

MARCH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a Christmas Lights Working Party Meeting held in The Skoulding Suite at March Town Hall on Monday 18 November 2024 at 7.45pm

Present:	Chairman	M Field
Councillors	M Purser S Court	G Christy
Members	A Stimpson R Kidger T Ranger	D Fortuna R Burry
	Town Clerk	S Lemmon

Apologies:

None.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 October 2024 were circulated and approved and were signed by the Mayor at the main meeting of March Town Council on 4 November 2024.

Committee Administration

The current Chair, Stuart Rayner confirmed his intention to retire as Chairman of the Committee (and joint chief steward). He would no longer attend meetings but would remain involved in the event on the night with setting-up and stewarding etc.

G Christy proposed M Field as the new Chairman. This was seconded by A Stimpson and carried by a vote.

M Purser nominated G Christy to remain as Treasurer to the committee. This was seconded by M Field and carried by a vote of committee members.

The Clerk would remain as Secretary to the committee.

The committee thanked S Rayner for his many years of dedication, hard-work and involvement with the Christmas Lights.

M Field to contact R Burry to check whether she would remain as chief steward, either individually or to share the role.

Switch-on Event 2024

“Switch-on” date confirmed as Friday 29 November 2024.

TRRO / Road Closure / Traffic Management

The Clerk had instructed C Brown Support Services to apply for the TRRO and complete necessary road closure application forms for submission to Cambridgeshire County Council (M Field to be named as 24-hour event emergency contact). Roads traditionally remain closed until 23:00.

C Brown has successfully supported the MAFF event for the past two years, and, as such, would provide the necessary expertise and reliability required for this year's event.

Provisional plans and application received from C Brown on 25.1.24. The Clerk will touch base with C Brown w/c 19.8.24 to see how matters are progressing vis-à-vis the TRRO.

Timings of the closure discussed. Clerk to investigate whether Bevills Place could be closed. No – it is residential. It has never been closed off for switch-on. There is no need for it to be closed as the event will be re-located predominantly to Broad Street as per every other year barring 2023. Residents will have to be escorted in and out as per any other year, and most are respectful of the switch-on event. There will always be some that abuse/disrespect the event and restrictions in place, sadly. **Following MF/Lisa's request on 21.10.24 to close roads at 16:00 instead of 17:00, the Clerk emailed C Brown on 22.10.24 to enquire whether this was possible. CB confirmed on 28.10 that he had contacted CCC could re-issue the closure with the new times and he can also close the Market Place on Thursday evening. C Brown signs already erected in town. FDC signage also on the Market Place advising closure from 00:01 29.11.24 – 1.12.24.**

Lighting / Permissions / Licenses / Compliance / Legal

1. Clerk to apply for CCC Street Lighting License. Emailed CCC on 17.1.24 explaining current situation in Broad Street and with the new lights. It is hoped that there would be joined-up working and a common-sense approach adopted in view of the project. Reply received on 24.1.24. Comms with Matt (FDC) and Shafir (CCC) on 30.1.24. Clerk emailed Matt & Shafir for updates again on 8.5.24. Matt out of office until 17.5.24. Response from Shafi on 10.5.24 (with new timelines of column installation, energising thereof and accrual by Balfour Beatty and ultimately the lights installation, testing, commissioning and delivery to FDC). Clerk responded to Shafi with information required on 15.5.24. Meeting arranged with Clerk, M Wright, Phil Hughes and Shafi 28.8.24. Clerk suitably reassured that everything would fall into place for the switch-on with regarding to the licensing and new lights etc. Clerk emailed Shafi et al a copy of the Town Council's Liability Insurance Certificate and the Unmetered Power Supply Certificate for 2024 on 2 September 2024. The new lights would be delivered direct to Octavious mid-late October. Octavious would install and test. Lighting would remain in situ with no removal of lighting columns, although after testing, the free-standing items would be removed to be re-installed nearer to the switch-on date. FDC suggested Dan and Alan's team be involved in the installation to oversee and have a better understanding for how everything works etc going forward. FDC is kindly allowing the use of their storage containers at The Base for the Christmas Lights since our current arrangements for storage will be inadequate for all the new lights/features. Update from Shafi received by Clerk on 23.9.24. Atkins is preparing the attachment licence application which the Clerk with print and complete to submit to CCC. Balfour Beatty are unable to connect the DNO connections to the new feeder pillars in Broad Street which supply power to the GIFAS units etc, as they are only authorised to make connection to breakers up to 25

amps each (the current breakers are 100 amp each). To resolve this, UKPN has been contacted. If a new connection cannot be achieved in time, a hybrid power supply generator will be provided through Octavius. Confusion as to management of the new connections. Awaiting further update from Shafi. M Wright confirmed on 25.9.24 to Cllr J French that the cost of the generator [if required] would come out of the Broad Street underspend. J French had confirmed that the generator had been delivered and was on stand-by if required. Clerk had still not received an application form for street light attachments from Shafi (this was to be done by e/o September). Clerk emailed Shafi on 22.10 demanding his urgent attention. Call from Shafi to Clerk on 23.10 and a follow-up email for audit trail purposes was promised by noon on 24.10. No email received so Clerk chased Shafi again on 28.10.24 and 4.11.24 for outstanding documentation/application. Response received on 4.11.24. No lights application will be completed for the new lights, but Clerk explained that there were other lights erected in town (all aware) and these still needed authorisation as well as electrical sign-off from Balfour Beatty. Shafi advised Clerk to complete a Street Lighting Attachment application form ASAP. Submitted on 5.11.24. Clerk met with Balfour Beatty contractors on 6.11.24. As soon as we have permission for the existing lights, they will book a return appointment. G39 and NRSWA requirements discussed. Clerk had Teams meeting with Street Lighting and Shafi on 18.11. Clerk has requested Balfour Beatty to attend urgently so the attachments application can be approved. Clerk to set up meeting with BB and Street Lighting to discuss how to manage the application process going forward. Given the requirement for G39 qualifications and NRSWA, if we didn't use contractors, BB would have to be in attendance on every occasion the lights are erected/taken down to supervise the process. BB could also provide the necessary Traffic Management element of the erection/removal process. BB is one of CCC's approved contractors. Potential for Dan to undertake the necessary qualifications/accreditations. All options will have significant budgetary consequences, to be discussed at a future meeting.

2. Clerk to contact 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.
Clerk emailed Brian Crabbe on 17.1.24. Brian has diarised to quote later in the year as it was too early to process on their system. However, he highlighted the fact that the regeneration project would not be able to be used until it had been adopted by CCC. Clerk escalated this urgent issue with Matt Wright at FDC and Shafi at CCC. Clerk emailed Brian on 15.5 to update him on Shafi's response of 10.5.24. Can they now quote for supervision? Clerk to chase. Clerk spoke with M Wright on 1.7.24 and was reassured that whilst Shafi is currently away in Pakistan on account of a family bereavement, everything is in hand and Balfour Beatty will supervise electrical works. Clerk will continue to press for updates/progress. Clerk spoke with Matt Wright on 16.7.24; he has a meeting with Shafi on 16.7.24 as he is now back from Pakistan. He will set up a meeting to include the Clerk. See above. 5.11.24 Clerk contacted Balfour Beatty advising they will visit on 6.11.24 to sign off the lights that have been erected by Dan and Alan. See 1 (above).
3. Clerk contacted UK Power Networks on 17.1.24 regarding the unmetered supply certificate and advised the dates of the switch-on, and off, and reduced illumination times as per 2023 (4:00-10:30).
(As members will recall, the UMS tariff increased by almost 50% from 1 September 2023).

Clerk chased Rob Smith at E-On on 16.1.24 for the UMS bill. He confirmed this would not be received until March.

2024 certificate received and copy forwarded to the energy supplier. Invoice received on 11.3.24 for payment on 18.3.24. Clerk emailed on 22.10 a reminder of all dates and timings. Confirmation received from UMSO (UK Power Networks) on 25.10.

4. All cross-street wires and wall bolts were tested during 2022. Tests are due bi-annually, so they are required to be tested in 2024 by Glomac. Clerk contacted Peter at Glomac by email on 17.1.24. Tel con with Peter on 12.3. Last tested on Sunday 8 August 2022. TDServices provided the cherry picker, A Stimpson attended along with 2 Glomac employees who tested all 25 brackets in Broad Street and High Street. Peter advised these really need doing every year. Clerk to get availability for A Stimpson and D Fortuna (and cherry picker) for Sundays in August and September 2024 to attend with Glomac once again. Clerk emailed A Stimpson and D Fortuna for availability on 19.3.24 and 29.4.24. Both have confirmed availability, Clerk to update Glomac. Clerk emailed Peter (Glomac) 30.4.24. Visit/inspection arranged for Sunday 15 September 2024 at 06:00 with Alan, Dan and cherry picker. Glomac have quoted £1,854.00 (incl.) for this. Unfortunately, Glomac failed to turn up to meet Alan and Dan on 15.9.24. The Clerk spoke with Glomac on 16.9.24 and they apologised for this failure. A new appointment is to be arranged, hopefully on 13 October at 6am to coincide with the start of the lights erection process. Glomac to confirm new date with Clerk w/c 23.9.24. Clerk called Peter Knight on 1.10.24. He confirmed appointment at 06:00 on 13.10.24, meeting on the Market Place. Telephone confirmation 9.10.24. 14.10.24, A Simpson advised that 2 wall bolts had failed (Costa and BetFred). AS would make the new plates and Glomac would re-test these on Sunday 25.10.24. [All have now passed] Invoice received for 31,854.00 (incl) to be paid on 5.11.24.
5. Clerk confirmed with FDC (Layna & Isabel) on 17.1.24 that the Market Place car park will be closed all day on 29.11.24 and that the [temporary] toilets in town will be open until 22:00.
6. PAT testing; The Clerk raised the issue of PAT-testing the Christmas lights this year. Even though it was no longer a *strict legal* requirement, it was considered good practise. A Simpson advised that Darren Biggs can assist/quote for this and it would be most practical to carry out the testing in tranches, as and when the lights are put up. It was also recommended that, for convenience, all lights are tested at the same time to monitor more easily. Irrespective of PAT testing, a physical inspection of the lights for wear and tear was always carried out at the time of erection and this is covered in the Method Statement (which forms part of the Christmas Lights Risk Assessment). The associated additional costs would have to be borne through additional fund-raising. A Simpson confirmed on 22.7.24 that he will contact D Biggs to get a quote. Quote received on 24.7.24. Accepted. A Stimpson to liaise directly with D Biggs to organise the dates and times to carry out the testing. A Stimpson advised there were approximately 100 units that would need testing this year, thereby allowing us to have a better idea of the total cost of the testing (roughly £400 (incl) per annum based solely on the lights we have already, but excluding all the new lights for Broad Street of course). The Clerk received an email from a legal adviser at SLCC on 30.7.24 recommending strongly that, as owner and storer of the towns Christmas lights, PAT testing be carried out annually as a safety precaution, but to refer the matter to our Insurer for further guidance. The Clerk contacted Zurich on 31.7.24. They [Zurich] were reluctant to “give advice” but confirmed that they would expect PAT testing to be carried out annually. As such, this additional cost will have to be met by the

Council every year, and it must be borne in mind that there will be many extra lights for Broad Street that will need testing going forward which will significantly increase future costs. Alan to arrange. Clerk emailed a reminder on 1.10.24. PAT testing now complete. **Awaiting invoice.**

Christmas Tree & Decorations

1. Clerk to order a Christmas tree from Elveden Farms. The tree last year was £3,636 (inclusive of VAT and delivery).

Last year's wonky tree had initially generated much toxicity on social media. However, our little tree became world-famous and put March on the map and gave the town a much-needed boost economically.

Could we source a wonky/imperfect tree again this year which would become a talking-point/local attraction?

Elveden emailed for a quote on 17.1.24. Quote received on 13.2.24 - 10% discount this year on last year's price which equates to £2,700.00 & VAT (£540.00) = £3,240.00.

Accepted on 14.2.24. As per conversation with Dan, Clerk emailed Elveden on 7.5.24 to request delivery of tree on Monday 18.11.24 between 9-10am. No response yet. Clerk to chase again.

Clerk confirmed with M Wright at FDC on 1.7.24 that the sizing of the new tree pit in Broad Street should be the same size as the existing tree pit on the Market Place. The Clerk advised M Wright on 15.7.24 that the girth measurement quoted was incorrect and advised the correct dimensions so that work could commence on installing the new pit. Clerk & Matt Wright had follow-up conversation on 16.7.24 to confirm the new dimensions.

*Could the Clerk also contact Matt Wright to confirm that the new tree pit will have sockets for the Christmas Lights? The Clerk emailed M Wright on 19.8.24. The Clerk has a meeting arranged with M Wright on 28.8.24 via Teams also with Shafi from CCC in order to iron outstanding issues. There will be sockets for the tree pit.

A Stimpson contacted the Clerk on 9.10.24 to confirm that the tree would definitely be located in Broad Street as the tree lights need to have a lot of the wiring cut away. Clerk advised by AS that the tree pit was the wrong size (only 200 mm) contrary to instructions to Matt and Shafi in July. Matt confirmed on 17.10.24 that this was an error on CCC's part and the new tree pit had been ordered. However, whilst we had wanted a 450mm girth, the biggest size available was 400mm.

Additionally, a separate power socket to power the tree lights would be installed by Octavius, a simple metal flap unlocked by a key.

Lights will be put up by Octavius w/c 11 November. Dan is unavailable this week but Octavius cannot wait until w/c 18.11 to start the erection/testing process as this leaves too little time to rectify any issues. Matt advised Dan to pop to the Octavius offices on 18.11 when he is in town for delivery of the Christmas Tree. Tree delivered today, it is wonky and the reception is generally positive. Clerk spoke with Matt Wright on 14.11.24 – we will need TM as well as a road closure in future for when the tree is delivered. This year, Octavius will step in and provide TM support and signage.

R Burry advised she had been contacted by the Chair of the Conservative Club enquiring whether their 2 lights would be put up. This would be done (if possible), but could not be guaranteed.

Final lights to be installed on Sunday. The lighting audit still needed to be completed.

Clerk to try to source some coloured tags for the tree, together with some permanent marker pens.

2. D Fortuna (Doctor Tree) had provided the Committee with a quote for the installation and removal of the Christmas Tree for 2024 once again. The quotation is £600 plus VAT (as per 2023/4). The Clerk confirmed that she had now received the invoice from D Fortuna for installation and removal of the 2023 tree for payment. This was paid on 5.2.24.
3. D Fortuna would slice the trunk of the famous 2023 tree with a view to selling “a slice of local history” at the Christmas Market and potentially from the FACT depot. Some clocks had been made and these would be available for purchase from the FACT bus on switch-on night. Clerk emailed Chairman and G Christy on 8.10.24 go encourage them to book a stall for the Christmas Market to maximise fund-raising opportunities. A stall at the Christmas Market had been booked and clocks and cake stands had been made.
4. Works/improvements to Broad Street would not be completed until Autumn 2024. The Christmas tree will be located in Broad Street this year. There will be new street lighting in town upon completion (funded by FDC). FDC representatives attended a meeting of March Town Council in January 2024 to present Atkins’ designs for the Christmas lights and decorations in Broad Street. Town Councillors resolved for Atkins to deliver the festive lights package (the lights will need to be ordered by mid-February for October delivery and installation). The new lighting will all be attached to County Council infrastructure with all new, digital timer switches. Clerk spoke to Matt Wright (FDC) on 18.6.24 to discuss the progress of Broad Street and the lighting issues (street lamps, application to CCC for permission and details of the new lights delivery) and would be speaking to Matt again this week. Owing to the new road layout, there will no longer be any catenary lights. Many of our lights will be not be fit-for-purpose going forward and these can be re-purposed, sold or gifted, as appropriate (M Field, G Christy and D Fortuna to prepare an inventory of our light stock and identify all those that cannot be used in future). The best time to do this would be immediately prior to putting up the lights in October. R Burry suggested that we could donate some lighting to Outwell and Upwell.
5. Clerk to discuss with FDC/Atkins substitution of feature gnomes/gonks with snowmen if possible and source a copy of the concept design board to share with committee members. Issue of vandalism of proposed ground-based festive features raised. Clerk emailed /spoke with M Wright (FDC) on 23.2.24. 31.1.24 Teams meeting between Christmas Lights Council Sub-Committee (J French, K French, N Spencer [apologies], S Lemmon and FDC and two Atkins representatives to discuss Christmas Lights package.
6. Discussion to be had as to whether the lighting traditionally placed on the shops in Broad Street would be used going forward. These are arguably not be in keeping with the aesthetic of the new lights and may well detract from them. Additionally, it would be far easier going forward not to erect the shop lighting so as to avoid issues with accessing the shops and unpredictable timer switches in the future. It was agreed that the Train and Boat set pieces designed for the bridge would continue to be used, however. D Fortuna, G Christy and Chairman to conduct an audit of the existing decorations. Consider an alternative setting for the Nativity, historically located on the Collingwoods building. The

Chair would speak to Tesco Express about siting the Nativity Scene on its roof. M Field had been recommended by a member of staff that they would need to contact Head Office. Alternatively, it could be useful to identify and liaise directly with the landlord. The Tesco store has now closed so M Field will liaise with the management of Budgens once it opens. **M Field advised that Budgens wished to see a picture of the nativity scene for possible installation on their roof, but A Stimpson advised the building was not suited to installation.**

7. **Email from Matt at FDC on 22.10 with dates for FDC to accompany Octavius erecting the new lights and attaching a copy of the Service Level Agreement between FDC and MTC re the handover of the lights and respective responsibilities re insurance, storage, maintenance etc. GC and MF confirmed they were happy with the agreement. Signed SLA emailed to Matt by Clerk on 30.10.24**

SAG / Event Management Plan / Health & Safety

1. SAG paperwork to be completed at the earliest opportunity (M Field). The SAG team had been in touch already and a meeting was scheduled for **17 October**. It was raised that SAG had *suggested* hiring security for the event. Chairman to obtain quotes if this was an *essential* requirement. Chairman to update the group on SAG's recommendations and seek quotes. M Field is finalising the report, but otherwise, no further updates. M Field would liaise with G Christy re security tender documentation.

*NB to Clerk to send completed copy of SAG to SJA once complete.

M Field had circulated the draft SAG to committee for comments prior to sending to the SAG after the 16.9.24 meeting. Points arising from the SAG meeting;

- Fire management; We would need a loudhailer (both GC and MP have one.)
- Discussion as to whether Grays Lane would be used as emergency access (as has been the case in previous years)
- All fire extinguishers to be checked
- Fire steward training; MF has identified a company that can provide training at £50pp (minimum 10 attendees) – need to therefore open up this training opportunity to other committees/organisations as we do not need/nor can afford to have 10 stewards attending. **This would be arranged for next year.**
- The event is now classified as a Tier 3 event
- SAG requires a registered nurse or qualified paramedic in attendance (see point 4 (below)). We have 4 first aiders attending. The Clerk will contact SJA tomorrow to confirm our requirements. **Clerk emailed SJA on 22.10. SJA advised there is a shortage of paramedics and registered nurses at this time of year. They will need to check availability and confirm. (Additional costs would be £41.60/hr for a nurse and £70.21/hr for a paramedic). Chased again on 5.11.24. Advised on 6.11 that they still need to check availability. Quote for 4 first aiders and a paramedic received by Clerk on 11.11.24 and signed copy returned.**
- Private security to be provided. **M Field had not received a response from the SIA. John Dowler to be contacted for a quote based on his recommendations for event security.**
- Unclear as to whether there will be a police presence? **To enquire...**
- FDC will empty all bins before the event, stewards to be mindful of bins becoming full. FDC to potentially supplier grabbers and bags? **M Field to ask for grabbers and sacks.**
- Layna had advised that the toilets might get blocked and, if so, could we place “out-of-order” signs on them? Committee suggested that FDC be made to ensure toilets were in proper working order for the switch-on event to minimise this possibility. Public toilets

- have to be** provided and it is **not** MTC's responsibility to provide a back-up plan or hire additional porta-loos. **M Field to contact SAG to advise FDC will need to check their toilets on 29.11.24. It is not the responsibility of MTC to deal with the toilets or fund a back-up plan.**
2. M Purser to complete the application for the Licence to Occupy the Market Place. M Purser will chase this week and update the Clerk prior to the next meeting. Amy Markillie has requested additional information. Clerk to supply copy of our Insurance Certificate. Clerk emailed insurance certificate to MP on 18.6.24. 2.7.24 M Purser confirmed that all documents had been submitted to FDC on 28.6.24. No response had been received from FDC. MP has diarised to chase on 19.7.24. Clerk received email from FDC Land Team on 19.7.24 to advise that issue of notice would be deferred until after the SAG meeting. Clerk challenged this and FDC confirmed a "miscommunication". The Clerk was relatively satisfied that permission would be forthcoming and our event would not be in jeopardy.
 3. The Clerk received an email from the Engineering Dept at FDC on 26.7.24. They [the FDC Assets and Projects Team] will also require us to apply for permits for our lighting contractors/volunteers to use the Market Place when accessing the County Council-owned streetlights. The Clerk contacted G Edwards on 29.7.24 to clarify the position and discuss the application process and logistical issues. The Clerk will update the Assets Team w/c 16.9.24 since Dan and Alan had confirmed that they will start erecting lighting on 13.10.24. Clerk emailed the Assets team on 18.9.24 advising that the lights team would start installing the lights on Sunday 13 October for 6 weekends potentially. Following discussions with the team, 13 and 20 were requested, with 5 and 12 January for the taking-down process. The Market Place had an event planned for 27 October. Cherry Picker licence and the MTC Christmas Lights Installation Risk Assessment and Method Statement were emailed to FDC on 30.9.24. FDC requiring road closures for these dates. Clerk explained this had never been done and was not necessary ***.
 4. Assistant Clerk requested St John Ambulance attendance on 17.1.24. Quote received on 2.8.24. Duly signed and scanned to SJA on 5.8.24. 4 first aiders will attend, but not in an ambulance. They will require a room or gazebo with table and chairs for them to use as a base for treatment. They can use the Skoulding Suite or the FACT bus. They also need a copy of the SAG/risk assessment as soon as possible. Quote received for £228.80 + VAT on 1.8.24 and accepted by the Clerk. Clerk to contact SJA (as above). Clerk to send final copy of the SAG to SJA also.
 5. Clerk to request local press advertise the event (which would also satisfy SAG requirement to notify residents of possible noise/nuisance etc)
 6. What Three Words app to be used once again in the event of emergencies on the night.
 7. The wristbands for lost children would continue and this was better advertised in 2023 (in part due to the 6pm "warm-up" by G Tustin). A banner had been purchased in 2023 advertising the location of Lost Children, First Aid and Information Point. **R Burry to ask G Tustin if he has wristbands.**
 8. The information point (FACT bus) would be located on the Market Place as per the 2023 event. M Field advised this will now be relocated to Broad Street. **It will be located near the Christmas Tree and people could get the labels from the FACT van to hang on the tree.**

9. R Burry enquired as to whether it was possible to attend fire marshal training. G Christy to make enquiries with the fire service. Chairman to contact to SAG to ask whether this training was *essential* for stewards. SAG confirmed not essential, stewards to clear the area and call the fire brigade in the event of a fire. EMP to be amended accordingly [done]. M Field had made further enquiries about fire marshal training. He will update stewards at the November meeting. **Will arrange for next year as per 1. (above).**
10. Those erecting the lights again in 2024 are to review and sign a revised Method Statement and Risk Assessment (to be circulated shortly). Both documents emailed to M Field and G Christy on 23.1.24 for approval. Comments received from G Christy. Chairman to confirm his approval. Further reminder sent on 15 May and 2.7.24. M Field confirmed his approval on 15.7.24 and the Clerk circulated the documents to D Fortuna and A Simpson for comments. A Simpson confirmed approval on 22.7.24. DF confirmed approval on 5.8.24. The Clerk had issued those erecting the lights with the Risk Assessments and Method Statement to read and sign. All were duly signed and returned to the Clerk on 19.8.24.

Finance / Fund-Raising / Collections / Sponsorship

1. March Town Council has committed £20,000 in its 2024/2025 budget for Christmas-related expenditure, representing a reduction of £7,500 p.a. More emphasis must be placed on fund-raising activities going forward.

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. (Dan's received by Clerk on 5.2.24). Alan and Nigel's forms handed to Clerk on 18.3.24. The final payout to helpers for 2023 (which included use of the cherry picker) was £6,000 - given that there were no lights in Broad Street etc due to the regeneration works. Octavius' specialist contractor will be erecting the new lights in Broad Street in 2024.

2. Kelly Riddell at Tesco (UK5657@tesco.com) confirmed that the weekend of Saturday 16 and Sunday 17 November was available for a collection at the Hostmoor store. **On 16.11, £552 cash was collected and £26 via the card reader. On 17.11 a total of £241 was collected in cash and £10 in card payments. A Just Giving page has raised over £270.00 and a £250 was received from UK Tow Bars for £250 during the meeting. This equates to £1,350 in fundraising for 2024 (Tesco collection and Just Giving combined) compared to 2023 Tesco collection and sponsorship of £638 + £2,876 = £3,514.**
4. G Christy to liaise with Lidl re the possibility of a collection/bag pack. Sainsbury had failed to respond to any requests in 2023 once again. G Christy confirmed that Lidl's were happy to support and would ask the army cadets whether they can attend. R Burry confirmed that the army cadets were happy to assist with a Lidl's collection. Committee discussed that November would be optimum month for a collection (avoiding Remembrance and the Tesco collection, of course!). G Christy to contact Rachel to chase for progress in relation to the Lidl's collection. As the army cadets need 6 weeks+ for paperwork, it is now too late to have them assist with a Lidl's bag-pack this year. The army cadets will be helping out on switch-on night, however and we must ensure that a date for a Lidl's collection is identified in good time for 2025.

5. G Christy to purchase new card readers now that the Friends of March Christmas Lights bank account had been set up and Money Laundering Policy and Procedure for Identifying Donors had been drafted. Last year the bank decided at the eleventh hour that it required a Power of Attorney and this did not give the committee enough time to get the application process and authorised in time for the switch-on event. G Christy confirmed a new card reader had been ordered from Lloyds Bank. The reader has not yet been received. G Christy had chased again on 16.9.24 – there was a problem with paperwork! GC still having issues with the bank getting this sorted. **Card reader has arrived. Invoice for £49 received and this will be paid for by GC and MTC will reimburse.**
6. Sponsorship opportunities should be explored for 2024. G Christy to lead, with all committee members tasked with exploring any opportunities for funding. G Christy had identified a number of potential sponsors. It is going to be crucial to obtain sufficient sponsorship to cover the costs of the 2024 event. G Christy has approached Octavius and is waiting to hear back. Nothing from Octavius so far.
7. To boost fund-raising activities, a Just Giving page could be set up again this year and QR codes generated (M Field). G Christy to send M Field the bank account details. Has this been done?
8. It is hoped that the Air Cadets would be able to support with the Tesco collection and stewarding duties at the switch-on once again in 2024. R Kidger confirmed this on 19.8.24. The air cadets will be there all day on Saturday 17 November.
9. R Burry to liaise with Kelly Summersell to enquire whether the Army Cadets would be able to help this year. R Burry advised that Kelly has now moved on, but she has a new contact for the March branch (Tracy Ranger) and will forward to the Chairman to progress. Chair will call again this week. Tracy Ranger had advised R Burry that they were happy to help at the switch-on event.

Stewards

1. Steward recruitment continues to be a priority for the event. More stewards must be sourced and available to help on the night to allow the event to run smoothly and safely. Facebook recruitment campaign to commence in the late Spring. M Field has taken over Facebook. Without additional stewards the switch-on event **cannot** happen. R Burry advised that there had been contact via Facebook from a potential committee member/steward. See “Communications / Advertising / Social Media” (below). A Murray suggested that R Phipps contact Geoff Walters (Veterans Breakfast Hub). He may be able to provide some stewards.
2. All stewards will now be DBS checked. This process had commenced in 2023 and we would need to resume the process for new stewards for 2024 (R Burry). RB is conducting the necessary checks, although some are taking longer to process than others. **There are 5 checks we are still waiting on.**
3. Stewards to wear high visibility clothing – vests, hats, sashes and lanyards. Waterproof torches had kindly been donated by Wrights Tools in 2023. The illuminated beany hats had worked very well, allowing stewards to be easily identified. M Purser to order hats.

Hats ordered. MP to count how many torches and beanies etc we have as we potentially have 18 stewards this year. Agreed that barriers would be manned from 17:30 as the event warm-up starts at 18:00.

4. S Rayner advised that the trollies needed repairing and he would arrange this. Chair to chase. M Field had arranged with D Fortuna on 15.7.24 to check the storeroom and take the damaged trollies to S Rayner for repair.
5. The Committee now have approximately 20 radios. These will be tested for efficacy in noisy locations in due course and must all be in full working order prior to the 2024 event. M Purser to explore new ear-piece options following reports of discomfort. New 'D' ear-pieces ordered.
6. Skoulding Suite steward refreshments; It was considered that tea and coffee would be enough this year.
7. Email from R Skoulding received on 28 August asking if stewards were still required for the switch-on event, as there were 3-4 Estafest marshals who would be happy to volunteer. Clerk and M Field had responded. Three Estafest committee members have agreed to steward.
8. Stewards Briefing – Wednesday 27 November 2024, 20:00 at FACT offices.
9. R Burry has drafted the Stewards Rota with an additional 5:30 slot.
10. Tracy Rayner confirmed the Army Cadets would arrive at 5:00. R Kidger advised the Air Cadets would arrive at 6:45.

Entertainment / Fairground / Catering / Refreshments

1. Clerk contacted Lisa Hedges re fair rides and food stalls (██████████) on 17.1.24 and confirmed the date of the 2024 switch-on. M Field has arranged to meet Lisa in March on 24.9.24 Lisa has now visited and will have stalls/attractions in both Broad Street and High Street. She had asked whether roads could be closed at the earlier time of 16:00 instead of 17:00. Clerk will contact the traffic management company, although it is likely that it is now too late to request a change.
2. John Whitehead (██████████) confirmed by email on 17.1.24 that he will be available for MC duties at the event once again this year. Clerk emailed John on 23.10 to confirm arrangements for switch-on. No response yet. Emailed again on 5.11.24. 19.11.24 M Field has spoken to John and his attendance is confirmed.
3. Duncan Partington (██████████). Duncan and his band are regrettably retiring after 11 years of entertaining at the event. Clerk to approach Tom Harlock regarding availability. Emailed on 23.1.24. Quote received on 23.1.24. Decision to be taken by committee to authorise acceptance of the quote which is considerably over-budget on previous year's entertainment expenditure. Clerk had confirmed booking with Tom 27.2.24 (band only, not the sound and light crew). 18.11.24 Clerk confirmed timings with Tom.

4. K Nightingale of 20Twenty Productions to be contacted regarding its involvement in the event as per 2023 (Chairman to liaise). Chair had invited K Nightingale to the meeting on 17.6.24 but she did not attend. M Field had struggled to arrange a time to meet K Nightingale, who was now away for a month. There had been discussions about a World-War-themed projector display on the Town Hall, if funding could be secured. The Clerk advised that K Nightingale was back in the country so a meeting could be set up to progress this. M Field confirmed that K Nightingale could not get hold of a projector so this project would be deferred until 2025. 20Twenty would still like to be involved in the switch-on event, however.
5. The Clerk contacted Derek Rutter (March Lions) regarding provision of a Father Christmas and sleigh on 17.1.24. [Tentative yes] Clerk emailed D Rutter once for confirmation on 9.10.24. D Rutter advised the Clerk in person on 14.10.25 that the Lions would be delighted to provide a Father Christmas on 29.1.24. **Sweets/chocolates for the children have been delivered to Derek Rutter.**
6. New PPL/PRS licenses for Broad Street [and also West End Park] purchased by Clerk in December 2023. The licence has a start date of 1 November 2018 (and has no expiry date). Copy to M Field on 16.9.24 for the SAG.
7. The Committee resolved that Father Christmas would switch on the lights and the Mayor would be invited to attend the event.
8. Scouts and Cadets to be offered a stall at the switch-on. R Burry had emailed C Elkin and R Kidger (scouts and cadets, respectively). The air cadets will not be requiring a stall. The scouts have asked if they can provide food. RB to liaise with C Elkin to ensure that the scouts have the requisite food safety certificates etc before we can agree to this. There has been no response from C Elkin in this regard. M Purser with contact him. Clerk advised that R Phipps/ M Field liaise with Catherine Goakes on behalf of the Scouts who should be able to confirm/assist.
9. R Phipps mentioned to the committee that he had been advised that no vehicles could be parked on the public realm area of Broad Street. This has implications for the fairground rides etc. Clerk to verify directly with the project team soonest. Clerk contacted FDC project team [Matt] on 18.6.24 to clarify the position. Vehicles not exceeding 7.5 tonnes (7,500kg) could use the public realm area without issue. Any vehicles bigger than this using the paved area we would have to be liable for any repair/damage costs to CCC property. Chair to contact Lisa this week (w/c 19.8.24) and advise Lisa of the limitations so that fairground rides and attractions could be selected accordingly based on the recommended loading. Site visit to be arranged. (24.9.24, see 1 (above)).
10. **Gary Tustin updated re the warm-up at 6 by R Burry via WhatsApp message.**

Communications / Advertising / Social Media

Facebook and social media communication usage/advertising must improve to raise awareness about the event and fund-raising activities, to share information and recruit/attract volunteers/stewards without which, the committee **would not be able to continue** to provide Christmas Lights or a switch-on event in the town. Chairman to review and update the Facebook page and remove all external, non-Christmas light related posts/adverts.

R Burry had posted on the Christmas Lights Facebook page to ask for stewards to help on 29.11.24, but had used the poster that the Clerk had produced in 2022 which carried the wrong date and would potentially confuse readers. The Clerk would have a Word version of the poster that could be amended with the correct date. G Christy updated the poster and circulated on 19.8.24. However, the old poster was still displayed and needed to be changed ASAP (R Burry).

The Chair will write a press release raising awareness about the desperate lack of/need for stewards. If more stewards cannot be recruited on a volunteer basis, the event will not be able to go ahead and this would be incredibly sad for the town.

Miscellaneous

1. The Clerk contacted Lynn McGhee, Branch Manager, of Ridgeons/Huwsgray regarding the loan of steps for the trailer once again (██████████). Lynn confirmed on 17.1.24 that we can rely on their continued support in 2024. Clerk to contact Lynn this week to confirm details. **Clerk emailed Lynn on 23.10 to confirm arrangements/delivery date. Response received. Awaiting details of day/time for delivery.**
2. John Thomas (01945 450555) confirmed they would loan a trailer once again in 2024 for the Market Place. Clerk to contact John this week to confirm arrangements. **Clerk called Rickie on 23.10 – all confirmed, trailer will be delivered on 29.11 at 05:30.**
3. The Christmas Shop Window competition remains suspended for the foreseeable future. The “Best Decorated House” competition is also discontinued due to lack of interest and rising cost of living/energy prices. It was agreed that the grotto should not be re-instated for 2024.
4. A generous donation of £376.41 had been received from Turner & Son from a collection at the funeral of the late Mick Beer. The Clerk had thanked wife Sue for this kind donation as well as their many years of hard work in connection with March Christmas lights.
5. M Purser suggested that John Dowler wished to join the Committee.

Date of Next Meeting:

Monday **20 January 2025** at 7.45pm in The Skoulding Suite at March Town Hall.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9:35pm.

Councillor G Christy 6 January 2025
Mayor of March.