

Christmas Lights Working Party Minutes

Tuesday 26 August at 7.00pm held in The Skoulding Suite at March Town Hall

Present:	Chairman	MField		
	Councillors	M Purser	S Court	G Christy
	Members	A Stimpson	R Burry	
	March Lions	IGroome (part of meeting)		
	March Air Cadets	BGoodwin (part of meeting)		
	Town Clerk	SLemmon (part of meeting)		

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Flt Lt R Kidger, D Fortuna

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 July 2025 were approved.

3. Event

- March Lions would like a stall. It was agreed to let them have a stall on the bridge on the path. They will setup from 5:00pm. MF to add this to the EMP.
- March Lions confirmed Santa will congregate at The Cornerstone and sleigh will depart at 6:45 to make way to the Market Place to be on stage for 7:00pm. It was agreed that Santa and the Mayor would jointly switch on the lights. MF to send invite to the Mayor via the Town Assistant Clerk.
- It was asked if the stairs to the stage will be secure. It is believed that new stairs are being used and this will be confirmed by MF. The use of the stairs will be added to the Risk Register by MF.
- After switch on Santa and Helpers will hand out sweets to the crowd. Risk Assessment to be provided by March Lions to MF. Santa will then exit on sleigh via High St and Elwyn Road back to The Corner Stone.
- GC confirmed that the FACT Mobile Community Hub would be at the event and it was agreed that this would be in the same place as last year next to the tree. GC will follow up with 20Twenty to see if there are any facilities to stream the switch on event to a TV and speakers at the FACT Mobile Community Hub.

4. Lights and Tree

- It was confirmed DF has completed NRSWA training at own cost. Balfour Beatty will not be required to attend when lights are installed.
- MF confirmed he had met with Shafi from CCC.
- Shafi committed to have Balfour Beatty audit of lights to be completed as a priority and at no cost to MTC. This needs to be completed by October for the Attachment Order. MF to follow up with Shafi if this has been completed or if not when it will be completed.
- Shafi also confirmed that the height of the tree in Broad St is governed by the diameter of the hole, and the maximum tree height that could be installed is 11.5m.
- It was agreed that DF be given the go ahead to order and arrange the delivery of the 10m tree from Mawsbury. Bath. This is the best cost value from the three options at the cost of £1,360 plus £350 for haulage.

- f. MF to check with Shafi if the lights on the bridge have been connected.
- g. The bolts for the lights have been stress tested and report provided to the Clerk. The bracket on the front of the Pawn Shop failed and the front of the building is in poor condition making it unsuitable for an alternative fixing. It was agreed that this year the string of lights at this point would not be installed but options would be looked at next year for an alternative solution or location. SL to arrange for removal of the bracket for safety concerns.
- h. It appears that the bolt holes on the Griffin for the light ornaments have been filled in during the renovation works. MF to follow up with Griffin for reinstatement of these fixings.
- i. AS raised that they will need access to the electrical junction box on Broad St and they do not have a key. SL to follow up and obtain key for access.
- j. AS said that they will also need a key for the electric access covers in the path. SL to follow up and obtain key.
- k. MF confirmed that Budgens have agreed the Nativity can go on their roof. AS to check if the lamp post outside Budgens has an electric point to plug in the Nativity.
- l. There was no other update on the progression of the Attachment Order. This is waiting on DF's NRSWA and receipt of a certificate or covering letter, although SL confirmed an alternative NRSWA number could be used. The Balfour Beatty audit is also required for the Attachment Order.
- m. There was no further update on the progression of the Road Closure which is being obtained by C Brown.

5. Finances

- a. No itemised budget projected cost breakdown was provided for 2025. SL said this was not possible to provide.
- b. SL stated that the only discretionary item for 2025 is the tree. MF confirmed it had been agreed to go ahead with the procurement of the tree quote obtained by DF as this was the best option of the three that had been provided. Cost is £1,360 for the tree and £360 for haulage. SL to confirm if this includes VAT.
- c. SL stated that there is an item on the next March Town Council agenda of Christmas Tree. MF asked why and SL said it was because of the concern raised by councillors of spiralling costs.
- d. The Balfour Beatty Living Place cost SL confirmed was for supervising the connection of the lights and was not required for 2025.
- e. No 2023 or 2024 itemised cost breakdown had been provided to the meeting, although MF confirmed he had received a Scribe report from the Clerk for 2024 which was in a pdf output format and had not been circulated.
- f. GC provided a 2023 and 2024 itemised cost breakdown that had been possible to produce using AI to extract the information from the Payments Lists for those payments made under the Cost Code 'CHRISTMAS LIGHTS'.
- g. For 2023 the report indicated a net cost of £15,866.77 which is an underspend of £4,133.22 against the March Town Council allocation that year of £20,000 reduced from £27,500 from 2022. This was expected as there were no lights in Broad St due to the regeneration. There was fundraising of £4,014.26 in 2023 which was unspent.
- h. For 2024 the report indicated a net cost of £19,385.94 which is an underspend of £614.06 against the March Town Council allocation that year of £20,000 which remained at the 2023 amount. For 2024 Broad St was included and additional costs

incurred although the amount allocated remained at £20,000. There had also been fundraising of £2,289.11 for the year which was unspent.

- i. MF asked if the figures seemed correct and SL confirmed they sounded right.
- j. The group asked why they had been told that costs had been escalating and there was a massive overspend when the actual figures and reports showed a significant underspend.
- k. The group asked where the unspent fundraising of £6,303.37 was and where the underspends of March Town Council allocation in 2023 of £4,133.22 and 2024 of £614.06 were. SL said these are reasonable questions.
- l. GC said he would check the AI reports he had produced against the report the Clerk had provided to MF.
- m. GC said he would put together a draft itemised 2025 forecast from the information available and attempt to have this ready for the Town Council meeting on Monday.

6. Stewards

- a. It was agreed that as per the previous two years all new stewards would be required to undergo an Enhanced DBS check for the Christmas Lights. This would be paid for by the Christmas Lights budget. RB agreed to co-ordinate all Steward offers and DBS checks.
- b. Steward recruiting is ongoing on Facebook. RB will post a new request.
- c. RB suggested contacting the people that volunteered as stewards at the Summer Festival and this was agreed. RB agreed to contact the Summer Festival Stewards to ask if they would volunteer for the Christmas Lights.
- d. The use of the radios was discussed and due to the nature of the surroundings can sometimes be problematic. It was agreed that WhatsApp would be used as a secondary communications method. MF will document this in the EMP.
- e. BG confirmed Air Cadets will be available to steward the event. Details on times will be confirmed closer to the date.
- f. RB asked about the Army Cadets and Police Cadets stewarding. MF to follow up.

7. SAG

- a. The SAG meeting is on the 18 September. MF to attend.
- b. MF confirmed Lisa Hedges has passed all the licences for traders.
- c. The new toilet block we have been assured will be open. MF will clarify with SAG if additional toilets are a requirement.
- d. MF will follow up on Fire Marshall training and arrange this for the required stewards.
- e. Bins, rubbish sacks and grabbers to be requested from FDC. MF will raise at SAG and make request.
- f. The removal of commercial waste is the responsibility of the traders and MF will remind Lisa.
- g. The committee agreed that a walk around of the event area before the event be carried out to record any damage. After the event a walk around would be conducted to do a rubbish sweep and damage check. MF to document this in the EMP.
- h. Keys are required for the electric box and the ground electric points. MF to raise this at SAG.
- i. RB raised that additional Christmas Lights hi-viz vests are required. MF to do a count up of how many there are and arrange order of additional if required.

8. Fundraising

- a. To date fundraising for 2025 has been £400 from sale of unused lights to Wimblington and £130 to date on the Just Giving Page.
- b. GC to apply to March Lions for £250 grant towards the Christmas Lights.
- c. GC confirmed that a request for a contribution to the lights had been made to Persimmon Homes to sponsor the tree.
- d. Tesco collection confirmed as 15 and 16 of November. BG to confirm what day the Air Cadets will be available to attend.
- e. Lidl have agreed that a collection can take place in store but date needs to be provided. MF to follow up with Army Cadets on availability.
- f. Aldi do not do in-store collections and the group agreed that a Sainsbury bag pack was not practical.
- g. It was agreed that the stewards and cadets would have collection buckets at the road closure points. MF to include in EMP and apply for Street Collection Licence.
- h. It was agreed that a collection bucket would be kept at the FACT Mobile Hub for donations towards the costs of the tree tags that are handed out.
- i. It was confirmed that the donation ask from Lisa would remain at £500 for all the work she does for the event and any trades that ask for a stall will be directed to Lisa.
- j. MP explained that he is organising a Race Night. The date was confirmed as 11 October opening at 6:30 for a 7:00 start, finishing at 10:30. This will be at the Lodge in the High St and MP confirmed the venue is being provided free of charge.
- k. MP confirmed the bar would be provided by the Lodge and be available to all attending.
- l. MP said he was approaching a caterer for the Race Night and would provide cost to MF.
- m. MP said he has confirmed Clinton will provide the Race Videos for the night and will confirm if this will cost and how much.
- n. MP confirmed he will arrange the production and printing of the programme and that it would be provided free of charge.
- o. MP said he would approach Jon Whithead to see if he would be compere for the Race Night.
- p. MP said he has a list of potential sponsors for the Race Night and has approached some of them who have said they would be prepared to contribute. MP to co-ordinate the sponsors on his list and provide to MF to ensure that we don't approach the companies that have already been asked.
- q. GC confirmed he would be prepared to run the Tote and has the Tote Tickets.
- r. GC confirmed he would be able to provide the projector and screen.
- s. It was agreed that the cost of entry to the Race Night be £15 per person to include the buffet.
- t. MP suggested the idea of a 100 Club. The group discussed this and agreed that it was not suitable for a public fundraiser.
- u. GC said that Nicola Christy is prepared to organise a Friday Night Food Festival in the Market Place. MF to confirm a date and organise entertainment if this is to go ahead.

9. Meeting Close

- a. There being no other business the Chairman closed the meeting at 9:45.

10. Date and Time of Next Meeting

- a. Monday 15 September 2025 at 7:45pm Skoulding Suite, March Town Hall.

March Christmas Lights Spenditure and Fundraising for 2023 Event (Draft Prepared by Friends of March Christmas Lights Treasurer)

Voucher						VAT			
Code	Date	Bank	Cheque No	Description	Supplier	Type	Net	VAT	Total
126	06/11/2023	Account Main Current	109	Christmas LightsSuppliesand	Walters	S	£60.13	£12.03	£72.16
127	06/11/2023	Account Main Current	110	XmasLightsswitch-onentertainment	Duncan Partington	Z	£350.00		£350.00
128	06/11/2023	Account Main Current	111	Christmas LightsSuppliesand	WRIGHTSTOOLS LTD	S	£11.12	£2.23	£13.35
140	06/11/2023	Account Main Current	116	Christmas LightsSuppliesand	WRIGHTSTOOLS LTD	S	£11.60	£2.32	£13.92
157	04/12/2023	Account Main Current	133	Music Licence Broad Street	PPL PRS Ltd	S	£224.62	£44.93	£269.55
159	04/12/2023	Account Main Current	135	Christmas LightsSuppliesand	WRIGHTSTOOLS LTD	S	£6.90	£1.38	£8.28
160	04/12/2023	Account Main Current	136	Christmas Lights DBS checks	Checks Direct	S	£50.00	£10.00	£60.00
161	04/12/2023	Account Main Current	137	Christmas Lights DBS checks	Rachel Burry	Z	£24.00		£24.00
162	04/12/2023	Account Main Current	138	Christmas Lights DBS checks	Checks Direct	S	£30.00	£6.00	£36.00
168	04/12/2023	Account Main Current	143	Christmas LightsSuppliesand	Darren Biggs Electrical Servic	S	£50.00	£10.00	£60.00
186	08/01/2024	Account Main Current	160	Christmas LightsSuppliesand	St John Ambulance	S	£211.20	£42.24	£253.44
191	08/01/2024	Account Main Current	165	Christmas Tree	Elveden Farms Limited	S	£3,030.00	£606.00	£3,636.00
202	05/02/2024	Account Main Current	176	Christmas Lights Erection Cost	T D Services	Z	£2,400.00		£2,400.00
203	05/02/2024	Account Main Current	177	Christmas LightsSuppliesand	Doctor Tree Limited	S	£600.00	£120.00	£720.00
204	05/02/2024	Account Main Current	178	Christmas Lights Erection Cost	Doctor Tree Limited	S	£400.00	£80.00	£480.00
205	05/02/2024	Account Main Current	181	Christmas Lights Erection Cost	Dan Fortuna	Z	£2,000.00		£2,000.00
206	05/02/2024	Account Main Current	179	Christmas Lights Erection Cost	Alan Stimpson	Z	£2,000.00		£2,000.00
207	05/02/2024	Account Main Current	180	Christmas Lights Erection Cost	Nigel Bright	Z	£2,000.00		£2,000.00
218	05/02/2024	Account Main Current	191	Christmas Lights Electrical Supply	Balfour Beatty Living Places	S	£862.20	£172.44	£1,034.64
173	04/11/2024	Account Main Current	168	Christmas LightsSuppliesand	Glomac Engineering Limited 2023	S	£1,545.00	£309.00	£1,854.00
						Total	£15,866.77	£1,418.57	£17,285.34
							£4,133.23		
						Fundraising			
							£637.85		
							£500.00		
							£376.41		
							£2,000.00		
							£500.00		
						Total	£4,014.26		

March Christmas Lights Spenditure and Fundraising for 2024 Event (Draft Prepared by Friends of March Christmas Lights Treasurer)

Voucher						VAT			
Code	Date	Bank	Cheque No	Description	Supplier	Type	Net	VAT	Total
140	07/10/2024	Account Main Current	135	Christmas Lights Fund-Raising	WRIGHTS TOOLS LTD	S	£115.00	£23.00	£138.00
143	07/10/2024	Account Main Current	138	Christmas Lights Supplies and	Doctor Tree Limited	S	£200.00	£40.00	£240.00
144	07/10/2024	Account Main Current	139	Christmas Lights Supplies and	March Electrical Supplies	S	£17.52	£3.51	£21.03
147	07/10/2024	Account Main Current	142	Christmas Lights Supplies and	March Electrical Supplies	S	£25.72	£5.14	£30.86
149	07/10/2024	Account Main Current	144	Christmas Lights Supplies and	WRIGHTS TOOLS LTD	S	£17.34	£3.47	£20.81
161	04/11/2024	Account Main Current	157	Christmas Lights DBS checks	Checks Direct	S	£10.00	£2.00	£12.00
165	04/11/2024	Account Main Current	161	Christmas Lights Supplies and	WRIGHTS TOOLS LTD	S	£11.33	£2.27	£13.60
174	04/11/2024	Account Main Current	169	Christmas Lights Supplies and	WRIGHTS TOOLS LTD	S	£3.36	£0.67	£4.03
178	04/11/2024	Account Main Current	173	Christmas Lights Supplies and	Walters	S	£79.43	£15.89	£95.32
182	04/11/2024	Account Main Current	177	Christmas Lights DBS checks	Checks Direct	S	£40.00	£8.00	£48.00
184	04/11/2024	Account Main Current	178	Christmas Lights DBS checks	Checks Direct	S	£10.00	£2.00	£12.00
196	02/12/2024	Account Main Current	190	Christmas Lights Supplies and	Sarah Lemmon	Z	£18.33		£18.33
197	02/12/2024	Account Main Current	191	Christmas Lights DBS checks	Checks Direct	S	£10.00	£2.00	£12.00
203	02/12/2024	Account Main Current	197	Christmas Lights Supplies and	March Electrical Supplies	S	£5.42	£1.08	£6.50
207	02/12/2024	Account Main Current	201	Christmas Lights Supplies and	WRIGHTS TOOLS LTD	S	£60.66	£12.13	£72.79
208	02/12/2024	Account Main Current	202	Christmas Lights Supplies and	March Electrical Supplies	S	£13.40	£2.68	£16.08
209	02/12/2024	Account Main Current	203	Christmas Lights Supplies and	Darren Biggs Electrical Services	S	£264.80	£52.96	£317.76
216	06/01/2025	Account Main Current	210	Christmas Lights Traffic Manag	C Brown Support Services	Z	£2,100.00		£2,100.00
218	06/01/2025	Account Main Current	212	Christmas Lights Supplies and !	Tom Harlock	Z	£500.00		£500.00
219	06/01/2025	Account Main Current	213	Christmas Lights DBS checks	Checks Direct	S	£10.00	£2.00	£12.00
223	06/01/2025	Account Main Current	218	Christmas - Broad Street Music	PPL PRS Ltd	S	£604.79	£120.96	£725.75
225	06/01/2025	Account Main Current	220	Christmas Lights Supplies and !	St John Ambulance	S	£509.60	£101.92	£611.52
228	06/01/2025	Account Main Current	223	Christmas Tree	Elveden Farms Limited	S	£2,700.00	£540.00	£3,240.00
229	06/01/2025	Account Main Current	224	Christmas Lights Supplies and :	WRIGHTS TOOLS LTD	S	£4.43	£0.89	£5.32
244	03/02/2025	Account Main Current	239	Christmas Lights Tree Erection	Dan Fortuna	S	£600.00	£120.00	£720.00
246	03/02/2025	Account Main Current	241	Christmas Lights Erection and	Alan Stimpson	X	£2,332.00		£2,332.00
247	03/02/2025	Account Main Current	242	Christmas Lights Erection and	Dan Fortuna	X	£2,332.00		£2,332.00
248	03/02/2025	Account Main Current	243	Christmas Lights Erection and	Nigel Bright	X	£2,332.00		£2,332.00
252	03/02/2025	Account Main Current	246	Christmas Switch-on Security	Loyal Reliance Services Ltd	S	£156.24	£31.25	£187.49
254	03/02/2025	Account Main Current	248	Christmas Lights Erection and	Doctor Tree Limited	S	£2,400.00	£480.00	£2,880.00
25	07/04/2025	Account Main Current	25	Christmas Lighting Electricity	Unpower Business Solutions L	Z	£846.77	£42.34	£889.11
102	04/08/2025	Account Main Current	96	Christmas Lights - Electrical Su	Balfour Beatty Living Place	S	£1,055.80	£211.16	£1,266.96
						Total	£19,385.94	£1,827.32	£21,213.26
							£614.06		
Fundraising									
Tesco							£828.76		
Switch-on collection							£41.67		
Xmas Market sales/collection							£178.37		
Donation from UK Towbars							£250.00		
Lisa Sharman – Hedges							£500.00		
Just Giving Transfer							£490.31		
						Total	£2,289.11		