

MARCH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a Christmas Lights Working Party Meeting held in The Skoulding Suite at March Town Hall on Monday 21st March 2022 at 7.45pm.

Present:	Chairman	RF Skoulding	
	Councillors	AR Donnelly RW White	MW Purser
	Members	David Doe Alan Stimpson	Stuart Rayner
	Town Clerk	C Lemmon	

Apologies:

Apologies were received from Gary Tustin, Clinton Elkin, Stephen Court, Colin Arnold and Dan Fortuna.

Minutes:

The minutes of the meeting held on 21st February 2022 were circulated and approved.

Matters Arising & Tasks To Be/Already Undertaken in respect of 2022 Event:

1. "Switch-on" date unanimously confirmed as Friday 25th November 2022.
2. The road closure has been confirmed by Cambridgeshire County Council and Ringways have been notified of their involvement therein.
3. The following interested parties were notified of the above date on 23rd February 2022. A further reminder will be forwarded later in the year.
 - a) Lisa Hedges re fair rides. *Confirmed as OK.*
 - b) John Whitehead re MC duties. *Confirmed as OK.*
 - c) Duncan Partington re entertainment. *Confirmed as OK.*
 - d) Ridgeons re loan of steps. *Confirmed as OK.*
 - e) John Thomas re loan of lorry trailer. *Confirmed as OK.*
 - f) Lions Club re provision Father Christmas and sleigh including transport thereof. *Confirmed as OK by Derek Rutter.*
 - g) FDC re ensuring that the Market Place car park will be closed all day and that the Broad Street toilets will be open until 10pm (Isabel & Layna). *Email sent 23rd February 2022.*
 - h) Order a Christmas tree from Elveden Farms. *Quotation requested, received and accepted on 23rd February 2022. Price of £3,030 is unchanged from last year.*
 - i) Ascertain whether Sainsbury's and Tesco's will allow bag-packing or collection:
 - A. *No response yet received from Sainsbury's.*

- B. *In a response from Tesco (Kelly Riddell) dated 8th March 2022, we have provisionally been booked in for collection dates on 19th and 20th November 2022 and collection times of 10am to 4pm.*
- j) Approach Balfour Beatty to ascertain whether they will again supervise electrical works since this is the only practical way the Committee can legally access CCC street lighting columns. *Quote requested on 23rd February 2022. Brian Crabb rang to say that Balfour Beatty would also check to see which sockets / connections / time switches were in need of replacement. A report will be provided, with costings, in the not-too-distant future.*
 - k) Assistant Town Clerk to be requested to book St John Ambulance.
 - l) Decide upon a suitable person to switch on the lights.
 - m) Apply for CCC Street Lighting License. *Application approved on 21st March 2022.*
4. March Town Council has committed £25,000 in its 2022/2023 budget for Christmas-related expenditure.
 5. In previous years a maximum of £7,500 has been paid out to helpers.
All payments were subject to recipients signing a receipt acknowledging that they were responsible for their own tax and national insurance if applicable.
Discussions need to be held regarding the best way to proceed in 2022 since Clinton and Dean Elkin have both stated that they no longer wish to assist with the erection and dismantling duties.
 6. All cross-street wires and wall bolts need testing during 2022. Tests are due bi-annually so will need testing again in 2024. *Glomac was contacted on 23rd February 2022 and, per a telephone conversation of 16th March 2022, a quote should soon be received. As in past years, we will need to supply a cherry-picker, or similar, to allow the checks to be undertaken.*
 7. More complaints than normal were received for the 2021 season regarding light outages and the failure to remedy faults. Better communication and management are needed for this coming year. The following points need resolving:
 - a) Is the cherry-picker being used in the correct manner?
 - b) Do some street light sockets need replacing? *See 3 j) above.*
 - c) Are there any better or more cost-effective erecting and dismantling methods that could be adopted? Alan Stimpson reported that suitable equipment could be supplied by Nationwide Platforms Luton branch. The equipment would need to be collected from Luton for a set period of time whilst the decorations were erected, returned to depot and then collected for another set period of time whilst they were dismantled. The only problem envisaged was that something more local was needed for repairs during the times the lights were illuminated.

Tasks Still to be Undertaken:

1. Discussions are needed to ascertain how improvements can be made to the Christmas tree and “Nativity Scene” displays.
2. SAG paperwork needs to be completed at the earliest opportunity.
3. It was previously agreed that the following groups can have stalls etc at the event if they so wish:
 - a) Waterman’s Club (on bridge).

- b) Scouts (in vicinity of Iceland).
- c) Churches Together (Nativity Scene in “old man’s shelter).
- 4. It was hoped that Rachel Burry and Stuart Rayner would remain in the joint roles of Head Steward.
- 5. The need to recruit more stewards was essential.
- 6. A Christmas Shop Window competition will be arranged in due course. Town Clerk to produce a letter for distribution around the shops in late October 2022.
- 7. Robert Skoulding again agreed to sponsor the “Best Decorated House” competition.
- 8. It was agreed that the grotto should not be re-instated for 2022.
- 9. Several “set-pieces” are in need of repair. Robert Skoulding has suggested that all stock should be checked by May 2022 and we should consider how best they could be repaired. Sue Beer has done an excellent job over the years but this cannot continue forever. Robert S is certainly keen to learn how Sue B does repair them and would like to receive some lessons. The other alternative is to send them back to the supplier for repair. It was agreed that initially an attempt would be made for Sue, Robert and possibly Mark to do the necessary repairs during 2022.
- 10. Mark Purser will order two more 2-way radios with associated ear-pieces since the previous ones had proven to work very well.
- 11. Refreshments will be discussed in due course.
- 12. Mark Purser will investigate whether a sponsorship scheme is feasible to raise funds for additional lighting / on-going maintenance.
- 13. The Air Cadets were previously thanked for their past efforts and, although not directly involved any more, Colin Arnold thought their help would be forthcoming again for 2022.
- 14. At the February 2022 meeting Robert Skoulding stated that, although he would remain as a Committee member, he would be stepping down from the Chairman’s role because of health concerns. He requested that a replacement be found and elected at the next meeting. He was thanked for all his past efforts. *At the March 2022 meeting, Stuart Rayner was duly appointed as the new Chairman.*
- 15. Mark Purser is inviting Nigel Spencer to join the Committee. He will invite him to attend the next meeting and enquire whether he (NS) would be willing to complete the SAG paperwork.
- 16. Discussions ensued regarding the positioning of barriers within town on the night of the actual “switch-on”.

Dates of Next Meetings:

Monday 23rd May 2022 at **7.15pm** in The Skoulding Suite at March Town Hall.

Monday 18th July 2022 at **7.45pm** in The Skoulding Suite at March Town Hall.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.25pm.

Councillor K French 4th April 2022.
 Mayor of March.