

MARCH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a Christmas Lights Working Party Meeting held in The Skoulding Suite at March Town Hall on Monday 17 October 2022 at 7.45pm

Present:	Chairman	Stuart Rayner	
	Councillors	SR Court G Tustin	M Purser
	Members	David Doe Dan Fortuna Ryan Kidger	Alan Stimpson Rob Phipps Rachel Burry
		Town Clerk	SL Lemmon

Apologies:

Apologies were received from Councillors Donnelly, Elkin, Skoulding and White.

Minutes:

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 September 2022 were circulated and approved.

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

1. "Switch-on" date 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. S Lemmon to remind Richard Hircock of Ringways in October. *SL emailed R Hircock on 3 October and spoke with him on 4 October. SL emailed once again on 7 October to confirm the earlier tree collection date of Friday 6 January 2023 (from 9 January) on account of works taking place on the Market Place commencing on Saturday 7 January. FDC had requested that the tree be moved before this date. A Stimpson hoped that he and Dan (assisted by R Phipps if required) would be able to dismantle the lights on 2 January 2023 (a Bank Holiday) so long as they could get the cherry picker on this date. D Fortuna emailed Tony Demetriuos re availability of hoist on 2 January.*
3. The following interested parties were notified of the above date on 23rd February 2022. *S Lemmon will contact all interested parties by the end of October to re-confirm availability.*

- a) Lisa Hedges re fair rides [REDACTED]
- b) John Whitehead re MC duties [REDACTED] *G Tustin offered to undertake MC duties if J Whitehead was unavailable.*
- c) Duncan Partington re entertainment ([REDACTED]). *S Lemmon has received Duncan's invoice to be paid in the November cheque run. Cheque to be given to him on "switch-on" night.*
- d) Ridgeons re loan of steps (662000).
- e) John Thomas re loan of lorry trailer ([REDACTED]).
- f) Lions Club re provision Father Christmas and sleigh including transport thereof.
- g) FDC to ensure 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. No acknowledgement received so a further email to be forwarded on 24th May 2022. Confirmed as OK later that day.
- 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. Tree to be delivered on Friday 18th November. *Originally intended to be removed on Monday 9 January 2023, this has now been moved to Friday 6 January (see point 2). S Lemmon has advised Richard Hircock of Ringways accordingly.*
- i) Ascertain whether Sainsbury's and Tesco's will allow bag-packing or collection:
No response yet received from Sainsbury's. Further letter sent on 18th May 2022. Still no response received. *S Lemmon rang Sainsbury on 3 October. Physical letters are "ignored" so, at the request of the store manager, (Graham), S Lemmon emailed him. Still no response forthcoming so we can assume at this late stage that Sainsbury do not wish to support/participate in a bag-pack.*
- j) In a response from Tesco (Kelly Riddell) dated 8 March 2022, we have provisionally been booked in for collection dates on 19 and 20 November 2022 and collection times of 10am to 4pm. **Rota attached hereto for the Tesco bag-pack. R Kidger to double check the relevant policies to ensure that that the cadets can help, and how.* The Clerk reported that the advertising banners used when collecting were currently housed in the Town Council offices. Mark Purser stated that an advertising poster could be displayed within store prior to the event. *R Phipps suggested that Kelly Riddell could be approached about the provision of bottled water for stewards (M Pursuer to action)*
- k) 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 23 February 2022. Quote received on 25 March 2022 (accepted 29 March 2022) for £690.44p. This is a rise of only £7.35p on the previous year.

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. Chased again in July, August and September. Balfour Beatty quote now received and accepted on 26 September 2022. The cost for the essential replacement festive timer sockets etc is £285.90 + VAT. Works to commence as soon as possible. *S Lemmon advised that she had received an email from Balfour Beatty on 3 October stating that 4 street light timers on the Bridge had been missed off the*

previous quote and needed replacing, 3 of which would be invoiced to MTC. Quote of £682.32 exclusive accepted by Clerk on 8 October and signed tender letter emailed on 10 October. There are still some issues with timers being on!

- l) St John Ambulance booked and confirmed by the Assistant Town Clerk in September 2022 (£192 & VAT).
- m) Decide upon a suitable person to switch on the lights. *S Lemmon requested to ask Clive Lemmon to switch on the lights. The Mayor had traditionally undertaken this role and would be asked if Clive was unable. G Tustin volunteered to switch on the lights if no one else agreed to. M Purser to ask Brandon Walker (Summer Festival Committee) about potentially live-streaming the event.*
- n) Apply for CCC Street Lighting License. Application approved on 21st March 2022. *Confirmed on 14 October as License no CCC404439023.*
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.
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. A quote of £1,895.00 + VAT was received on 23rd May 2022. The work and the hire of a cherry-picker has been arranged for Sunday 7th August 2022. This work has been completed satisfactorily.

Tasks Still to be Undertaken:

1. Discussions are needed to ascertain how improvements can be made to the Christmas tree and “Nativity Scene” displays. *If the Broad Street was regenerated as proposed, the tree is likely to be re-located to central Broad Street. Specific provision had been made for the tree, with a specially designed tree pit. It is unlikely that Broad Street would be anywhere near completion in time for Christmas 2023, but with having a tree pit on the Market Place, there was still an option to have a Christmas Tree next year, even if street furniture was not in place for lighting throughout the rest of the town.*
2. SAG paperwork needs to be completed at the earliest opportunity. *Rob Skoulding had emailed the completed EMP to M Bishop at Fenland District Council on 26 September 2022. The SAG meeting has been re-scheduled twice now, but is due to take place on Monday 24 October at 2pm via Teams Meeting. M Purser to attend.*
3. *S Lemmon advised the Committee that the FDC online application to occupy the Market Place was required to be completed at the earliest opportunity. M Purser agreed to attend to this.*
4. 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”).

5. It was confirmed that Rachel Burry and Stuart Rayner would remain in the joint roles of Head Steward.
6. The need to recruit more stewards was essential. Clinton Elkin agreed to advertise on Facebook in an attempt to get more volunteers. A further push for volunteers/stewards would take place in the weeks ahead. *Following email communications with R Burry on 16 October, the Clerk had prepared a poster to help attract additional volunteer stewards. Copies of the poster were distributed at the meeting to be displayed locally in shops and clubs. S Lemmon email the e-version of the poster to Committee members to circulate on social media.*
7. 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. Committee members to deliver said letters. *The Clerk handed out 50 copies of the letter to Committee members for circulation to local shops and businesses.*
8. Robert Skoulding again agreed to sponsor the “Best Decorated House” competition. *RS to order 2 trophies for 2022 and 2023. C Elkin would be asked to advertise this on Facebook. R Phipps suggested that there should be additional admins for the Facebook page.*
9. It was agreed that the grotto should not be re-instated for 2022, although this decision could be reviewed for future years depending upon the number of available volunteers.
10. Several “set-pieces” required repair. All 27 faulty set-pieces were sent to The Festive Lighting Company for repair and were delivered back to March on 21st September 2022.
A Stimpson unloaded the items and has checked everything off against an inventory and has stored the lights in the lock-up. Works had been able to commence on 2 October as originally planned. An invoice for the repair work had been received in the sum of £11,303.50 & VAT for payment on 3rd October. *This invoice has now been paid. Timers/switches had been left on by a Balfour Beatty operative so lights were illuminated on 2 October. Balfour Beatty apologised and rectified this. It was also discovered that FDC had changed the lock on the electricity box between the Town Hall and The Exchange. S Lemmon had secured a new key and a copy was handed to A Stimpson on 12 October.*
11. Mark Purser has obtained more 2-way radios with associated ear-pieces since the previous ones had proven to work very well. Sets of radio and ear-pieces will be individually packed and itemised for future events for convenience. *There are approximately 18-19 radios now. M Purser asked for volunteers to assist in testing the radios in a loud environment to check their efficacy.*
12. Refreshments will be discussed in due course. *M Purser is leading on this and is expected to update the Committee at the next meeting.*
13. Mark Purser will investigate whether a sponsorship scheme is feasible to raise funds for additional lighting / on-going maintenance. *It was agreed that this is now too late to further discuss or implement for 2022, but the idea of sponsorship should definitely be revisited for 2023, along with card machines and QR codes for payments/donations in an increasingly cashless society.*
14. 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. Andy Murray (attending in lieu of Ryan Kidger) advised that the Cadets would indeed be happy to help again this year. *See also j) (above).*
15. Mark Purser has invited Nigel Spencer to join the Committee. *It remains to be confirmed, although it is unlikely that N Spencer would be in a position to join in light of his many other commitments and the decision to host another MAFF event in 2023. However, he has kindly agreed to assist M Purser with SAG advice.*
 16. Further discussions ensued regarding the positioning of barriers within town on the night of the actual “switch-on”.
 17. The Clerk advised that a large number of towns were not having any Christmas Lights at all this year owing to the hugely increased electricity costs. Whilst we could not estimate the likely electricity consumption for the Christmas lights at this stage, it was suggested that we could consider turning the lights off slightly earlier than in previous years, but possibly switch them on at the same time as usual so that the lights could be enjoyed by children coming out of school. *It was agreed that the lights would be switched off at 10:30pm every evening (cf midnight).*
 18. It was discussed whether the tree could be more heavily decorated this year. It was noted that vandalism and theft of lower-level decorations and lighting was an issue and because of the location of the tree and proximity to the path and highway that barriers could not be used to help prevent this. However, if the tree was re-positioned to Broad Street in future, the additional space would allow barriers to be installed to reduce the likelihood of vandalism occurring. We could utilise the cherry picker to potentially increase the number of high-level lighting and decorations for 2022. *G Tustin suggested that we formalise the recent tradition of getting members of the public to decorate the bottom of the Christmas Tree.*
 19. R Burry enquired whether the Upwell Park offices could again be used this year for the Stewards’ meeting. The Clerk to check with R Skoulding to see if this is possible. *R Skoulding advised Clive Lemmon on 28 September that this would not be a problem. S Rayner to liaise with R Skoulding re a Steward’s meeting on Thursday 17 November.*
 20. *R Burry to collate a list of Stewards with contact details as soon as possible.*
 21. *The Mayor is to be invited to attend the “switch-on” (Clerk to arrange).*

Dates of Next Meeting:

Monday 21 November 2022 at 7.45pm in The Skoulding Suite at March Town Hall.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9:10pm.

Councillor K French 7 November 2022.
Mayor of March.

Tesco Bag-Pack Rota 19/20 November 2022

Times	Saturday 19 November	Sunday 20 November
10-11	S Rayner	S Rayner
11-12	S Doe	<i>tbc</i>
12-1	S Court	M Purser
1-2	R Burry	M Purser
2-3	R Burry	R Burry
3-4	M Purser	