

MARCH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of March Town Council held on 1 September 2025 held in The Skoulding Suite at March Town Hall commencing at 7.15pm.

Present	Councillor	A Woollard N Spencer	Town Mayor Deputy Town Mayor
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Councillors	G Christy M Field J French M Purser T Taylor	S Court K French J Lawler R Skoulding
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Cambridgeshire County Councillors	C Thornhill
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Town Clerk	S Lemmon
Assistant Town Clerk	S Farmer

Public	2
Press	1

84 Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr Hannah Orbell and County Councillor Galbraith. Apologies were also received from PC Scott Clarke (March Neighbourhood Policing Team).

Prior to the start of the formal meeting, the Mayor thanked Lieutenant Colonel Nigel Spencer MBE for yet another fantastic and wonderfully attended MAFF on Sunday. All agreed that it was superbly organised by Spence and his team, with record numbers supporting the event.

85 Police Update

The Mayor reported that he is still waiting for a date for a community engagement meeting. However, in the meantime, there had been a clear and pleasing rise in ticketing for parking on double yellow lines in town.

86 Planning Applications

Because of her position on the Fenland District Council Planning and Development Committee and her commitment to Paragraph 28 of the Fenland District Council Code of Conduct, Councillor J French declares a permanent personal interest and takes no part in discussions relating to planning matters.

<i>Application</i>	<i>Name and address of applicant, details of application, Number and recommendation of March Town Council</i>
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Three additional planning applications would be discussed at tonight's meeting.

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| F/YR25/0604/F | Mr Ali Boyraz
Erect 1 dwelling (retrospective) at Plot 2 Land North of Woodville, Wisbech Road, March.
Received: 18 August 2025
Reply by: 8 September 2025
*Cllr Kim French declared an interest in this application.
Recommendation; Approval in principle, although the Town Council has concerns about a neighbour's comment in relation to loss of light caused by the garage. |
| F/YR25/0607/A | Mr Andrew Rice, Royal Mencap Society
Display of 1 non-illuminated fascia sign at 11 Broad Street.
Received: 20 August 2025
Reply by: 10 September 2025
Recommendation; Approval |
| F/YR25/0628/F | Suzanne Richardson
Erect a single storey rear extension to existing dwelling involving the demolition of existing single storey extension and conservatory at 40 Smiths Drive, March
Received: 28 August 2025
Reply by: 18 September 2025
Recommendation; Approval |
| F/YR25/0630/F | Mr Paul Woolfe
Erect a carport to rear of existing dwelling and erection of a 1.8m high gate (retrospective) at 5 Church Gardens, Westry, March.
Received: 28 August 2025
Reply by: 18 September 2025
Recommendation; Approval |
| F/YR25/0634/F | Mr & Mrs Joshua Watson
Erect a single storey extension to rear of existing dwelling involving the demolition of existing conservatory at 97A Station Road, March.
Received: 29 August 2025
Reply by: 19 September 2025
Recommendation; Approval |

87 Public Participation

Since nobody had given the requisite notice to the Clerk to enable them to address the meeting, no public participation took place.

88 Minutes of Meetings

The following Minutes were agreed and signed by the Town Mayor:

Main Meeting - 4 August 2025

Planning Meeting - 18 August 2025

Christmas Lights Committee - 26 August 2025

89 Matters Arising

Christmas Lights – The Clerk highlighted a number of points that required clarification and/or correction. The Clerk is responsible for drafting minutes. The minutes circulated were drafted by Cllr Christy (as the Clerk could only attend part of the re-scheduled meeting) and were only provided in a pdf version to the Clerk.

The Clerk would amend the minutes to append to the official working minutes and re-submit for approval.

90 Grants and Donations

One application had been received from FDC requesting the sum of £100 for the Golden Age Fair.

Unfortunately, no supporting documentation had been received in accordance with the Quarterly Grants and Donations Policy.

The information would be requested, and if/once received, the Clerk/Assistant Clerk were authorised to review this and make the award provided they are satisfied that the relevant criteria had been met.

91 MVAS

The Clerk requested an update on MWAS.

She had requested removal of the signs pending the outcome of the research by the Mayor and Cllr Christy into alternatives.

This had not been done by Cllrs Field and Christy since Cllr Christy had been unwell.

However, a TEK100 would be purchased soonest from Wrights Tools to enable removal of the MVAS and Cllrs Woollard and Christy would report back to council as soon as possible with an update re other options.

92 Christmas Tree/Christmas Lights Expenditure

The Mayor referred to emails received today from Phil Hughes at FDC and Shafi Ahmad at CCC.

These stated that, *“further to a new socket being fitted in Broad Street, two conditions MUST be met for a Christmas tree using the socket in Broad Street to ensure that it is safe:*

- 1. The maximum height of the tree should be 38’/11m*

2. *Any tree used should only have a trunk that has the same diameter as the fitted socket, whereby the tree trunk can be fitted into the socket without any trimming of the tree trunk diameter itself. Removal of the lower twigs/branches will be fine."*

It was also stressed that the tree size and shape should be suitable for the streetscene location, with care taken to ensure that the space between the tree and the war memorial and tree and the roadway is safe for pedestrians. Also, advice "*from an aesthetics point of view*" is "*to try and keep the tree proportionate in size with the adjacent features such as the war memorial, flag posts etc*"

The size of the tree last year was disproportionately large for its surroundings.

As highlighted in Matters Arising, the Clerk expressed her dissatisfaction with the Christmas Lights minutes for the 26 August meeting which had resulted in a lack of continuity in the official minutes.

She explained that a full 2024 breakdown of spending had been provided to Cllr Field, Chair of the Christmas Lights Committee. There were only 2 items of expenditure so far for 2025, but it would be easy to forecast 2025 expenditure (as per The Clerks Report and Christmas Lights minutes) based on actual 2024 expenditure.

Whilst it would not be necessary to use Balfour Beatty for electrical supervision in 2025 (saving £1,055), the Clerk highlighted all the additional expenditure and potential expenditure for 2025 which would result in potential expenditure of £25,000+.

She reminded councillors that wall-bolt testing now has to be done every year as opposed to every two.

The annual insurance premium for Christmas lights has risen by £1,000 following taking ownership of the new lights in Broad Street.

There is no budget available for expensive repairs. Not all damage is covered by insurance, such as that sustained to the parcel last year.

New items of expenditure will be confirmed by the SAG (but could include provision of additional toilets, body cams for stewards, additional security and first aid dependent upon the tier classification of the event).

AS still had to complete his NRSWA training and our Erections team would be spending more hours erecting lights this year, at increased cost to MTC in terms of man hours and use of the cherry picker.

The Clerk was concerned that the Committee did not seem to share her concern about sticking to the budget.

Fundraising activities, Fundraising monies and ring-fencing of money was discussed.

Cllr Purser shared details of the Race Night he has organised on 11 October to raise funds for the Christmas Lights.

Cllr J French advised that the Christmas Lights Committee will not receive extra money from the Town Council in the event of an overspend. But she urged the Committee to strongly considering a contingency fund at the time of the budget so that means were in place to cover costly future repairs etc.

93 Cambridgeshire County Council Update

All email updates were being circulated by the Clerk as and when received.

County Councillor Thornhill advised that the Local Government Reorganisation was still on track for 2028, with Option 3 still being the most popular model. He acknowledged that it would take many more years, however, to homogenise all the contracts from merged councils.

94 Fenland District Council Update

All email updates were being circulated by the Clerk as and when received.

In the context of the Local Government Reorganisation, Cllr J French advised that FDC has until November to submit its preferred choice.

There will be elections in 2027 after which a “shadow council” will be formed, although how this will work is neither known nor clear.

Due to nuisance parking outside Iceland, 6 new bollards will be installed this week. A few of the newly planted trees have died due to the low rainfall and these will be replaced shortly.

Cllr J French encouraged councillors to share information about the Shop Front Grant. Notwithstanding that these grants have been promoted and available for over 18 months, there has been low uptake and Cllr French wished the underspend to be fully utilised for the benefit of the town.

Cllr Field would contact the Pawn Shop with a view to making an application to repair some damaged brickwork.

The public toilets would be completed by the end of the month.

The former Barclays Bank now has permission to be demolished (in spite of officer recommendation for refusal) and it is thought that this will take place in October.

Cllr J French mentioned the eventual progress that had been made in connection with St Wendredas and the issue with the Closed Churchyards that the Clerk had been dealing with for some time. FDC would be taking responsibility for the churchyards, but the cost of some of the urgent tree works would be split between our respective authorities.

Burnt House Wind Turbines had grants available for up to £3,000 if it could be demonstrated that we can share donate this to good causes. She would share details of this with the Clerk.

Cllr Skoulding enquired about a bench and bin on the sconce in March East. Cllr J French confirmed and stated that more benches and tables would also be installed in West End Park.

Cllr J French provided an update on Council Tax fraud prepared by ARP (Anglia Revenue Partnership). The partnership had been working hard to tackle fraud in the district, the majority of which related to falsely-claimed single person allowance.

Cllr Christy advised that there had been a lot of fly-tipping on farmland in the area recently. Please report any incidents direct to FDC.

He also shared information about bus route updates with the group.

Finally, Cllr Christy advised that the source of the rat infestation at Mill View Car Park had been identified by Environmental Health and action was being take to address the issue.

95 Payments List

The Payments List, as circulated, was agreed.

96 Mayor's Charity Golf Day

The Mayor promoted his Charity Golf Day taking place on Sunday 21 September at March Golf Club and invited all golfers and non-golfers to attend to help raise funds for children's charities and organisations with the town of March. There would be bacon rolls, a raffle, open bar and a prize-giving. All welcome!

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8:25pm.

Councillor A Woollard.....6 October 2025
Mayor of March.