MARCH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a Christmas Lights Working Party Meeting held in The Skoulding Suite at March Town Hall on Monday 21 July 2025 at 7.45pm

Present:	Chairman	M Field
Councillors	M Purser	S Court
Members	D Fortuna R Burry	A Stimpson
	Town Clerk	S Lemmon

Apologies:

Apologies were received from Flt Lt R Kidger.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 April 2025 were circulated and approved and were signed by the Mayor at the main meeting of March Town Council on 7 July 2025.

Committee Administration

M Purser proposed M Field to continue in his role as Chairman.
This was seconded by D Fortuna and carried by a vote.
M Purser proposed S Court to the new position of Vice-Chairman.
This was seconded by R Burry.
The Town Clerk would remain as Secretary and Treasurer to the committee.

Feedback from 2024 Event

In the main, the event was hugely successful and people were very positive about it.
It was agreed that the C Brown Support Services (who managed the road closure and provided traffic management) were exceptional.

Issues to consider;

- People gathered in Broad Street near the tree could not hear the countdown for the switch-on. Speakers could possibly be connected to the van so that those in Broad Street could hear the countdown in future. G Christy advised that loud speakers could be connected to the FACT van. He also has a big TV screen.

- The option of moving the trailer to Broad Street was also discussed, but this would take up too much room in Broad Street potentially. Both these options to be fully explored. Agreed that the trailer/stage would remain on the Market Place.
- The stewarding rota would have to be amended in future to include Barclays Bank/Grays Lane.
- There were not enough high vis jackets, beanies or torches for all the stewards; All jackets to be returned to the office forthwith so that a full stocktake of jackets and equipment can be undertaken, and further items purchased, as required. Stocktake of torches, hats and high-vis jackets to be undertaken ASAP. MP to do. Bag with unknown quantities of beanies, high vis jackets and torches given to Clerk on 14.4.25 to store in the office. A full stocktake will still need to be done and torches charged prior to switch-on event (MP).
- More guidance/closer supervision may be required for the cadets helping on the evening.
- Stewards had reported that it was not possible to hear the radios, so they had resorted to using their 'phones/WhatsApp to communicate. The existing radios were not suitable in environments with high background noise.
- Itinerary of switch-on events to be prepared for 2025
- Issues with toilets and litter (see below)

Preliminaries

March Town Council at its meeting in December 2024 approved the 2025/2026 budget prepared by the Clerk, subsequently ratified on 6 January 2025. The budget provided for the retention of the sum of £20,000 for Christmas Lights for 2025. It was agreed however, that in early 2025, once the bulk of the Christmas Lights-related invoices had been received, the Clerk would prepare a report for councillors regarding the total 2024 expenditure, which was likely to represent a significant over-spend. This report would inform the basis of a discussion as to the viability of continuing to fund the long-standing tradition of having Christmas Lights and a switch-on event in March, given the ever-escalating costs of erecting the lights and staging this event.

It has been suggested once again by some that the switch-on event be combined with the Christmas Market in a bid to reduce costs, as costs would be shared with FDC.
However, this suggestion has time and time again been rejected for a number of reasons.

In terms of finances, fund raising and sponsorship/donations were significantly down in 2024;

2023 Tesco collection £637.84, Lisa Hedges £500, Funeral collection £376.41, Octavius donation £2000, Bretts Transport £500 = £4,014.25.

2024 Tesco (£828.76), Switch-on collection (£41.67), Xmas Market sales/collection (£178.37), donation of £250 from UK Towbars, Lisa Sharman – Hedges (£500), Just Giving (£510 – to be transferred, although there will be some commission to be deducted) = £2,308.74 (down over £1,700 on 2023 figures).

The cost of the event in **2023** was just over £16,000.

Projected costs for **2024** are £23,000 - £25,000.

Moreover, the cost of the event was likely to increase *dramatically* in future years for the following reasons;

- Wall bolt testing was previously only done every other year. This now needs to be carried out every year (over £1,800)
- Lights have never been PAT tested previously. This will now take place every year
- The switch-on is now a Tier 3 event. As such, a paramedic is required in addition to first aiders, so this more than doubles the SJA bill
- Private security is now required for the event
- Fire training is now required
- Full traffic management (in addition to a road closure) is now required for the delivery and installation of the tree in Broad Street
- The Council's insurance premium has risen significantly by virtue of the new lights (valued at over £100,000)
- There is no budget for replacement/repair of the new lights – the £20,000 present was vandalised having been in situ less than 1 week.
- FDC have strongly indicated that the event will require additional toilet facilities at the switch-on event (another £1,000+)
- The entertainment/band costs have increased significantly (almost doubled)
- The PPL/PRS (music licence) for the event has risen 300% from £270 pa to £725.
- The cost of the unmetered [electric] supply has increased dramatically following a 49% increase in September 2023.
- The major issue is the erection/dismantling of the lighting. If we use a contractor in future, this alone will blow the entire Lighting budget (£20,000 - £30,000).
  If Balfour Beatty provide electrical supervision for every occasion that our team erect or dismantle lights, this would also prove to be too expensive as the team have roughly 10-12 visits in total. There were in fact 19 visits for 2024.
  Alternatively, there is potential for some of the committee members working towards the necessary qualifications (NRSWA and G39), but this option is certainly not without its difficulties, complications or cost implications (willingness, numbers, availability, continuity, capacity, time, insurance).

The Committee agreed that it was **imperative** to increase fund-raising efforts and secure sponsorship opportunities to bridge the budgetary shortfall.

Switch-on Event 2025

"Switch-on" date confirmed as Friday 28 November 2025.

TRRO / Road Closure / Traffic Management

The Clerk will instruct C Brown Support Services to apply for the TRRO and complete necessary road closure application forms for submission to Cambridgeshire County Council (M Field to be named as 24-hour event emergency contact).

C Brown had supported our 2024 event most successfully.

The 2024 closures were;

B1101 Broad Street	14:00 – 23:00
B1101 High Street	16:00 – 23:00
Market Place	00:00 – 23:00
Elwyn Road	16:00 – 23:00

At a meeting on 2 December 2024, Cllr J French advised that the closing of Broad Street at 14:00 was too early and caused too much disruption for the rest of the town.
However, on that day there had also been an RTI and there were traffic lights in other parts of the town that had compounded the traffic issues.
Set up in Broad Street had started promptly at 14:00 and it was agreed that it would not be practical to close Broad Street any later than 14:00.

As such, timings for 2025 will be as per 2024.
Clerk to advise C Brown about the metal barriers at Barclays/Grays Lane.
Clerk emailed C Brown on 12.2.25. No reply as yet. Clerk emailed on 18.3.25
Quote received from C Brown on 9/4/25 - £2,300.
Clerk to touch base with C Brown in August.

Lighting / Permissions / Licenses / Compliance / Legal

1. Clerk to apply for CCC Street Lighting License in due course. Last year CCC advised they only wished to see one application per town. Whilst the Clerk would normally apply for the Attachments License in January, the new columns in Broad Street had not gone through the accrual process and are yet to be adopted by CCC. As such, the Clerk would have to wait until this process was completed before applying to CCC for the licence. Clerk emailed M Wright and P Hughes on 12.2.25 to ask for progress on the accrual process. This has been passed to Shafi at CCC for update. Until the street lamps have been adopted by CCC, the Clerk is unable to apply for an Attachments License. The Clerk emailed Shafi at CCC once again on 18.3.25 for an update. It is not acceptable that we are almost into April and there has been no progress made (M Wright at FDC copied in). Clerk sent further email on 25.3.25 requesting a response* Confirmation from the Street Lighting Team at CCC was also demanded re NRSWA and G39 qualification levels required for our volunteers.
   Street Lighting confirmed on 2 April that 1 x G39 accredited person is required to be on site. Information shared with D Fortuna.
   One person with NRSWA signing and guarding is also required to ensure Highways works are carried out safely.
   D Fortuna confirmed that he will undertake NRSWA training although the trainer was unable until June. Dan would therefore complete at the earliest opportunity. Dan's Secretary had contacted the training provider once again for his availability. Otherwise, an alternative training provider will be identified so Dan can undertake the relevant qualification soonest.
   *Since Shafi had not responded to the Clerk's emails, the Clerk communicated the difficulties to his manager who advised that Shafi was meeting with the street lighting FPI on 9 April and would report back to the Clerk with a programme to show the street lighting accruals process including details about the feeder pillar. No update provided so Clerk emailed again on 14.4.25.
   CLERK CANNOT PROGRESS THE APPLICATION FOR AN ATTACHMENTS LICENSE UNTIL THE ACCRUAL PROCESS IS COMPLETED.

Shafi's reply of 14.4.25;

"As you are aware due to unforeseen issue of the feeder pillar and subsequent new connections requirements the process had been substantially delayed and therefore accrual by Balfour Beatty will be requested subsequent to energizing of the new connection.

TENTATIVE PROGRAMME

UKPN connections	***8th – 16th May 2025***
Meter installation and energizing	***17th – 25th May 2025*** *(subject to confirmation by Total Energies)*
Request to Balfour Beatty for inspection	***25th May – 30th May***
Tentative timeline for accrual (4 weeks)	***30th June 2025***
Application for attachments licence (Christmas Lights)	***July 2025***
Timeline for CCC to issue licence (6-8 weeks)	***Sep 2025***

Minor amendments to as-builts have been requested to Octavious with further tests certificates. This process will be completed by 15th of May 2025 including verification by CCC Street Lighting so that we can have the joint inspection immediately after energizing the new feeder pillars."

Email received from Shafi on 3.6.25;

"The UKPN connection work had been completed a couple of weeks ago where the new cable needed to be paid and connected to the new feeder pillars. MPAN numbers were issued about a week to 10 days ago for the initiation of meter connections. We have applied to Total energies for new meters installation and are awaiting date for installation and energizing.

The as-built information and test certificates required for the accruals process initiation have been provided. We are initiating the inspections process for Balfour Beatty to work towards the tentative programme shared earlier. (see above)

We will keep you posted as we progress and request the formal application submission accordingly. As mentioned earlier, we are in constant liaison with our street lighting team and have shared the as-built data with them today"

Clerk emailed Shafi and Nicola at CCC on 9.7.25 for an urgent update as tentative programme [above] stated accrual would take place at the e/o June.Shafi away until 14.7. 25. Clerk chased on 15.7.25 for an update.

Update received from Nicola (on behalf of Shafi) on 16.7.25;

"There has been a delay in the process for Balfour Beattie to accrue the lights – this is due to a number of issues including amendments required to the belisha beacons following the final road safety audit, replacement of the recently damaged illuminated sign and relocation of a column due to construction of the new toilet block.

Having spoken with the street lighting team this morning, whilst it is likely that the accrual will be delayed now until early September, they will prioritise your Christmas lights attached application and aim to process this within 2 weeks to ensure it's all in place well ahead of the installations in November.

If you need any further support in this please do reach out – I'm sorry that there has been some delays, and recognise this has been frustrating for you."

Clerk replied on 16.7.25 that this is **more** than frustrating as the installation process starts in October!!!!! Not November!

2. Further to the issues experienced in 2024 with making the attachments licence [above] and in an effort to reduce costs, the Clerk had a further meeting with Balfour Beatty on 11.12.24. It was confirmed that if Dan (+ one other) achieved the relevant qualifications (the NRSWA "Signing and guarding" and G39), he and his team would be able to erect and dismantle the lights without Balfour Beatty's involvement in the process. BB would only be required to assist to fix a faulty column, replace a faulty timer or if a new street light needed connecting for example. The Clerk wrote to Dan on 11.12.24 requesting he explore costings for the required qualifications. The Clerk spoke with Dan on 11.12.24; his initial findings were that there would have to be **2** x NRSWA & G39 qualified people – one at operative level and one at supervisor level. They cannot be the same person. This was confirmed to the Clerk by Balfour Beatty. Clerk received an email from City of Ely Council on 13.2.25 advertising a 210.1 G39 Working in the Vicinity of DNO Equipment Awareness course on 20 March. This is for all staff and volunteers working on lamp columns – either for Christmas Lights, hanging baskets or MVAS. The Clerk would book GC, MF and DF onto the course. (This was done by Clerk on 18.2.25). It was agreed that Alan and Dan would complete the relevant G39 qualifications and also attend the NRSWA "signing and guarding" courses – an essential requirement for the Attachments License. Clerk to re-send detail of G39 course to attendees tomorrow. Dan to arrange for Dan and Alan to attend NRSWA courses. Clerk emailed Alan and Charan in the Street Lighting team at CCC on 18.3.25 to get confirmation as to levels of respective qualification required for the attachments license and to avoid needing BB to provide electrical supervision (see 1. (above)). Clerk emailed Dan on 9.7.25 to enquire whether/when his NRSWA training is booked as the certification is required to proceed with the Attachments Licence. Dan is completing the training on 17.7.25. Alan will do it later in the year. Cost of attending course is £285 plus VAT. 21.7.25 Dan confirmed that the course was over-subscribed and he will now undertake it w/c 4.8.25

3. [Clerk to contact 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] *(if required)*. As per 1 (above), Dan and Alan will be G39 qualified, so Balfour Beatty will not be required this year.

4. The Clerk had contacted Balfour Beatty in December, it having been reported that 2 street lights on the Bridge (card shop side) did not have any power and therefore the lights were not illuminated. Balfour Beatty were aware and advised that the small feeder

pillar in Grays Lane that powered them had been wrongly removed by CCC/Octavius during the regeneration works. BB had found the old cables coiled up in the ground. The pillar would be reinstated in due course to restore power [no time frame provided]. Clerk to chase in July.

5. Clerk to contact UK Power Networks in January regarding the unmetered supply certificate and advise the dates of the switch-on, and switch-off (16:00-22:30). Clerk emailed details over on 12.2.25

   Clerk emailed Rob Smith at E-On and UMS@npower to chase the UMS bill for 2024. Reply received on 6.2.25 confirming the invoice will be issued in March. Clerk emailed again on 18.3.25. Chased again on 24.3.25. Bill received in sum of £750.06 on 24.3.25, paid on 7.4.25.

6. In March 2024 Peter at Glomac advised that wall-bolting testing was recommended to be done every year (formerly we had this carried out bi-annually).
   Clerk to contact Glomac to arrange a date for a Sunday in September and liaise with Dan (with cherry picker) and Alan. (The 2024 invoice was £1,854 (incl) paid in November 2024). Clerk to contact Glomac in **July** to instruct wall-bolt testing. Clerk emailed Dan and Alan for their availability on Sunday mornings in August and September to do wall bolt testing with Glomac. Clerk emailed Peter on 15.7.25 to check his availability for Sunday 10 and Sunday 17 August. No response. Will chase again at the end of the week.

7. Clerk to confirm with FDC (Layna & Isabel) that the Market Place car park will be closed all day on 28.11.25 and that the toilets in town will be open until 22:00. There was an issue in 2024 with the temporary toilets getting left open (the original toilets had a timer locking system) and the toilets were "trashed". The same thing happened to the Town Hall toilets which are NOT public toilets and should not have been advertised as such. Contacts at FDC had indicated that the committee would need to provide additional toilets in future years due to the increased numbers attending the event. Clerk emailed Layna & Isabel on 12.2.25. Confirmed by Layna on 13.2.25.

8. PAT testing; Clerk to instruct Darren Biggs to PAT test all lights annually which was considered best practise. This would include the new lights. The cost was £317.26 in 2024. This will be more in 2025 given the additional Broad Street lighting acquired. Clerk emailed D Biggs on 12.2.25. Darren confirmed he will do this and will liaise with Alan nearer the time.

9. Following an enquiry about the staging and insurance, the Clerk contacted Zurich on 21.1.25 to confirm that we are insured to use the trailer as a stage. On 4.2.25, Zurich confirmed this is covered under our public liability insurance so long as the use is thoroughly risk-assessed. Clerk to review the documentation.

10. The Clerk had a licencing review with the Licensing Authority in June. It was recommended that the Town Council applies for its own Premises Licence for the Market Place for the switch-on event (previously we have utilised Fenland District Councils). A licence was duly applied for on 1.7.25 with representations to be made before 29.7.25. The police have responded (4/7) requesting the addition of some voluntary conditions to the Operating Schedule. These include SIA security wearing body cams. See also *Stewards [below] for conditions re training.

Christmas Tree & Decorations

1. Elveden were able to supply a slightly wonky tree in 2024.
   In spite of popular demand, there had still been lots of negativity towards the wonky tree which was disappointing and unnecessary. As usual, and not surprisingly, the complaining keyboard warriors were not interested in assisting the committee.

   The cost of the tree in 2024 was £3,240 (a 10% reduction on the 2023 given the publicity caused by the 2023 wonky tree).
   Due to criticism on Facebook about the cost of the tree and a request by CCC (and discussed/requested by the BSSG), we will need to have a smaller tree in 2025.

   Cllr J French has managed to source an **8m** tree locally (Wisbech) for £350.00 (Bassets, 07979 393418).
   Cllr K French had advised that Cobra would provide transport for the tree which would reduce costs and they have a suitable Hiab vehicle.

   The combined saving on the tree and delivery costs will be significant.

   The Clerk contacted Fred on 13.2.25. He has a few larger trees still available and advised that Committee members should visit as soon as possible to select a tree as soon as possible. It would be slightly more that £350, however. Agreed that MF and RB would visit to select a tree, but we would ideally like to have an 8m tree. RB and MF will contact Fred and visit to select a tree on Saturday 22/2.
   The Chairman advised that only 8 m trees were available which would be 7m above ground and he deemed this too small. The Clerk advised that the tree would need to be smaller than last year and that Elveden prices were not an option if we were to have a switch on event within budget this year.

   RB had sourced an 8m tree from a company in Peterborough for £1,250, delivered, or a 10 m tree for £1,800.
   The supplier is not VAT registered, but this is immaterial as we can recover VAT.
   We usually have a tree that is 10-11m in the ground.
   DF had sourced a tree from Marmsbury (near Bath) for £1,500 and had identified a local supplier that would collect for £350.
   DF – An 8m tree would be £1,360 plus haulage (£350?) from Marmsbury.
   Trees could be delivered on a flat base to DF's yard and possibly collected by Cobra.
   The Clerk reiterated that substantial costs savings would need to be made on the tree as other costs were **non-negotiable.**
   The possibility of sourcing a tree from Bassets in future years was considered that could grow to the required height. It would be nice to support local business.

   Members wished to purchase the larger tree. The Clerk warned that if the committee expenditure was over-budget, it would be unlikely there would be a switch-on event next year. No monies had been raised through fund-raising or sponsorship.

2. D Fortuna (Doctor Tree) to provide the Committee with a quote for the installation and removal of the Christmas Tree for 2025 once again. Traffic Management will be **essential** for this process. (Octavius had had to provide emergency TM on the day of the

tree delivery in 2024). Quote received on 17.1.25 in the sum of £1,100 (+ VAT) for erection and removal of the tree, removal of arisings, road space bookings and Stop & Go traffic management. Dan has requested that tree be collected/delivered w/c 10.12.25.

3. Would the 2024 tree be sliced up as per the 2023 tree with a view to selling slices of the trunk to raise funds at events throughout the year? Yes – Dan to slice and deliver to FACT. Has this been done?

4. Many of our lights will be not be fit-for-purpose going forward and these can be re-purposed, sold or gifted, as appropriate. M Field, G Christy and D Fortuna prepared an inventory of our light stock and identify all those that can no longer be used on 17.12.24. The chairman would try to sell some of the lighting that could no longer be used. Whilst we had discussed *donating* lighting to surrounding towns and villages, it was now vital to raise additional funds to fund our own lighting and switch-on event. Alan advised that Wimblington PC had asked to purchase 10 lights from us. Price to be agreed. Wimblington have now purchased the lights for £400. D Biggs emailed the Clerk on 21 May stating that would like to purchase the large Christmas tree lights and the snowman to donate to a care home. In lieu of payment he proposes to carry out this year's PAT-testing free of charge. The price for 2024 was £317.76 but there are lots of extra lights this year of course which he has agreed to include as part of the "purchase price". Committee thought that we should possibly retain the tree and snowman as these lights were a fit with the new "aesthetic" and had sockets and fittings on top of Holland and Barrett. Were there any other lights that Darren would consider in place of the tree and snowman. If so, he could meet with DF & MF to take a look at the other lights we have** Clerk to contact Darren to advise outcome. Clerk called Darren on 17.6.25.

5. FDC had agreed (Service Level Agreement dated 28.10.24) to provide the free usage of two storage containers at The Base in which to store the new lights. However, Russ at Octavius had advised Dan that anything stored therein would suffer water damage as the containers were not watertight. The Clerk contacted M Wright at FDC and an alternative location was identified and offered to the committee on 11.12.24 to use for storage (Station Road Chapel). Dan and Alan confirmed that the Chapel was ideal/fit for purpose.

6. The Clerk had contacted Zurich Insurance to acquire cover for the new lights (costing in the region of £100,000). The current sum assured for Christmas lighting was £72,783. An additional premium of £260.13 (for the remainder of the year only) was payable (which increased the sum insured to £160,000.00 and would cover the cost of the new lighting). Clerk to update the Council's asset register accordingly. The additional premium for a full year has caused the insurance premium to rise by **£1,000**.

7. There have been many complaints about the Nativity not being installed in 2024, especially from "Churches Together".
   Could a suitable location be found for it in 2025?
   M Field would discuss with Budgens once again. **TO DO.** Further complaints received from another member of the public via FDC re non inclusion of the nativity in the Christmas Lights display in 2024. **This was discussed at 4 (above) also. DF advised that Julia would be able to liaise with Budgens regarding the Nativity. Dan will check with Julia if she has made contact with Budgens. Update required. Establish who the landlord of the building is as we do not require electricity from the store.

8. The “parcel” light was unfortunately vandalised, less than a week after the switch-on. Sadly, after thorough examination of CCTV footage, it was not possible to identify who caused the damage or when, and the police had not been at all helpful with the investigation. There is no budget to get this repaired.

9. Dan/Alan had advised the Clerk that they had been unable to erect any of our old lights on some of the columns in Broad Street. However, M Wright confirmed by email on 4.12.24 that *“the design installed was for the Christmas lighting that we brought to Town Council, we had no instruction that they wanted old lights to be re-used in those locations and as such the design does not reflect this. The new lights have their own timers built in as far as I’m aware but you won’t be able to use the columns that are already hosting the new lights as the infrastructure was not installed as the brief was to install the new design”*

SAG / Event Management Plan / Health & Safety

1. SAG paperwork to be completed at the earliest opportunity (M Field). FDC has been in touch with dates for the SAG. Clerk advised that it needed to be August, no later this year. MF to advise Dawn of his holiday dates in August. Meeting confirmed for Tuesday 19.8.25. This has now been cancelled. New date TBC.

2. M Purser advised he had submitted the application for the Licence to Occupy the Market Place. MF now dealing with this.

3. Clerk to apply to FDC Land Team for permission to use the Market Place **once dates were confirmed for the erection/dismantling of the Christmas Lights**. Notice and signage would be required for the closure of the Market Place. FDC will require copies of our liability insurance, Risk Assessments and Method Statement as well as the cherry picker licence.

4. Assistant Clerk to request St John Ambulance attendance at the event. In 2024 the switch-on event was deemed a Tier 3 event, so the SAG required a registered nurse or qualified paramedic attend in addition to 4 first aiders. This has significant cost implications. Assistant Clerk emailed SJA on 14.2.25. 12.3.25 SJA advised that it is difficult to supply a paramedic. Instead, we will have 4 first aiders and a registered nurse at a cost of £395.20 plus £79.04 VAT = £474.24. Quote signed and returned by Clerk on 17.3.25. This was re-sent by the Clerk on 4.4.25.

5. M Field to arrange fire marshal training, extending the invite to non-committee members so that the training costs can be split (a new, additional cost for the event). MF to progress.

6. Chairman to request local press advertise the event (which would also satisfy SAG requirement to notify residents of possible noise/nuisance etc and would help to advertise the road closure so as to give residents, businesses, taxi firms and bus companies etc a heads-up about the timings of the road closures). This could be a further opportunity to thank any sponsors. Update required.

7. What Three Words app to be used once again in the event of emergencies on the night.

8. M Field to arrange private security for the switch-on event as per last year (another new, ongoing cost) MF to deal. The Clerk shared details of the conditions placed on the Premises

Licence in relation to security and this would have to be factored in which would affect the quotation. Licensing/SAG aware. Conditions to be shared with the security firm to ensure compliance. Security booked with J Dowler.

9. M Field to enquire whether there will be a police presence at the switch-on. The Clerk has asked for this also.

10. G Christy to request delivery of 15 extra wheelie bins from FDC for the event that will be emptied and collected on the Saturday morning (these are FOC) To remind them nearer the time…

11. There was an issue with litter in 2024. The event pre-application had clearly stated that stewards would litter-pick at the end of the night. G Christy to contact Dawn Rae at FDC to supply litter pickers for 2025. M Field would speak to Lisa re litter removal.

12. The wristbands for lost children would continue.

13. The information point (FACT bus) would remain located to Broad Street, near the Christmas Tree and people could get the labels from the FACT van to hang on the tree.

14. Those erecting the lights again in 2025 are to review and sign the Method Statement and Risk Assessments (to be circulated in due course).

Finance / Fund-Raising / Collections / Sponsorship

1. 2024 Fund-raising; £2,308.74.

2025 fund-raising = £0.00

2. March Town Council has committed £20,000 in its 2025/2026 budget for Christmas-related expenditure.

   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. All helpers to supply the Clerk with their timesheets for 2024 as soon as possible for payment before year-end. Clerk emailed a reminder on 13.1.25. Timesheet handed to Clerk to process payment in February. Tax & NI Statements emailed to erection team on 21.1.25 for completion and return to the Clerk for accounting purposes. All received by Clerk on 17.2.25.

3. Clerk to contact Kelly Riddell at Tesco (UK5657@tesco.com) regarding a Tesco collection in November. Clerk emailed on 21.2.25. Kelly has booked us in for weekend of 15 & 16 November. Clerk emailed MTC's Public Liability Insurance to Kelly on 17.2.25, as requested.

4. G Christy to liaise with Lidl ASAP re the possibility of a collection/bag pack. This must be done early in the year to give the Army Cadets enough time to complete the necessary paperwork etc. GC confirmed Lidl happy to allow this, MF to liaise with Army Cadets to find a suitable date. UPDATE REQUIRED BY G CHRISTY URGENTLY

5. G Christy to contact Sainsburys and Aldi (which is due to open late Spring) re a collection or bag pack. UPDATE REQUIRED BY G CHRISTY URGENTLY

6. The Friends of March Christmas Lights bank account had been set up and Money Laundering Policy and Procedure for Identifying Donors had been drafted. It was agreed that no further units would be purchased at this stage.

7. **Any sponsorship opportunities must be explored for 2025**. Sponsorship had been poor in 2024. Local businesses to be approached. Sponsors to be advertised on Facebook, ideally weekly. It is critically important to raise additional funds to make up for the budgetary deficit. It was agreed that a Sponsorship package would be put together (GC and MF to work on this). MF had shared documentation to GC that was used for the Summer Festival. There will be limited opportunities for banners, but regular Facebook mentions would be a good way to thank and promote sponsors, along with shout-outs on the night and a press release thanking sponsors. RB suggested holding a raffle at the switch-on event to raise money. MP will look into holding a Race Night to raise funds and will liaise with the Lions to see if they could potentially assist with this.MP appointed to organise a Race Night on a Saturday in May and consider a suitable location. A Race Night has been organised for Saturday 24 May at The United Services Club in March. C Elkin can provide the DVDs and GG has a projector and screen. MP has a PA and microphones. MP's brother, a desktop publisher can assist with programmes. Advertising space can be sold to local businesses. Members to contact local businesses to sponsor the event. MF to contact local business man to compere at the event. MF to ascertain cost of venue hire. GC to prepare a costings sheet. Catering for the event was discussed. MP to establish whether USC will allow their kitchen to be used for the event if outside caterers are used. Tickets to be sold in advance and a Facebook post should be posted straight away to advertise and save the date. Decision taken on 12.5.25 to cancel the event due to lack of organisation. MF to check availability of USC for a race night later in the year, all Fridays are booked until the end of the year. MP will make enquiries about Lodge Hall availability. **IT IS NOW IMPIRITIVE THAT NEW FUND-RAISING ACTIVITES ARE ORGANISED AND EFFORTS STEPPED UP**

   MF circulated potential weekend dates for a Race Night at USC on 1.7.25.
   Saturday 11 October selected. Check with USC that date is still available. All committee members to use their contacts to sell races and horses. Need to determine prices first – as a priority.

8. RB had attended a fund-raising course and had some good ideas for fund-raising events; as well as Race Nights which can be lucrative, a "beauty/pamper afternoon" with cocktails and buffet was suggested, as well as a Craft Fayre. Details of events could be shared on schools' ParentMail. The Fundraising Code must at all times be observed. RB to email MP with a view to seeking a donation from the Masons. [Clerk understood that the Masons could only help registered charities???] The Masons are on a summer break, but Rachel will investigate availability of Lions small grant.

9. The Just Giving page had been successful and would be set up again for 2025 and circulated widely and as soon as possible. MF to set up. Clerk advised this must be done now.

10. It is hoped that the Air Cadets would be able to support with the Tesco collection and stewarding duties at the switch-on once again in 2025. This was confirmed by email from Flt Lt R Kidger by email to the Clerk dated 15.1.25.

11. R Burry/M Field to liaise with Tracy Ranger to see if the Army Cadets are happy to help at the 2025 switch-on event.

Stewards

1. Steward recruitment continues to be a priority for the event. More stewards must be sourced and available to help on the night to allow the event to run smoothly and safely. Facebook recruitment campaign to commence in the late Spring. M Field has taken over Facebook. Without additional stewards the switch-on event ***cannot*** happen. MF suggested that RB contact former stewards to ascertain if they would be prepared to steward again in 2025.

2. All stewards will now be DBS checked. RB advised that there was one DBS outstanding and she was trying to resolve this. This has now been withdrawn.

3. Stewards to wear high visibility clothing – vests, hats, sashes and lanyards. The high-vis jackets must be collected from the Town Hall/MTC one week prior to the switch-on event. MP to drop high-vis jackets into the Town Hall for safe-keeping.

4. Waterproof torches had kindly been donated by Wrights Tools in 2023. M Purser to ensure that these are all collected, in his possession and fully charged prior to the 2025 event.

5. The Event Manager must get a key for the Town Hall from Kathryn at 20Twenty/current Chairman of the March Civic Trust to be able to lock the Town Hall after the switch-on.

6. The Committee now have approximately 20 radios. There were a number of complaints following the switch-on event about the radios/headsets not working/messages not audible. New radios need to be purchased.

7. Skoulding Suite steward refreshments; It was considered that tea and coffee would be sufficient.

8. R Burry to contact the Estafest stewards who volunteered in 2024 to see if they would be able to steward once again in 2025.

9. Stewards Briefing – to be arranged in due course.

10. The additional conditions to the Premises Licence requested by the police affect steward/staff/volunteer training. Training shall be documented and conducted every 12 months. Training to *include* a) actions to be taken in an emergency / reporting an incident to Emergency Services b) crime scene management (ie spiking, assaults, sexual assaults), c) safeguarding (children and vulnerable persons), d) suspicious packages and e) VAWG (violence against women and girls). Documents emails to committee on 9.7.25. Dan to contact S Rayner re the terrorism training he attended.

11. Dan to ask S Rayner whether we can borrow the barriers and whether he would be available to steward.

Entertainment / Fairground / Catering / Refreshments

1. Clerk to contact Lisa Hedges re fair rides and food stalls ([redacted]) and confirm the date of the 2025 switch-on. Clerk called on 17.2.25. Lisa has put the date in her diary.

2. John Whitehead ([redacted]) Clerk to contact John to see if he will be available for MC duties at the event once again this year. Clerk thanked Mr Whitehead on 5.2.25. Emailed on 12.2.25 to enquire whether he would be available on 28.11.25.

3. Clerk to contact Tom Harlock regarding band availability (band only basis). Clerk emailed on 12.2.25. Tom will check to see if the band is available at practise and update the Clerk. Tom confirmed by email on 27.2.25 that they can play this year.

4. M Field to contact K Nightingale of 20Twenty Productions regarding its involvement in the 2025 event. There had been discussions in 2024 about a World-War-themed projector display on the Town Hall, if funding could be secured. This was deferred until 2025. Suggest contact is made with Kathryn about this soonest so that time doesn't run out again. MF to liaise with KN. Initial discussions have taken place. KN to identify a company that can be used. 20Twenty will definitely do a performance.

5. The Clerk to contact Derek Rutter (March Lions) regarding provision of a Father Christmas and sleigh. Clerk emailed on 12.2.25. Derek confirmed this on 15.2.25.

6. R Burry to contact Gary Tustin re the pre-warm-up at 18:00. Confirmed.

7. New PPL/PRS licenses for Broad Street [and also West End Park] purchased by Clerk in December 2024. The licence has a start date of 1 November 2018 (and has no expiry date). <u>The cost of this has tripled in one year.</u>

8. The Committee resolved that Father Christmas would switch on the lights and the Mayor would be invited to attend the event.

Communications / Advertising / Social Media

Facebook and social media communication usage/advertising must improve to raise awareness about the event, sponsorship and fund-raising activities, to share information and recruit/attract volunteers/stewards without which, the committee **would not be able to continue** to provide Christmas Lights or a switch-on event in the town.

The Chair and Clerk will write a press release raising awareness about the desperate lack of/need for stewards. If more stewards cannot be recruited on a volunteer basis, the event will not be able to go ahead and this would be incredibly sad for the town. Also mention spiralling costs of providing lights and a switch-on event.

Fund-raising and sponsorship must continue to be a priority for the Committee to deliver a 2025 event.

Miscellaneous

1. Clerk to contact Lynn McGhee, Branch Manager, of Ridgeons/Huwsgray regarding the loan of steps for the trailer once again in 2025 ([redacted]). Clerk emailed Lynn on 20.2.25. Lynn replied to confirm that they are happy to support the town once again this year.

2. Clerk to contact John Thomas of Ken Thomas Haulage (01945 450555) re the loan of a trailer once again in 2025 for the Market Place. Clerk emailed on 17.2.25. Ricky confirmed that we were booked in for 2025. We are very grateful to the Ken Thomas team for this wonderful gesture every year.

3. AS advised that Wimblington had enquired whether they could purchase some of our redundant lighting. 10 decorations required by Wimblington PC. Offer put to Wimblington of £600. Counter-offer of £400 received from Wimblington on 12.5.25 via D Biggs, on the basis that two of the lights are not in working order. Email circulated to Christmas Lights committee members on 12.5.25 for comment/approval. Agreed. Monies transferred from Wimblington PC to March Town Council on 16.5.25. Lights to be collected on 19.5.25.

4. The Clerk advised committee members that she, MF and GC had received an email from a member of the public (Simon?) dated 8.3.25 regarding Christmas Lighting. The Chairman will respond accordingly. The Chairman emailed the sender on 15.7.25 and invited him to the meeting on 21/7/25. He did not attend.

Date of Next Meeting:

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

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9:05pm.

Councillor A Woollard …… 4 August 2025
Mayor of March.