this historic part of town. In this way the notion of festive decorations should be viewed in a far wider sense.
Accrington	Fair	Increased	Ensure that the lights are working and replace any faulty ones promptly. There is nothing worse than half lit festive decorations. Could sponsorship from local businesses etc be a way of increasing the funding available for festive decorations throughout the Borough.
Accrington	Excellent	Stay the same	
Accrington	Fair	Stay the same	Funds should be distributed more equally throughout the Borough.
Accrington	Good	Increased	



Accrington	Fair	Increased	Having so many district Councils/towns within Hyndburn means having to place Christmas trees in so many places. Accrington's Christmas tree was fine, but the one on Dill Hall Lane (Church) was a very poor specimen and started to turn brown within days of its erection. Switching on the Christmas lights at Accrington town centre was good but the firework display was definitely money going up in smoke and I think the money would be better spent on better Christmas trees and decorations in the surrounding districts.
Accrington	Good	Increased	
Accrington	Good	Increased	
Accrington	Poor	Increased	
Accrington	Fair	Increased	Santa's grotto in town centre as people have to go out of town to find one.
Accrington	Good	Stay the same	Cannot see where £50k has been spent.
Accrington	Fair	Increased	It would be nice to see the display again in the Arndale centre, it always looked nice and was lovely for the children at that time of the year.

Accrington	Good	Stay the same	The lights on the trees are very eye catching, like beautiful sculptures in the night. The family play guessing games with the one at Clayton traffic lights, eg. What does it look like? Broadway looks good, I think other town centres look a bit bare, but I understand the Council has got limited funds.
Accrington	Good	Stay the same	
Accrington	Fair	Stay the same	To consider environmentally friendly/natural decorations with baubles and fairies on and possibly chocolates and alcoholic decorations stuck to the trees so that residents can help themselves.
Accrington	Good	Increased	
Accrington	Fair	Reduced	Need to consider more natural/sustainable/classy decorations.
Accrington	Good	Stay the same	It is important for the Council to contribute to festive decorations, but it also has to be matched by businesses/shops. There should also be consultation with businesses especially in the out districts of the impact decorations have had during the Christmas period. Have businesses seen an increase in trade or stayed the same.
Accrington	Good	Stay the same	

Accrington	Poor	Increased
Accrington	Fair	Stay the same
Accrington	Fair	Stay the same
Accrington	Good	Increased
Accrington	Fair	Increased
Accrington	Good	Stay the same
Accrington	Good	Stay the same
Accrington	Good	Stay the same
Accrington	Excellent	Stay the same
Accrington	Good	Increased

The increase should be in line with the current rate of inflation so as to maintain the present standard of provision. We should continue to celebrate Christmas and not allow those with ulterior motives to use this as a means to further their cause.

Accrington	Good	Stay the same	Hyndburn Homes do not take enough responsibility for the safe storage of the cribs and figures. Whilst Environmental Services provides storage space, we do not have a storeman at Willows Lane any longer so it is important that the contractor identifies which figurines go with their respective cribs and where.
Accrington	Good		Without having all the relevant information it is difficult to answer Q.3
Accrington	Poor	Increased	
Accrington	Excellent		I can't make an informed response to Q.3 because I do not know what the cost of Christmas decorations is comparatively speaking. I wouldn't like to see the decorations compromised in anyway. That said, it sounds like a lot of money to me, but maybe the amount of £50,000 is the going rate for a town of this size?
Accrington	Good	Stay the same	Accrington town centre looks nice and festive and I have seen the odd Christmas tree dotted about in some of the other towns/areas in the Borough (not visited them all during this festive season.) No trimmings at all would bring negative publicity as seen on the news this year. The area for consideration is where we could adopt solar powered lights or trial them as soon as authorities have - although this obviously comes down to cost.
Accrington	Fair	Stay the same	

Accrington	Fair	The decorations look tired so to admit to spending this amount of money is quite shameful. The fireworks at the switch on were a crowd-pleaser but the 'entertainment' was shocking. People would rather have more up-to-date decorations as opposed to bare coloured bulbs on a string and silly girls singing along to a Spice Girls CD.
Accrington	Excellent	I think the Council have done an excellent job especially compared to the pitiful lights at its neighbouring town (and larger town) of Blackburn. Keep up the good work.
Accrington	Fair	Stay the same
Baxenden	Poor	I feel that the gateways to the Borough, e.g. Baxenden should have been provided that one lousy Christmas tree with a set of poor quality lights. I think that what was provided was an embarrassment. We would like to be able to provide more Christmas decorations through the Area Council but we only have limited funding although we are trying to see if we can afford some additional lighting through the Area Council for 2008. I realise that £50k is already a lot of money to spend on what is an attraction for no more than two month maximum, but the good side is that Accrington town centre does look very attractive with the decorations.
Baxenden	Poor	Stay the same
Baxenden	Poor	Baxenden Area Council decided not to spend on Christmas decorations

Great Harwood	Poor	Increased	The Christmas tree in Great Harwood was a total disgrace, the worst one the town has had.
Great Harwood	Fair	Stay the same	Why is Great Harwood's tree smaller this year and Accrington's the same size? No wonder no-one in Great Harwood wants the change it's not all about Accrington!
Rishton	Fair	Fair	That no spending on festive decorations
Rishton	Poor	Increased	As a Christian and regular Church attendee I am very keen to ensure that our Christian celebrations are protected. Less is being done each year to celebrate times such as Easter and Christmas, which is a shame. We should do more to ensure our children are good Christians.
Rishton	Fair	Increased	Decorations in Rishton are minimal and I feel that more decorations would be appropriate.
Oswaldtwistle	Good	Stay the same	They make the Borough look much better.
Oswaldtwistle	Fair	Increased	
Oswaldtwistle	Fair	Stay the same	Accrington still seems to have priority as regards Christmas decorations. Yet often, Broadway is deserted once the shops have closed at tea-time and I shouldn't think late night drinkers and clubbers are that

bothered about admiring the lights.

On the other hand, the townships are smaller places where people pass on foot or in the car, both day and evening/night. We are proud of our townships and would like to have nice decorations too. Obviously the budget had to be controlled, but it would be nice if the townships could be made attractive too.