

'PR disaster over lights could be averted'

Another row broke out in the town council chamber as the bitter saga about funding for this year's Christmas lights boiled over again.

One councillor was told to sit down by the mayor when she tried to quote articles from the Kentish Express.

Another said the council had a "moral duty" to light all the 22 High Street trees this year.

After a heated debate, councillors agreed by nine votes to six to spend between £5,000 and £6,000 on lighting some of the trees.

That had been a recommendation from the highways and amenities committee which Cllr Mike Carter tried to get overturned at Mon-

day's full council meeting.

He said: "A PR disaster could be averted by full council voting to take this back to committee. We promised the lights when agreeing to take them on. We have a moral duty to perform."

The council failed to budget for this year's lights, but Cllr Carter said that mistake should not be a reason to delay spending. "We have monies in reserve that could be made available. We have virtually £400,000 in the bank."

Cllr Carter suggested that the matter be sent back to the committee with a recommendation that all the money be made available.

Cllr Mike Pearson, who had



Cllr Mike Carter

clashed with Cllr Carter over funding at the highways and amenities meeting, said the time to buy the lights was getting close. "If it goes back to another committee, it is a few more weeks before a decision is made," he said.



Cllr Sue Ferguson

The majority of councillors had recommended spending between £5,000 and £6,000, he added.

Cllr Sue Ferguson stood to try to refer to previous reports in the Kentish Express, but was interrupted

by mayor Cllr Jennifer Crickmore-Porter.

The mayor said: "We have been through all this and do not want to go through it again. Will you please sit down."

Last year, the town council agreed to take over responsibility for the big tree lights from Tenterden Chamber of Commerce.

The lights had gone missing in 2012 and the chamber raised around £15,000 for replacements. Last year, 10 of the big trees were lit.

The chamber remains responsible for small trees above the shops and lights in The Fairings and Coombe Lane.

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