

# March Town Council

Minutes of the **Annual Assembly** of March Town Council that took place at 7.15pm in The Skoulding Suite at March Town Hall on Monday 17 April 2023

<b>Present</b>	Councillor	K French M Purser	Town Mayor Deputy Mayor
	Councillors	S Court R Johnson R White	J French G Tustin
	Town Clerk Asst Town Clerk		S Lemmon S Taylor
	Public		9

## **10 Introduction**

The Mayor welcomed everyone to the Annual Assembly.

## **11 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Councillors Connor, Donnelly and Skoulding.

## **12 Minutes of the Annual Assembly held on 25 April 2022**

The minutes of the 2022 Annual Assembly, as previously circulated, were accepted by the meeting.

## **13 Matters Arising from the above Minutes**

There were no matters arising.

## **14 Report of the Town Mayor for 2022 / 2023 and the Mayor's Charity Donations**

The Mayor's report was accepted by the meeting and is attached to these minutes as Appendix A (2 pages).

The Mayor distributed 8 cheques from the Mayors Charity Account totalling £3,100.00p to causes of her choice and presented said cheques to representatives from the chosen organisations. The recipients left the meeting following the presentations and photographs.

The Mayor's Charity Account is attached (Appendix B – 1 page).

#### **15 Written Report of the Town Clerk for 2022 / 2023**

The written report of the Town Clerk, as previously circulated, was accepted by the meeting (see Appendix C – 4 pages).

#### **16 Affirmation re Mayor's Allowances**

The Mayor, Councillor Kim French, affirmed that the Mayoral expenses received during this year of office and totalling £3,450.00p per annum had been fully expended in the execution of her Mayoral duties.

#### **17 Resolution to Approve the Annual Governance Statement**

It was noted that the Personnel and Administrative Sub-Committee had undertaken a full review of the effectiveness of our systems of internal control on 10 January 2023. It had also fully reviewed all general risks likely to be faced by March Town Council and all procedures included within the MTC risk assessment document. All the findings were ratified by Full Council on 6 February 2023.

Members re-affirmed their approval of the procedures adopted to satisfy themselves of the effectiveness of the systems of internal control currently in place.

The Annual Governance Statement was then discussed as follows:

- a) Its contents were reviewed and completed as appropriate.
- b) It was proposed by Councillor Purser and seconded by Councillor J French, with all in favour, that its contents were approved.
- c) The resolution to accept the Annual Governance Statement was, therefore, unanimously approved.
- d) The Clerk and Chairman duly signed and dated such Statement.
- e)

#### **18 Resolution to Approve the Accounting Statements for 2022 / 2023**

The Annual Accounting Statements for the financial year 2022 / 2023, as previously circulated, were presented to the meeting by the Responsible Financial Officer to allow full discussion by Councillors.

After such discussions, the following decisions were reached:

- a) It was proposed by Councillor K French and seconded by Councillor Purser, with all in favour, that such Accounting Statements be approved.
- b) The resolution to accept the Accounting Statements for 2022 / 2023 was, therefore, unanimously approved.
- c) The Mayor, Councillor Kim French duly signed and dated such document as necessary.

**19 Open Forum**

There were no members of the public present so no questions or concerns were raised.

Cllr J French advised that going forward there may be continued issues with getting potholes fixed and referred to recent difficulties in Oxford with dangerous roads merely being closed rather than repaired. Concerns were shared about the potential introduction of parking charges in future years, unless such measures were fiercely challenged.

Cllr J French congratulated both the Clerk and Deputy Clerk for a fantastic first year in post.

Councillors J French and K French thanked all Councillors present for their hard work over the foregoing four years and wished them well in the future.

The Mayor declared the meeting closed at 7:45 pm.

However, anyone who so wished, was invited to remain for the Planning Meeting which was due to follow.

Councillor ..... 15 May 2023  
Mayor of March

## Appendix A

It was a true privilege to be elected again as the Mayor of March for the year of 2021/2022.

I was fortunate to be able to attend some lovely events this term.

The first event of the term was at RAF Molesworth for the Civic Leaders Open Day. This gave Ian and I an insight into the works that the personnel do within the RAF bases across the UK and Europe. An interesting day for sure.

On the Friday the 2<sup>nd</sup> of June I had the honour of unveiling a plaque situated on the town hall to commemorate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. Later that day I was fortunate to be able to light the beacon for the official jubilee celebrations. Over the course of the weekend we were invited to various street parties to be part of the ongoing jubilee celebrations which was lovely. A lot of cake was eaten through that time.

The next event was at the Bishop of Ely's Garden Party at the end of June, where we met with other relatively new dignitaries in the beautiful surroundings of Ely Cathedral's Garden. This was a lovely evening meeting and greeting new friends.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> July we were celebrating Independence Day at RAF Alconbury, the entertainment, food and games was great fun and the evening ended with an amazing fireworks display.

I held my first fund raising event on Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> July, with afternoon tea at March Golf Club. This must have been the hottest day all year but this didn't melt people's enthusiasm and generosity to donate to the Mayor's Charities.

Ian and I also attended the High Sheriff's Garden Party in July which was set in the grounds of Jennifer and John Crompton's home in at Sawston Hall, Cambridge. It was lovely to see so many attending, again, lots of new faces.

September started with a bang, with March having its first Armed Forces Fair, organised by a group of volunteers. This was a brilliant event for the town and was extremely well attended. Not just by the local people of Cambridgeshire, but of dignitaries too.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> of September, at the full council meeting, I had the pleasure in presenting Col Nigel Spencer MBE, with the "Freedom of the Town of March", which has only previously been bestowed to two other citizens of the town.

Unfortunately. On the 8<sup>th</sup> of September we lost of beloved Queen. This was a huge shock to the nation and whilst it was an extremely sad time for us, I was honoured to have been able to read out the Proclamation of the accession of King Charles III on Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> September.

September we also saw Clive Lemmon, our Town clerk retire after 23 years in the position. What an amazing achievement for Clive and we very much valued everything he did in the execution of his role. His replacement, Sarah has fitted in extremely quickly and has found her feet in no time.

October, we welcomed back the March Town Council's Civic Service, held at St Wendreda's church. It was lovely to see so many attend, both locally and from afar. I had some amazing people contribute to the day, including Twenty20 and BackTwo, thank

you.

At the end of October we attended the 75<sup>th</sup> birthday of the USAF 501<sup>st</sup> squadron which was a hanger dance held at Sywell Aerodrome. This was an amazing atmosphere and we had great fun at the event.

Ian and I was honoured to attend Madingley's Remembrance Service at the American Cemetery on the 11<sup>th</sup> November, it was a beautiful service and surroundings. The town also welcomed back the MTC Remembrance Parade on Sunday 13<sup>th</sup>, which, as always was very well attended.

On the 6<sup>th</sup> of December, we instilled the new Mayor's Cadet for March Town Council. Cpl Faith Anders was chosen for the first Mayor's Cadet and she will have the honour of having an 18 month term, which will take her through to May 2024.

Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> of December I held the Mayor's Carol Service which again as very well attended.

January was a relatively quiet month as we were ramping up for the Mayor's Charity Ball on Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> February. We had 150 attend the evening and a huge sum of money was raised for the Mayor's Charities. This was obviously the first Ball since 2020 – it was amazing to see so many familiar faces come together and raise funds for my amazing causes.

On the 17<sup>th</sup> of April, I will distribute the Mayor's funds to some amazing causes across the town. They have all played an important part in my Mayoral year, and by way of thanks, my donation to them will hopefully help their causes.

I'd like to personally thank everyone who has supported me in my Mayoral year. It's nice to have been part of the council for the last four years, three of those as mayor.

Lastly, to my fellow Councillors, thank you for all your support, not just to the Mayor and Deputy Mayor, but to the town. Each and every one of you are an asset to the town.

*Kim French*

## Appendix B

<b><u>Mayor's Charity Account 2022 / 2023</u></b>			
	<b><u>Income</u></b>	<b><u>Expenditure</u></b>	<b><u>Net Profit</u></b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
<b>Balance brought forward</b>			<b>578.94</b>
<b>Afternoon Tea Ticket Sales - July 2022</b>			<b>1,240.00</b>
<b>Afternoon Tea Raffle and Donations</b>			<b>627.71</b>
<b>Civic Service Collection (09.10.22)</b>			<b>279.69</b>
<b>Mayors Charity Ball Net Proceeds (03.02.23)</b>			<b>1,100.00</b>
<b>Afternoon Tea Catering (March Golf Club)</b>		<b>738.00</b>	
<b>Transfer from Mayor's personal account</b>	<b>11.66</b>		
<b>Amount available for distribution</b>			<b>3,100.00</b>
<b>Donations to charities of Mayor's choice made on 17-Apr-23</b>			
<b>March Street Pride</b>			<b>250.00</b>
<b>Mr S Harris (RKA Kick Boxing Academy)</b>			<b>300.00</b>
<b>1220 (March) Squadron Air Training Corps</b>			<b>1,100.00</b>
<b>The Friends of March Library</b>			<b>250.00</b>
<b>March Armed Forces &amp; Veterans Breakfast Club</b>			<b>250.00</b>
<b>FACT</b>			<b>250.00</b>
<b>20Twenty Productions CIC</b>			<b>250.00</b>
<b>MAFF (Royal British Legion (March Branch))</b>			<b>450.00</b>
<b>Total</b>			<b>3,100.00</b>
<b>Balance carried forward</b>			<b>-</b>
.....			
<b>S. Lemmon</b>			
<b>Town Clerk</b>			
<b>17.04.23</b>			

## Appendix C

# ANNUAL REPORT of The Clerk to March Town Council (2022/2023)

## INTRODUCTION

This Report and the Annual Assembly on Monday 17 April 2023 mark the end of the fourth year in office of the current Council. A warm welcome to you all.

Once again, it has been a very busy year for Councillors working hard for and on behalf of the Town and people of March.

It has been a challenging and difficult year in many respects – with a complete change of administrative staff, a wonderful celebration of the late Queen Elizabeth II’s Platinum Jubilee, followed a few months later by the sad news of her late Majesty’s passing which invoked Operations Unicorn and London Bridge. As a Town, we held a Proclamation on the Market Place, the first such event in over 70 years, to officially announce the reign of our new Monarch, King Charles III.

Central government has experienced a tumultuous year, the war between Ukraine and Russia has not proved to be a short-lived affair, having wide-spread consequences across the globe. The world continues to respond to the combined climate and cost of living crises. The town of March, specifically Broad Street (as part of the Future High Street Fund project) is undergoing change beyond all recognition. Happily, with Covid-19 restrictions lifted, the town could once again enjoy The St George’s Day Fayre (our busiest yet) and a wonderful Summer Festival. Last, but not least, the Town Council has gone digital, having acquired a new online accounting system.

## COUNCIL

During May 2022, Councillor Kim French was elected as Mayor of March and Councillor Mark Purser as her Deputy.

At the time of this Report the political groups within the Council are as follows; Conservative 7, Independent 2, Green 2 and Liberal Democrat 1.

The average attendance of Councillors at Main Council Meetings was 76%, calculated as follows:

SR Court	13 attendances out of 13	100%
J French	13 attendances out of 13	100%
K French	13 attendances out of 13	100%
RM Johnson	13 attendances out of 13	100%
MW Purser	13 attendances out of 13	100%
RF Skoulding	12 attendances out of 13	92 %

D Connor	10 attendances out of 13	77%
CK Elkin	9 attendances out of 13	70%
AR Donnelly	7 attendances out of 13	54%
RW White	7 attendances out of 13	54%
G Tustin	6 attendances out of 13	47%
RE Jack	2 attendances out of 13	15%

The low attendance on the part of Cllr Donnelly has been due to declining health and an enforced leave of absence from October 2022. Cllr Jack took a leave of absence from April to July 2022 and has been unable to attend main meetings since due to personal reasons.

## **ADMINISTRATION**

March Town Council still maintains an office within the Town Hall which is manned by a basic staff of two part-time employees. As you will be aware, Sally took over as Assistant Town Clerk in February 2022, following the death of Geoff in December 2021, and I officially took over the mantle of Town Clerk in October 2022, with Clive having retired in September. Clive served as Clerk to March Town Council for 24 years and set the bar high. I am grateful for the 5-month hand-over period with Clive and I am honoured to have been given this opportunity to take over this position and I have enjoyed every second of the role, which has been rewarding and challenging in equal measure.

With Covid restrictions lifted, the office is manned (as a minimum) from 8am to 3:30pm on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays and from 8.30am to midday on Fridays.

## **PLANNING**

A total of 196 Planning Applications received consideration during the year, an increase of 6 applications on the previous year's total.

Approval was recommended in respect of 163 applications, 15 were the subject of comments, more information was requested in respect of 4 applications, no site inspections were suggested, and no comment was made on 8 occasions. Objections were raised in respect of 6 applications.

## **DONATIONS AND GRANTS**

During 2022/2023 financial year donations totalling £1,350.00 were made to the following organisations;

March Armed Forces Breakfast Club	£ 250.00
1 <sup>st</sup> March Scout Troop	£ 300.00
RKA Kick Boxing Academy	£ 500.00



March Library (Summer Reading Challenge)£ 300.00

Grants totalling £3,500.00 were made as follows;

Volunteer Centre Fenland	£ 750.00
Isle of Ely Society for the Blind	£ 250.00
East Anglian Air Ambulance	£1,000.00
*Talking Newspaper for the Blind	£1,000.00
FACT	£ 500.00

In addition, generous financial support was also given to March Museum Society and Estover Playing Field 2015 CIC.

\*Talking Newspaper for the Blind is sadly winding up in July after 47 years. No further grants will therefore be payable to this organisation.

## **ALLOTMENTS**

Since relinquishing some of its allotment sites in October 2004, the remainder are now fully occupied and a waiting list of nearly 50 exists.

Since September 2020, waiting lists have increased, no doubt influenced by householders wanting something to do during the pandemic and the increasing costs of food in supermarkets. We have also written to Allotment holders so that we can align the billing of all allotments with the financial year. This will lead to less complicated allotment accounting.

## **OTHER ACTIVITIES**

During the year March Town Council has supported the following organisations and events;

- A. March & District Museum.
- B. March Street Pride Group (previously March in Bloom).
- C. The town centre Christmas Lights. Christmas 2022 again saw an excellent display of lights thanks to the continuing efforts of all the volunteers and fundraising.
- D. March St. Georges Fayre and Christmas Market.
- E. March Summer Festival Committee. The event, a further victim of Covid-19, returned with a vengeance in 2022.
- F. The Queen's Platinum Jubilee Celebrations which shared the same weekend as the Summer Festival.
- G. March Summer and Winter Arts Programme including entertainment on the Market Place. These activities have not fully resumed following Covid-19.
- H. Band Concerts on West End Park during July and August.
- I. Estover Playing Field 2015 CIC. It is pleasing to note that following the signing of a 99-year lease in November 2015, exceptional progress has been made with

plans to develop the site into a first-class multi-sports facility. As previously advised, the lease has been assigned to March Town United Football Club and will continue to be operated for the benefit of the community. It has now been renamed March Town FC Estover CIC to reflect the change of the management involved.

- J. The Town's first March Armed Forces Fayre in September, which was an enormous success, the first of its kind in the country. This will now become an annual event.
- K. The March Armed Forces Air Cadets – in November 2022, the first Mayor's Cadet was appointed.
- L. Remembrance Day Parade - which saw a record turnout in November 2022.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, and continuing on a positive note, the past year has again been extremely successful with all Councillors, and the various political groups, working constructively together for the benefit of the town, in often challenging circumstances.

I wish you all the very best going forward.

*Sarah Lemmon* – Town Clerk  
17 April 2023