

Stretton Parish Council – Proposal to Reduce Street Lighting Costs

Introduction

Findings from the Rutland County Council's Street Lighting Policy, directly support a case for reviewing and potentially reducing the number of streetlights in Stretton Parish.

Currently, our street lighting is concentrated in a relatively small area of the parish, yet it represents a significant and ongoing cost to the Community. Many of us have questioned whether all these lights are necessary, and whether our money could be better spent. After reviewing the County's own policy and recent information about land ownership, I believe we now have a clear and compelling case to act.

1. No Legal Requirement to Keep Current Lighting Levels

The policy clearly states that there is no legal duty to provide street lighting. This means we are under no statutory obligation to maintain the number of lights we currently have. We have discretion.

2. Parish Councils Have the Right to Request Removal

Sections 2.4 and 2.5 of the policy confirm that we can formally request the removal or reduction of street lighting in specific areas. These requests are permitted and considered valid if they come from a Parish Council, particularly when the lights are no longer needed or are at the end of their useful life.

Moreover, the policy states that such requests will also be considered if they are made for financial or environmental reasons—two very relevant concerns for us in Stretton.

3. Cost Savings for the Parish

Under section 2.9 of the policy, it is clearly outlined that Parish Councils are responsible for 100% of the energy costs for the community-owned lighting. Since we are paying for all of this ourselves, reducing the number of lights is not only reasonable, it's financially responsible.

4. Environmental Benefits and Energy Efficiency

The county council's policy aims to reduce carbon emissions and improve energy efficiency across the board. Section 10.5 even states that energy-saving upgrades should aim for a minimum 40% reduction. Reducing unnecessary lights aligns well with these goals—and we can position ourselves as supporting the county's environmental ambitions.

5. Our Lighting Is Likely 'Community Lighting'

The policy draws a clear distinction between 'Highway Lighting', which applies to busy roads and commercial centres, and 'Community Lighting', which is what we most likely have in Stretton. This distinction gives parishes like ours more flexibility in managing local lighting.

6. Additional Consideration – Prison Service Land Ownership

It has recently come to light that a large section of the road where many of the parish's street lights are located is in fact owned by the Prison Service. This raises serious questions about the appropriateness of the parish bearing the ongoing energy and maintenance costs for lighting situated on land that is not publicly owned or maintained.

If the lights in question are not serving parish infrastructure or residents directly—but rather lighting a road belonging to a national institution—then we may be inappropriately subsidising another body's responsibilities. This strengthens our financial argument and suggests we should be seeking clarification from the County Council and the Prison Service regarding:

- Ownership of the lights
- Responsibility for ongoing costs
- Whether these lights should be removed or transferred to the appropriate party

What This Means for Us

In simple terms, we are allowed—and indeed encouraged—to request the reduction or removal of street lights if it suits our local needs. We are not breaking any rules. In fact, we would be working within county policy and contributing to its stated goals.

We know that light pollution, rising costs, and unnecessary energy use are ongoing concerns. Reducing our street lighting could make a meaningful difference—both for the parish budget and the environment.

Suggested Next Steps

1. Nominate Specific Lights or Areas for Review:

Identify which lights are least used or most redundant, especially those on Prison Service land, and propose these for removal or invoicing to the prison service.

2. Formally Submit a Request to Rutland County Council:

Cite sections 2.4, 2.5, and 2.6 of the policy, requesting that certain lights be removed or switched off.

3. Seek Clarification from the County Council and Prison Service:

Confirm ownership of the road and lighting infrastructure and challenge the appropriateness of current parish expenditure.

4. Prepare for Assessment and Consultation:

The county may carry out a formal consultation or assessment. We should be ready to participate.

5. Check If Lights Are Nearing End of Life:

If any lights are old or nearing their useful lifespan, the county is more likely to approve their removal.

Conclusion

Rutland County Council's Street Lighting Policy, along with new information about road ownership, gives us the authority, the opportunity, and the responsibility to make sensible decisions about our village lighting. If we act now, we can reduce our costs, support environmental goals, and tailor our lighting to the actual needs of our community.