

MARCH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a Christmas Lights Working Party Meeting held in The Skoulding Suite at March Town Hall on Monday 15th November 2021 at 7.45pm.

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|-----------------|-------------|--|---------------------------|
| Present: | Chairman | RF Skoulding | |
| | Councillors | AR Donnelly R Jack RW White | CK Elkin M Purser |
| | Members | David Doe Rachel Burry Dan Fortuna | Stuart Rayner Sue Beer |
| | Town Clerk | C Lemmon | |

Apologies:

Apologies were received from Colin Arnold and Gary Tustin.

Minutes:

The minutes of the meeting held on 18th October 2021 were circulated and approved.

Review of 2020 “Switch-on”:

Due to coronavirus restrictions, the 2020 “switch-on” had been a low-key affair with no road closures, funfair or entertainment.

Progress & Tasks Already Undertaken in respect of 2021 Event:

1. “Switch-on” date unanimously confirmed as Friday 26th November 2021.
2. The road closure has been confirmed by Cambridgeshire County Council and Ringways have been notified of their involvement therein [redacted] notified by email 14th June 2021). The cost of the Ringways traffic management has been agreed at £1,818.00p.
3. [redacted] funfair [redacted] (MC duties [redacted]) [redacted] (entertainment [redacted]) have all confirmed their attendance.
4. [redacted] steps [redacted] (loan of lorry trailer [redacted]) – confirmed for 6am on 26.11.21.) and Lions Club (Father Xmas / sleigh) have all confirmed their attendance.
5. Fenland District Council is aware that the Market Place needs to be closed and the public toilets kept open until 10pm ([redacted] notified by email on 9th February 2021 and again on 18th October 2021).

6. Christmas tree ordered from Elveden Farms on 22nd March 2021 ([REDACTED])
[REDACTED] Delivery arranged for Friday 19th November 2021 at 10am at a cost of £3,030 + VAT. To be removed on Monday 10th January 2022 (Ringways aware of all necessary dates). The cost of the Ringways involvement has been agreed at £786.00p.
7. Although Sainsbury's and Tesco's have both been approached about collection days, no decisions have yet been taken by either organisation.
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] uk5657@tesco.com or marchhostmoor.community@tesco.com)
The most recent contact with each company was made on 13th September 2021, Sainsbury's by phone and Tesco's by email. It would appear highly unlikely that any bag-packing will be allowed at Sainsbury's and the response from Tesco's states that no update has been provided by their Head Office as of yet. [REDACTED] will be in touch as soon as any news is received.
It is now certain that these fund-raising activities will not be taking place in 2021.
8. The Chairman reported that he would make enquiries of FDC Licensing to ascertain whether it would be allowable to place collection buckets near the road closures since all other fund-raising efforts had been thwarted.
9. Balfour Beatty have again agreed to supervise electrical works since this is the only practical way that the Committee can legally gain access to CCC street lighting columns.
([REDACTED] – Operations Supervisor [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Contract agreed and signed on 29th March 2021.
10. March Town Council has committed £25,000 in its 2021/2022 budget for Christmas-related expenditure.
11. It has been agreed that a maximum of £7,500 be paid out to helpers for 2021. All payments made will be subject to recipients signing a receipt acknowledging that they are responsible for their own tax and national insurance if applicable.
12. All cross-street wires and wall bolts were tested during 2020. Tests are due bi-annually so will need testing again in 2022.
13. [REDACTED] have agreed to perform the "switch-on" ceremony. This was confirmed on 1st March 2021.

All interested parties, with the exception of [REDACTED] were contacted again by Clive Lemmon on 18th October 2021. Robert Skoulding to speak directly to these two.

Tasks Still to be Undertaken:

1. Discussions have been held with Clinton Elkin to ascertain how improvements can be made to the Christmas tree and "Nativity Scene" displays.

2. Robert Skoulding has had on-going discussions with ██████ regarding the SAG requirements and been involved in a “zoom meeting” with the actual SAG committee.
3. Geoff Wilkinson has booked St John Ambulance.
4. It was 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 previously agreed that it was necessary to appoint a Head Steward, and it was agreed that serious efforts must be made to recruit as many stewards as possible for 2021 onwards. However, it should be remembered that due diligence must be exercised prior to utilising new stewards or introducing new members to the Committee.

It was agreed that Rachel Burry and Stuart Rayner would take on the joint roles of Head Steward. Stuart Rayner confirmed his willingness to jointly take on this role on the morning of 22nd June 2021 and Robert Skoulding agreed to provide whatever advice was needed.

Clinton Elkin agreed to advertise the need for more stewards on Facebook.

6. Once again, a Christmas Shop Window Competition would be organised. The Clerk produced a letter which Robert Skoulding distributed around the shops in late October 2021. Judging will take place between 1st and 5th December 2021, with all results being forwarded to CL by 10am on Monday 6th December 2021. The list of judges was agreed as follows: Robert White, David Doe, Ray Jack, Rachel Burry, Sue Beer and Ray Jack.
7. Robert Skoulding had again agreed to sponsor the “Best Decorated House” competition. Arrangements for the judging of this would be made on or immediately after “switch-on” night.
8. It is necessary to arrange refreshments for “switch-on” night. Mark Purser agreed to provide the refreshments and organise the serving thereof.
9. It was previously agreed that a grotto would not be a sensible idea for the current year but that, hopefully, it will be re-instated for 2022.
10. Several “set-pieces” were in need of repair and Sue Beer is refurbishing as many as possible of them.
11. A lady called ██████ who had suggestions about the Christmas tree had previously asked to join the Committee. It had been agreed that she should be invited to attend the August 2021 meeting. ██████ was emailed on 22nd June 2021 but no response has been received. Normal “due diligence” procedures had confirmed that ██████ was not on the Police database and, as such, would have been an approved person.
12. CL previously reported that he had applied for the Street Lighting License. This is a Cambs County Council annual license that is required before seasonal decorations are allowed to be attached to street lights. The application was approved on 13th July 2021.
13. Mark Purser has purchased 14 “walkie-talkies” with associated accessories and one loud hailer to assist with communications on “switch-on” night.

14. Clinton Elkin reported that Holland and Barrett should be arranging for the reinstatement of the Christmas lights socket.
15. It was noted that the sockets on the two “Iceland” lampposts are due to be fitted by the FDC lighting contractors at the earliest opportunity. Time switches had previously been fitted but the sockets had been forgotten.
16. The Chairman previously reported that, because of his health issues, he would not be able to perform as many of the physical activities this year either in preparing for the event or the on-the-ground liaison duties on the night.
17. The Chairman reiterated the need for everyone to encourage as many stewards to come forward as possible (eg Fire Brigade and Ambulance Service off-duty personnel).
18. Stewards’ meetings have been arranged for 18th November 2021 to ensure that everyone is aware of all relevant information/documentation and to review all possible scenarios that could occur. These will take place at the Chairman’s office at 4 The Wheel Centre at 7pm.
19. The erection of the lights started on Sunday 24th October 2021 and has continued every Sunday thereafter – good progress has been made.
20. March Rotary Club will be assisting March Lions with marshalling the sleigh. Thereafter, they will assist with stewarding duties.
21. The Clerk reported that he had been approached by Cambs County Council to ascertain whether it could bring its “Community Thinking” vehicle to the “switch-on”. Following discussions relating to the size of the vehicle, space constraints and social distancing requirements, it was agreed that permission should not be granted for the current year.
22. The Chairman and Stuart Rayner reported that they had both engaged another steward.

Date of Next Meeting:

Monday 21st February 2022 at 7.45pm in The Skoulding Suite at March Town Hall.
(The Chairman gave advance notice of his apologies for the above meeting).

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.35pm.

Councillor K French 6th December 2021.
Mayor of March.