

MARCH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a Christmas Lights Working Party Meeting held in The Skoulding Suite at March Town Hall on Monday 26 September 2022 at 7.45pm

Present:	Chairman (acting)	Clive Lemmon
	Councillors	SR Court
	Members	David Doe Alan Stimpson Dan Fortuna Sue Beer Andy Murray (for Ryan Kidger) Rachel Burry Rob Phipps
	Town Clerk Elect	SL Lemmon

Apologies:

Apologies were received from R Skoulding, R White, A Donnelly, C Elkin, G Tustin, M Purser, Ryan Kidger.

Minutes:

The minutes of the meeting held on 18th July 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.*
3. The following interested parties were notified of the above date on 23rd February 2022. *S Lemmon will contact all interested parties at the end of October to re-confirm availability.*
 - a) Lisa Hedges re fair rides (████████).
 - b) John Whitehead re MC duties (████████).
 - c) Duncan Partington re entertainment (████████). *S Lemmon to ask Duncan to submit his invoice so he can be paid in the November cheque. 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 (████████).

- 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. Removed on Monday 9th January 2023. S Lemmon to re-confirm with Richard Hircock of Ringways.*
 - i) Ascertain whether Sainsbury's and Tesco's will allow bag-packing or collection:
 - a. No response yet received from Sainsbury's. Further letter sent on 18th May 2022. Still no response received. *S Lemmon to contact one more time for a response either way, but it was fair to assume at this stage that Sainsburys did not wish to support/participate in a bag-pack.*
 - b. In a response from Tesco (Kelly Riddell) dated 8th March 2022, we have provisionally been booked in for collection dates on 19th and 20th November 2022 and collection times of 10am to 4pm. 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. *S Lemmon to arrange a rota for the collections at the next meeting of the Committee on 17th October.*
 - 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. Quote requested on 23rd February 2022. Quote received on 25th March 2022 (accepted 29th 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 26th September 2022. The cost for the essential replacement festive timer sockets etc is £285.90 + VAT. Works to commence as soon as possible.*
 - k) *St John Ambulance booked and confirmed by the Assistant Town Clerk in September 2022.*
 - l) Decide upon a suitable person to switch on the lights. Although this was previously discussed in detail, a final decision will be made at the *October* meeting. [REDACTED]
 - m) Apply for CCC Street Lighting License. Application approved on 21st March 2022.
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. Discussions need to be held regarding the best way to proceed in 2022 since Clinton and Dean Elkin have both stated that they no longer wish to assist with the erection and dismantling duties.

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.*
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.*
3. 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”).
4. It was confirmed that Rachel Burry and Stuart Rayner would remain in the joint roles of Head Steward.
5. 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.*
6. 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.*
7. Robert Skoulding again agreed to sponsor the “Best Decorated House” competition.
8. 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.
9. 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. A Stimpson had arranged to commence erection of the lights on Sunday 2nd October but this will be pushed back to 9th October as Tony Demetrious is not now available on Sunday 2nd. An invoice for the repair work had been received in the sum of £11,303.50 & VAT for payment on 3rd October.

10. 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.
11. Refreshments will be discussed in due course. *M Purser is leading on this and is expected to update the Committee at the next meeting.*
12. 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.*
13. 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.*
14. At the February 2022 meeting Robert Skoulding stated that, although he would remain as a Committee member, he would be stepping down from the Chairman's role [REDACTED]. He requested that a replacement be found and elected at the next meeting. He was thanked for all his past efforts. At the March 2022 meeting, Stuart Rayner was duly appointed as the new Chairman.
15. Mark Purser has invited Nigel Spencer to join the Committee. Although busy at the present time, he is likely to be able to join in 2023. (*To be confirmed in light of his many other commitments and the decision to host another MAFF event in 2023.*)
16. Further discussions ensued regarding the positioning of barriers within town on the night of the actual "switch-on".
17. Having previously contacted Clinton Elkin, Peter Miles from Atkins spoke to the Clerk on 29th April 2022 to discuss the Broad Street refurbishment plans. Very little information was gained since no final decisions have yet been taken on the positioning or height of replacement street lights. *However, if the proposals are implemented in Broad Street it is possible that there may be no Christmas lights in Broad Street in 2023 since the lampposts will have been removed for the duration of the Highways works.*
18. *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.*
19. *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.*
20. *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.*

21. As C Lemmon would be retiring shortly and the meeting was to be his last as Secretary, those present thanked Clive for his support and guidance over a period of many years and wished him a very happy retirement.

Dates of Next Meetings:

Monday 17th October 2022 at 7.45pm in The Skoulding Suite at March Town Hall and Monday 21st November at 7.45pm, same location.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8:30pm.

Councillor K French 3rd October 2022.
Mayor of March.