

	Events Committee
Date	8 June 2026 14.00
Agenda Item	4

Safety Advisory Group meeting 30/4/26 at BDC offices

Present: Josie Falco Chair Head of Environment BDC

Dan Mellini Environmental Health Manager BDC

Hayley Street Essex Highways

Emma Guiver Essex Highways

Lisa LeBesque Health & Safety BDC

Jenny Wiehahn Trading Standards ECC

Gavin Tripp Halstead Fire station

Luke Kirby Halsted Fire Station

Kevin Mayle Essex Police

Philip Jackson Essex Police

Ed Merry Administrator, Halstead Town Council

Sarah Greateorex Town Clerk Halstead Town Council

Josie Falco informed the meeting that the Safety Advisory Group was a forum to advise on public safety. She asked Sarah to provide an overview of the event:

Overview

- A much loved public event, highlight of the winter season which had been run for the past 40 years
- Numbers had grown and it was now attended by more than 1000 people every year
- There are 8 roads which open onto Market Hill and the High Street, where the procession walks
- HTC apply for a rolling roadblock every year for around 30 minutes
- There are diversion signs and safety notices in place
- In 2025 following the first SAG meeting, torches were limited to 500
- 30 volunteer marshals assist with safety, and communicate using radios
- The crowd are held back on car parking spaces and pavement with cones and tape while they wait for torches to be lit
- 10 Young farmers' tractors were used as mitigating vehicles in 2025

Safety issues raised by the SAG

- **Petrol station** The procession walks past the town petrol station. This is closed for the duration of the procession, and a fire engine is in place to block the entrance, if not called elsewhere to tackle a fire. If no fire engine is available, barriers are placed across the entrance and volunteer marshals man the area.
In spite of these measures, there are concerns that there will still be petrol vapour in the air, and the advice would be to temporarily disengage the pumps
- **Risk**
The biggest risk is parents carrying small children and torches, and bunching of one row of torches up against the one in front, when there is an acute risk of burns or of hair or clothing catching fire. The police are particularly concerned about this risk, and pointed out that the Event Manager, the Town Clerk, would be liable and held responsible if there were any incident.
- **Tractors** In view of current incidents, it is necessary to have mitigating vehicles to prevent random attacks on the crowds. There is a legal issue around using tractors to close the roads. Firstly it is thought that the tractors would not be covered by their insurance if another vehicle drove into them – they would need more specific business insurance for this (This was raised with the tractor drivers last year, and they said that they weren't bothered) It may be that they would be covered by HTC public liability insurance. Secondly, the meeting was told that it is illegal for the tractors to be used to close the road – this has to be done by a traffic management company.
- **Traffic management company**
The meeting recommended that a professional Traffic management company be employed to close the roads during the torchlight procession. They are legally allowed to close the road, and would manage the diversion with proper signposting, but at considerable cost.
- **Road closure application**
This would need to be done again, this time for a full closure, and probably for up to an hour
- **Event management**
The meeting felt that torches should not be given to anyone under 18.
There should be more notices, either handed out with the torches or big public notices on the street at frequent intervals, or both.
Martyn's law when it comes into force would apply to this event even though it is outside
Marshals need further more detailed training and would need to be prepared to challenge anyone presenting a risk in the procession.
We have considered how we manage children who have been separated from their parents, but we need also to consider parents who cannot find their children.
Emergency plans need to be more carefully considered – how do we manage an emergency until the emergency services arrive.
The event management plan submitted to BDC needs to be submitted again, with the Purple Guide in mind.

Action taken so far

1. A number of Traffic management companies have been contacted for quotes
2. The Event management form has been updated with further risks considered, and more specific information on who is allowed to hold a torch
3. The road closure form has been updated to include a total closure for 1 hour
4. The Purple guide has been consulted, and a subscription bought
5. Further training for marshals is being considered
6. A loud hailer has been bought to allow emergency announcements to be heard
7. A location has been agreed for lost children at Fox and Herb who have agreed to take on this role– one marshal will be assigned to that location
8. The petrol station has been consulted on whether they are able to disengage the pumps for the duration of the closure. They say pumps will be switched off
9. Our insurers have been contacted relating to the cover offered by our public liability insurance. Our insurers state : *Assuming you have risk assessed this the tractors will be covered for Public Liability whilst they remain stationary however when they are in motion they will not be covered under your policy.*

Recommendation: that the committee considers the risks surrounding this event, and agrees to:

1. Engage a traffic management company
2. Consider further restrictions on the distribution of torches
3. Purchase further loud hailer to enable easy communication in an emergency



Sarah Greateorex Town Clerk