

# MARCH TOWN COUNCIL

## Minutes of a Christmas Lights Working Party Meeting held in The Skoulding Suite at March Town Hall on Monday 20 November 2023 at 7.45pm

<b>Present:</b>	Chairman	S Rayner	
	Councillors	S Court M Purser	M Field
	Members	R Burry D Fortuna A Stimpson	D Doe R Kidger G Tustin
		Town Clerk	S Lemmon

### Apologies:

Apologies were received from Cllr Christy.

### Minutes:

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 October 2023 were circulated and approved.

1. "Switch-on" date confirmed as Friday 24 November 2023.
2. The Clerk would complete the necessary road closure application forms for submission to Cambridgeshire County Council (S Rayner to be named as 24-hour event emergency contact). Roads to remain closed until 10:00pm, although the fair had over-stayed in 2022. The Clerk to advise L Hedges that stalls and attractions must be moved away by 10:00pm (see point 4(a)). Highway Event Application Form and Traffic Management Plan submitted by the Clerk on 24.1.23. Email from Highways Events received on, application reference CCC483682641. Highways will require Public Liability Insurance certificate and SAG progress. PLI insurance emailed to Martin Elwood at CCC on 14.3.23. The Clerk emailed Highways on 28.6.23 to if progress had been made with the application. A reply on 29.6 advised that Highways were working with the Broad Street regeneration team. A further email of 4.7.23 stated that Broad Street was not available and perhaps a new application should be submitted. SL replied stating that we knew from the outset that Broad Street would not be utilised for the event, nor lights strung due to the absence of street furniture. However, the roads would still need to be closed as for any other year and therefore

argued that a fresh application was unnecessary. Email from CCC on 6.7.23 – asking for a new plan and the EMP. There is an issue in that there is currently a TTRO (Temporary Traffic Regulation Order) in place for Broad Street and there cannot be a second covering the same area. CCC has agreed to work collaboratively to ensure that the project and switch-on can both work. The project only implements its TRRO at certain times. SL responded on 10.7.23. SL emailed Martin Ellwood at CCC again on 29.8.23 to advise that CNM Ltd would now be providing road traffic management services at the event (see also 4(n) and again on 12.9.23 to advise that CNM would be progressing the Highway Event Application on behalf of March Town Council now. No reply received. Email from Craig at CNM 9.10.23 – he has contacted Octavius about the road closure and has the road space booked. Awaiting confirmation that they will extend the road space for us. SL rang Craig on 11.10.23 – he is submitting a new road closure application. *Road Closure not confirmed by CCC until 17 November 2023 which does not allow for the 14 days advance notice required by law. CCC Highways website is not up-to-date and has been the cause of much stress. Clerk to ensure CNM and Octavius/Highways have liaised vis-à-vis the practical operation of the dual TRROs.*

3. D Fortuna had provided the Committee with a quote for the installation and removal of the Christmas Tree for 2023 at a much-reduced cost to Ringways.12.9.23 DF contacted the Clerk to ask if Elveden could deliver the tree on 10 November rather than 17 November. SL emailed Elveden with the request on 12.9.23. Reply on 13.9.23 confirming 10 November delivery. Awaiting time, 9-9:30 preferred. 13.10.23 advised Elveden of the tree pit dimensions and Luvena confirmed the tree delivery time, as requested. *Tree delivered as arranged. Huge toxic fall-out from the keyboard warriors about the fact that the tree is wonky (although safely installed and structurally sound). Lower branches have now been trimmed so that people can navigate around the tree without having to encroach on the road. Members expressed sadness about the negativity on Facebook that has had an adverse effect on volunteers and potential stewards. Sadly, this criticism threatens this event as it has the March Summer Festival.*
4. The Clerk will contact the following interested parties regarding the 2023 event to confirm availability;
  - a) Lisa Hedges re fair rides and food stalls ( [REDACTED] ). Lisa will be happy to attend and understood the fairground would be on a smaller scale and in the High Street. Lisa will visit in August/September to assess the new siting. 10pm finish time also discussed. MF to liaise with L Hedges. She only has the area from Iceland to Bevills Place to occupy this year. SL called LH on 6.9.23 to check she was happy with this year's arrangements [yes]. There will only be space for about 2 rides this year but that is not a problem. MF awaiting confirmation of what rides for the EMP.
  - b) John Whitehead re MC duties ( [REDACTED] ). Confirmed on 25.1.23
  - c) Duncan Partington re entertainment ( [REDACTED] ). Confirmed. Invoice received. *Cheque handed to Chairman to pass to Duncan on the 24.11.23*

- d) Ridgeons re loan of steps (662000). The contact is Lynn McGhee (branch manager, [lynn.mcghee@huwsgray.co.uk](mailto:lynn.mcghee@huwsgray.co.uk)). Confirmed by Lynn on 25.1.23.
- e) John Thomas re loan of lorry trailer (01945 450555). Confirmed by Ricky on 25.1.23 *and 10.11.23.*
- f) Lions Club re provision Father Christmas and sleigh including transport thereof. Derek Rutter confirmed on 25.1.23. Clerk to purchase sweets. *Sweets purchased and delivered to Derek Rutter.*
- g) FDC to ensure that the Market Place car park will be closed all day and that the Broad Street toilets (if in situ) will be open until 10pm (Contracts: Isabel & Layna). Layna confirmed on 26.1.23. *FDC signs already erected on Market Place.*
- h) Order Christmas tree from Elveden Farms. The tree this year was £3,636 (incl). Clerk emailed for quote on 25.1.23. Quote received on 30.1.23 and for £3,636 again. Quote accepted on 1.2.23. G Christy has secured a sponsor for the Christmas tree and forwarded invoices for tree and advertising literature. Octavius will make a contribution of £2,000 towards the tree. *Donation gratefully received from Octavius on 13 November 2023.*
- i) Ascertain whether Tesco and Lidl will allow bag-packing or collection. No bag packing. Clerk emailed Kelly Riddell ([uk5657@tesco.com](mailto:uk5657@tesco.com)) at Tesco on 25.1.23. Kelly from Tesco emailed confirmation of 18-19 November to Clerk on 17.2.23. Rota emailed to committee members by Clerk on 22 August and is attached to this document as an appendix. \*\*\*G Christy will contact Lidl re sponsorship opportunities. Lidl's happy to allow a collection. Arrange for after the switch-on event, or next year. *The Tesco collection raised £637.84. (This figure would undoubtedly have been more had the card reader been used. See 12 (below)) and banners utilised. M Purser will potentially store the banners at home in the future.*
- 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. Emailed Brian Crabbe on 25.1.23. They can, although they will need the column numbers to be used. These are not yet known. SL emailed Ffion Daniel and Brian Crabbe on 10.7.23 for follow-up/clarification. SL emailed on 29.8.23 and again on 12.9.23. No reply from Brian Crabbe, FD advised dates of switch-on and off. 9.10.23 call from Alan re lamp pots still on outside Griffin etc. Emailed Brian Crabbe at Balfour Beatty on 9.10.23 to advise/check. No reply. Emailed again on 16.10.23. *Quote from Balfour Beatty received on 26.10.23. Signed and returned by Clerk on 30.10.23.*
- k) Assistant Clerk to book St John Ambulance. Online application submitted on 30.1.23. Booking confirmed on 7.8.23. SL confirmed they have space to work in the Skoulding Suite on 12.9.23. Emailed latest draft of EMP to them on 19.9.23.
- l) Clerk to apply for CCC Street Lighting License. Emailed Alan Hitch at CCC on 25.1.23. Online application submitted on 31.1.23. Application reference CCC482515944 approved on 9.2.23.
- m) Clerk to contact UK Power Networks regarding the unmetered supply certificate and advised the dates of the switch-on and off and reduced illumination times as per 2022 (4:00-10:30). Bill requested on 25.1.23. Npower have requested the 25.11.22 – 06.01.23 bill to be raised. Chased again on 1.3.23. Received on 2.3.23 for payment on 6.3.23. Letter from npower Business Solutions received on 2.8.23. The unmetered supply (UMS) tariff has increased by almost 50% as of 1 September. This will greatly increase the cost

of lighting to MTC. Consider further reductions on the timings of the lights. *Clerk received Unmetered Supply Certificate from UMSO Power Networks on 3 November which had been sent to our electricity supplier for registration purposes. The Clerk had advised that this year there are only half the usual number of lights.*

n) Clerk emailed Richard Hircock at Ringway on 25.1.23 to ask for attendance at 2023 event for traffic management purposes [request cancelled].

Chris and Natalie Moore of March-based CNM Highways Ltd were invited to the meeting on 21.8.23 (and 18.9.23) following a successful meeting with representatives of the company, the Clerk and Cllr J French on 27.6.23 regarding the provision of traffic management for both the “switch-on” event and Remembrance parade. Unfortunately, CNM were unable to attend either meeting. CNM can provide an enhanced service at a much-reduced cost to the committee. Additionally, they can also erect the lighting at a very competitive price. Given that amazing “volunteers” have hitherto been paid to help erect lights, it would perhaps be better to pay professionals going forward. SL, GC & MF had meeting with CNM on 24.8.23. SL spoke with Natalie on 12.9.23 and sent through the Highway Event Application/road closure documentation to CNM who will progress the application now. Due to circumstances beyond our control, regular volunteers will erect the lighting again in 2023. This commenced on Sunday 8.10.23. *CNM will quote for 2024 although our existing team are very happy to continue erecting the lights in future years.*

5. March Town Council has committed £27,750 in its 2023/2024 budget for Christmas-related expenditure.
6. 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. Payments made to 2022 volunteers (A Stimpson, N Bright & D Fortuna) on 6.2.23. Tax and Insurance certificates/declarations had been duly completed.
7. All cross-street wires and wall bolts were tested (by Glomac) during 2022. Tests are due bi-annually, so will not need testing again until 2024.
8. *S Lemmon received quotes for new PPL/PRS licenses on 8 November 2023 for Broad Street [and West End Park]. The invoice due date is 6/12/23 and both will be paid on 5.12.23 after the main meeting. Last years' licenses have technically expired but due to the unfortunate timing of the renewal and the late invoices, last years' licenses can be used/relied upon.*

#### **Discussion/Action points:**

1. Works/improvements to Broad Street would not be completed until Summer 2024. In future years, the Christmas tree would likely be located in Broad Street, although it would need to be located on the Market Place once again in 2023. There would be new street lighting in town upon completion and the Clerk would seek to ensure that

FDC provided appropriate street furniture and digital timers. When positioned in Broad Street, there would be more space to enable the tree to be fenced off, thereby allowing lighting to be strung much lower than when situated on the Market Place.

2. SAG paperwork should be completed at the earliest opportunity – *M Field – done.*
3. MP to complete the application for the Licence to Occupy the Market Place. Permission letter received from Isabel on 21.2.23. MP and MF meeting on 23.6 to progress the SAG. MF circulated a draft to committee members on 21.8.23. L Hedges to provide details of stalls and Showmans Guild number. Information such as stewards would not be able to be completed until nearer the time. SAG meeting of 14.9.23 postponed due to outstanding information required for the EMP. MF to contact Michelle Bishop (FDC) regarding a collection license (if required). MF to attend. Comments received from SAG on 9.10.23 – circulated to Cllrs Christy and Field. SL removed herself as primary contact for the EMP. 10.10.23 MF circulated an updated draft of the EMP. Next meeting scheduled for 2.11.23.
4. Rachel Burry and Stuart Rayner would remain in the joint roles of Head Steward (*See also 26, post*).
5. Steward recruitment continues to be a priority for the event. More hands-on-deck were needed to manage the event comfortably. M Purser had had positive discussions with members of the Kick Boxing Club who had expressed an interest in helping with stewarding duties. All stewards/volunteers to be DBS checked. Standard and enhanced volunteer applications are free of charge. Following discussion with CPCA, GC advised that we would need to use a registered agency to undertake the DBS checks (£16 admin fee per DBS). Core members of the committee/stewards to get checked soonest. *This process is now underway with all checks having been carried out successfully. R Burry thanked for her time and efforts administering these checks.*
6. The Committee agreed that the Christmas Best Dressed Shop Window competition would be suspended for 2023.
7. Decision to be made regarding the continuance of the “Best Decorated House” competition. Decision made to discontinue due to lack of interest and rising cost of living/energy prices.
8. It was agreed that the grotto should not be re-instated for 2023. At a meeting of March Town Council on 3.7.23 Cllr French enquired whether this was a permanent decision.
9. The Committee now have approximately 19 radios. These will be tested for efficacy in noisy locations in due course and must all be in full working order prior to the 2023 event. Testing to be completed. MP confirmed that following the Summer Festival broken radios and headsets were disposed of, leaving 16 complete sets. More

holsters had been purchased. *MP to organise radios and headsets into individually packaged units.*

10. Refreshments - M Purser happy to organise along with Ruth Johnson.
11. Sponsorship opportunities should be better explored. A generous donation of £500 had been received from Bretts Transport. MP tasked with applying to Tesco to take part in the Bags for Help. *Thanks to Octavius for their generous donation towards the cost of the Christmas tree.*
12. M Purser is researching the purchase of card reader machines for fund-raising purposes. GC to set-up a dedicated [CIC] bank account. GC confirmed that he had drawn up a committee constitution in order that a bank account could be set up (circulated to all committee members). The Friends of March Christmas Lights bank account is now open and all documents, card and reader were received w/c 11.9.23. Documentation and card reader etc handed to Cllr Christy on 18.9.23. In order to set up the account, GC had drafted an Anti-Money Laundering Policy for Small Donations Collection, a Procedure for identifying givers of donations to Friends of March Christmas Lights, and a Products and Services Statement. *Disappointingly, the card reader company decided last week that they needed a Power of Attorney completed before the card reader could be used. This does not allow enough time for processing and authorisation in time for the Tesco collection or switch-on event.*
13. It is hoped that the Air Cadets would be able to support the collections and possible stewarding duties at the switch-on once again in 2023. Email received from Flt Lt R Kidger on 20.2.23 advising that the Cadets would continue to support the event with stewarding and collections etc. The air cadets will attend Tesco on Saturday 18.11.23. R Burry confirmed that the Army Cadets would also be happy to support and would contact them formally. R Burry contacted Kelly Summersell (March Army Cadets) by email on 1.3.23. Kelly will attend the 20 March meeting [Kelly did not attend the meeting]. Kelly was unable to attend the 22.5.23 meeting. RB to make contact with the army cadets and arrange a meeting on a day other than a Monday. RK had spoken to the Army Cadets. They need 8 weeks' notice of events. *14 air cadets will attend from 6:30 on 24.11.23.*
14. The wristbands idea for lost children was agreed as being a good one, although it was decided that the system should be better communicated and advertised with proper signage. G Tustin kindly offered to provide an event "warm-up" from 6:00pm when many families with children would start to arrive so that he could explain the lost child procedures as well as helping to build up the event to the actual switch-on. *G Tustin to be provided with an itinerary and list of announcements and people to thank/introduce.* Facebook can be used to provide information about the wristbands and lost children procedures etc. GC confirmed that a banner would be approximately £70.00. Banner to be designed to include Lost Children, First Aid and Information Point. Banner sorted. *The FACT van will now act as the event Control Centre.*



15. R Burry suggested that stewards wear high visibility hats as well as jackets to distinguish them from members of the public and others wearing high visibility clothing. M Purser had purchased a selection of high-vis hats, sashes and lanyards. MP has ordered high-vis hats with lights. Costings for high quality, waterproof torches for stewards to be sought. Check with SR re quote for torches. *Torches had very kindly been donated to the Committee by Wrights Tools. Neon hats and sashes had been purchased for stewards.*
16. All vehicles to be escorted whilst the road closure is in place.
17. Consider offering the Scouts and Cadets a stall at the switch-on. It seemed unlikely that the Watermans Club would host a stall in future, but would be asked, of course. R Burry to offer the Cadets a stall. Location cannot yet be determined. It is unclear whether the Town Bridge can be utilised at this stage. RB advised that the Scouts were interested in potentially running a tombola stall (Clinton Elkin to confirm). RB confirmed that the Scouts did not want a stall next year but would be interested in 2024.
18. With the majority of Broad Street unavailable this year, consideration was given to having more food stalls and attractions in the High Street towards Iceland. The Clerk to discuss this with L Hedges who provides the fun fair, which would need to be on a smaller scale in 2023, hopefully returning to normal in 2024. Confirmed with Lisa on 25.1.23. Lisa would carry out a site visit later on in the year to assess the options. The SAG could then be updated accordingly.
19. Facebook and social media communication must improve to raise awareness about the event and share information and potentially attract volunteers/stewards. R Phipps would set up a Facebook page. Live streaming the switch-on event was discussed and using a drone to get some good advertising footage (once the Broad Street works were completed in 2024) for marketing purposes. MF offered to assist with Facebook. RB to contact Clinton Elkin to share the page and add new admins. RB to advertise for volunteer stewards and contact all existing and former stewards via WhatsApp.
20. The Committee to decide on a suitable person to switch on the lights in 2023. The Committee were in favour of Father Christmas switching on the lights to support the Mayor, who had agreed to be in attendance. S Lemmon would contact Cllr K French who had taken over from Cllr Purser as Mayor of March for the remainder of the 2023/2024 mayoral term to check her availability for the switch-on. Attendance confirmed on 21.8.23. *The Committee discussed the fact that Friday would be the 25<sup>th</sup> switch-on event that Jon Whitehead had hosted/acted as MC. To honour this achievement and to thank him for his time (he had never accepted payment for this role) the committee voted in favour of Jon switching on the lights, although the Mayor would be present also. Clerk to update the Mayor accordingly.*
21. A Stimpson advised that there were issues with the lamppost nearest to Iceland and that adjacent to the former Georges public house. The timers do not work. It is

believed that these lampposts are owned by FDC and this needs to be investigated and remedied. SL emailed Garry Edwards at FDC on 31.5.23 to ascertain ownership of the lampposts. They do belong to FDC who will assess the operation of the solar timers and replace as necessary. Cost to be borne by March Town Council. SL chased Garry & Lisa at FDC for a response on 10.7.23. The Assets teams at FDC advised that they'd received an update from CTL who had attended on 20.6.23 and found all lights to be functioning. SL questioned this and advised A Simpson to check again when possible. Garry Edwards at FDC promised that if there were continuing issues, they would get CTL back out on site. On 2.8.23 G Edwards clarified that the contractor had fitted commando sockets to the top of the columns and solar timers into the base compartment for Christmas light use. We have permission from FDC to check again. *20.11.23 Alan advised the Clerk that one of the lights/timers still did not work outside Iceland. Alan to email the Clerk with the exact location and nature of the problem identified for forward transmission to FDC Asset Team to action.*

22. K Nightingale of 20Twenty Productions was invited to the meeting of 19.6.23 to discuss involvement in the switch-on event. Whilst it was decided that 20Twenty's Winter Wonderland could not be relocated from the library to the Skoulding Suite due to the venue being required by the committee as the switch-on control centre and base for stewards and first aid etcetera, 20Twenty would like to be involved at the beginning of the evening (6-7pm during G Tustin's warm-up) to sing some Christmas songs or production numbers. 13.9.23 KN confirmed that a group of youngsters would sing from 6-6:20pm on the Market Place prior to D Partington's slot. 20Twenty will share information about the event on their social media platforms. 20Twenty would perform on an area in front of the stage. KN advised on 19.9.23.
23. Consideration was given in future years to the possibility of combining the switch-on event with the Christmas Market. This would arguably enhance both events and reduce costs. The logistical viability could be explored more fully at a future date. At a meeting of March Town Council on 3.7.23 Cllr J French advised that this had been explored in previous years but was not considered safe or practicable because of the movement of the market traders. Additionally, shops would be unlikely to open on a Sunday to allow access to the timer switches. G Tustin noted that based on the results of a facebook "poll" respondents were mostly in favour of keeping the events separate in any event.
24. N Spencer advised that the "Purple Guide" be used to assist with the SAG/EMP. The Guide covers every element of an event to be considered and covers lost children as well as risk assessments. He will circulate a link to the free-to-download, web-friendly version. Link emailed on 20.6.23 and duly circulated.
25. *S Lemmon advised that Matt Wright from FDC would be coming to a meeting in the new year to discuss designs for the new lights in Broad Street. It would have to be convened at a different time to allow the designers to attend who do not live locally.*



26. *S Rayner (Chairman) will be stepping down from the committee this year. D Doe and G Tustin also advised that they would be retiring. R Burry may also step back a little after this year. G Tustin would remain as a volunteer steward however, as would D Doe, if physically able. The retiring members were thanked for their many years of support and hard work.*
27. SL emailed local newspapers to run an article advertising the switch-on event. S Cliss agreed to run an article. This will satisfy the SAG requirements re alerting residents to possible noise/nuisance/disturbance from the event.
28. The Stewards' pre-meeting was held on Thursday 16.11.23.
29. *The Clerk reported the sad news that Sue Beer's husband had passed away. A card would be sent on behalf of the committee.*
30. *M Field mooted an idea whereby the bottom of the tree could be "decorated" with biodegradable tags that people could write their Christmas messages wishes on. The tags and tags would be available in the Control Centre.*
31. *M Field also suggested that to counter the fact that the card machine would not be in operation by Friday, he could set up a Just Giving page and generate a QR code so that people could still donate at the switch-on event.*
32. *M Field and S Rayner would visit local businesses and premises on Thursday and Friday to remind people about the road closures. If cars were not removed before 5pm they would not be able to be moved until after 11pm. R Burry would urge people to remove their cars from High Street via a Facebook post.*
33. *What Three Words app to be used if emergency services required contacting.*
34. *The Clerk thanked D Fortuna and A Stimpson for erecting all the lights and decorating the tree.*

**Date of Next Meeting:**

Monday 22 January 2024 at 7.45pm in The Skoulding Suite at March Town Hall.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9:55pm.

Councillor K French ..... 4 December 2023  
 Mayor of March.