

MARCH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a Christmas Lights Working Party Meeting held in The Skoulding Suite at March Town Hall on Monday 23 January 2023 at 7.45pm

Present:	Chairman	Stuart Rayner	
	Councillors	M Purser	G Tustin
	Members	David Doe Dan Fortuna	Alan Stimpson
		Town Clerk	S Lemmon

Apologies:

Apologies were received from Councillors Donnelly, Elkin, Skoulding and R Burry

Minutes:

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 November 2022 were circulated and approved.

Matters Arising, “Wash-up” of the 2022 Event and Actions for the 2023 Switch-On:

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). The roads traditionally 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.
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. The Clerk confirmed that she had received the invoice from Ringways for installation and removal of the 2022 tree for payment.
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])
 - b) John Whitehead re MC duties [REDACTED]
 - c) Duncan Partington re entertainment [REDACTED]
 - d) Ridgeons re loan of steps (662000). The contact is Lynn McGhee (branch manager, lynn.mcghee@huwsgray.co.uk).
 - e) John Thomas re loan of lorry trailer (01945 450555).
 - 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 (if in situ) will be open until 10pm (Contracts: Isabel & Layna).
 - h) Order a Christmas tree from Elveden Farms. The tree this year was £3,636 (incl).
 - i) Ascertain whether Tesco and Lidl will allow bag-packing or collection.
 - 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.
 - k) Assistant Clerk to book St John Ambulance
 - l) Clerk to apply for CCC Street Lighting License.
 - 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).
5. March Town Council has committed £27,500 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.
 7. All cross-street wires and wall bolts were tested 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 9 November 2022 for Broad Street [and also West End Park].

Discussion 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.
2. SAG paperwork should be completed at the earliest opportunity *see 3 post
3. MP would set about completing the application for the Licence to Occupy the Market Place soonest. Martin Fields had previously volunteered to take on the role of Event

Manager and complete SAG paperwork going forward. MP would contact M Field urgently to ask whether he is still happy to take this on.

4. Rachel Burry and Stuart Rayner would remain in the joint roles of Head Steward.
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.
6. A Christmas Shop Window competition will be arranged in due course.
7. Decision to be made regarding the continuance of the “Best Decorated House” competition.
8. It was agreed that the grotto should not be re-instated for 2023.
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.
10. Refreshments to be discussed in due course.
11. Sponsorship opportunities should be explored for 2023. D Fortuna advised that the Bretts Transport had indicated that they wished to support us this year. D Fortuna would enquire whether they would be happy to sponsor the tree.
12. M Purser is researching the purchase of card reader machines for fund-raising purposes.
13. It is hoped that the Air Cadets would be able to support the bag pack, collections and possible stewarding duties at the switch-on once again in 2023.
14. The Clerk to invite Karen Beckwith of March Rotary Club to the February meeting to discuss her idea for a “Festival of Light”
15. 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.
16. 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.

17. All vehicles to be escorted whilst the road closure is in place. Conversation to be had with the Fire Service in this matter, as well as a few other local businesses who had failed to observe the closure.
18. 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.
19. 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, by definition, need to be on a smaller scale in 2023, hopefully returning to normal in 2024.
20. Facebook and social media communication must improve to raise awareness about the event and share information and potentially attract volunteers/stewards.
21. The Committee to decide on a suitable person to switch on the lights in 2023.
22. The Clerk thanked the Committee for all of their hard work in challenging circumstances. All the lights had now been removed and packed away.

Dates of Next Meeting:

Monday 20 February 2023 at 7.45pm in The Skoulding Suite at March Town Hall.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9:00pm.

Councillor K French 6 February 2022.
Mayor of March.