

HALSTEAD TOWN COUNCIL



	Events committee
Date	24 August 2026 19.00
Agenda Item	4c

Torchlight Procession 2026

Event Safety Management Options Report

Proposed event: Tuesday 9 December 2026, 7:00pm

Route: Top of the High Street to Halstead Public Gardens (Town Park)

Expected attendance: approximately 1,000 people (see caveat below)

Report prepared: 1 August 2026

Important note on attendance figures

The 1,000-person figure used throughout this report is a planning estimate provided to inform the safety options, not a confirmed or verified number. This is a free, open-access procession on the public highway, with no ticketing, registration or admission control at any point on the route or in the Public Gardens. As a result, the Council has no practical means of capping, verifying or restricting the number of participants and spectators who attend, and actual numbers on the night could be materially higher or lower than 1,000 — for example due to favourable weather, local publicity, or informal attendance by passers-by who were never part of a headcount. All marshal numbers, equipment quantities, staffing models and cost estimates in this report should therefore be treated as a baseline for c.1,000 people, reviewed against local knowledge and the weather forecast closer to the date, and supported by a contingency plan for a higher-than-expected turnout (see Appendix B for how requirements would change at a materially different attendance level).

This report sets out options for safely planning and delivering the procession. It is written as planning guidance to support the Council's decision-making and formal risk assessment process. It is not a substitute for legal advice, a site-specific risk assessment, or sign-off by a Safety Advisory Group (SAG).

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1. Executive Summary

Halstead Town Council is planning a procession for approximately 1,000 people on 9 December 2026, starting at the top of the High Street and descending to the Public Gardens (Town Park), where a laser light show, carol singing and food trucks will follow. This is a high-footfall, after-dark, moving-crowd event on a steep gradient, which raises specific safety considerations beyond a typical static community event. The key points for members are summarised below; the full analysis follows in Sections 2–10 and the appendices.

- Attendance is an estimate, not a fixed number. This is a free, unticketed procession on the public highway, so the Council cannot cap or verify numbers in advance — see the caveat on the previous page and Appendix B for how requirements scale if numbers differ materially from 1,000.
- The High Street gradient is the single biggest site-specific risk factor. Halstead's High Street is reported to be the steepest in Essex; descending it after dark, in December weather, with a large moving crowd materially increases trip/fall risk and — if used — the risk from carrying naked flame (Section 3).
- Legal framework: general duty of care, Highways/road closure consent and Purple Guide good practice all apply now; Martyn's Law is unlikely to be in force or to strictly apply to this unticketed event, but its four protective themes (evacuation, invacuation, lockdown, communication) are recommended as good practice regardless (Section 4).
- Illumination: glow sticks/LED wands are the lower-risk option for the full crowd, and this is the option chosen for 2026;
- flaming torches give the strongest traditional effect but should, if used, be restricted to a small trained adult group given the hill and the conservation-area buildings lining the route (Section 5). This option could be chosen in another year, with the associated costs.
- Staffing model: a hybrid model — the Town Clerk as accountable Event Manager, supported by a competent event-safety adviser and a paid marshal team — is recommended as the balanced default if flaming torches are to be used; a fully volunteer-led model is not recommended for safety-critical positions (Section 6).
- Indicative costs (excluding illumination): staffing and management ranges from c.£1,400–£3,200 (volunteer-led) to c.£4,200–£7,900 (fully outsourced), with the recommended hybrid model at c.£2,750–£5,600 (Section 6.4); equipment (excluding illumination) adds a further c.£1,900–£4,400 (Appendix A).
- Training: all marshals need a baseline safety briefing; supervisors should hold a recognised Level 2 stewarding/spectator safety qualification; torch handling and hill/traffic positions need additional specific training (Section 7).
- Governance: decisions on illumination method and staffing should be risk-led and formally minuted by full Council, not driven by preference or tradition alone — Appendix C sets out the consequences for the Council and the Event Manager if an incident is later found to be attributable to a failure to take suitable and proportionate safety steps.

2. Event Overview

Item	Detail
Date / time	Tuesday 9 December 2026, 7:00pm start
Expected attendance	~1,000 participants and spectators (planning estimate — see caveat, page 1)
Route	Assembles at the top of the High Street; processes downhill through the High Street to the Public Gardens (Town Park)
Destination activities	Laser light show, pyrotechnics, snow machine and carol singing, food trucks/vendors in the Public Gardens

Item	Detail
Season / conditions	Early evening in December — dark from assembly, likely cold, possible rain, frost or ice underfoot
Site character	Historic, sloping conservation-area High Street (timber-framed and listed shopfronts) descending to Victorian-era public gardens owned by Braintree District Council

3. Route and Site Considerations — the High Street Gradient

Halstead's High Street climbs Market Hill and is widely described as the steepest high street in Essex, descending from the historic core near St Andrew's Church down towards the town centre and on to the Public Gardens. This gradient is the single most important site-specific factor shaping the safety plan, and affects both illumination choice and staffing needs.

3.1 Hazards created by the slope

- Momentum and crowd control: a 1,000-person crowd moving downhill can naturally accelerate, especially at the rear where people are unaware of the pace being set at the front. This raises the risk of crowd surge, concertina effects at pinch points, and loss of controlled spacing.
- Trips, slips and falls: combined with December weather (wet leaves, rain, frost or ice) and uneven historic paving, the descent is a heightened trip/slip risk, particularly for children, older participants and anyone carrying a lit torch or hot wax/fuel source.
- Naked flame on a descent: carrying an open flame while walking downhill increases the chance of spilled fuel, dripping wax or embers falling onto the person behind — a risk that is materially lower on flat ground.
- Conservation area / historic timber buildings: the High Street's Georgian and Victorian (including weatherboarded/timber) shopfronts sit close to the carriageway and pavement, increasing the consequence of any dropped flame, spark or radiant heat contact near frontages, doorways, bunting or dressed shop displays.
- Pinch points and road junctions: side roads, narrow pavement sections and shopfront doorways along the hill will need dedicated marshal positions to prevent crowd bottlenecks and to manage vehicle interfaces during the closure.
- Egress at the bottom: the transition from a controlled, linear procession into an open, multi-activity park (laser show, food trucks, carol singing) is a classic 'funnel-to-open-space' pinch point and needs a controlled filter/hold system rather than free flow.

3.2 Implications for planning

- A published go/no-go weather policy (ice, high wind, heavy rain) should sit with the Event Manager, with a clear decision deadline and communication route to participants.
- Marshals should be positioned at fixed intervals up the hill (not just start/finish) to control pace, watch for falls, and act as a fire-safety watch if flaming torches are used.
- Additional lighting of kerbs, steps and changes in level is required beyond the torches/glow sticks themselves, since decorative illumination is not a substitute for pedestrian safety lighting.
- Food truck vehicle movements into and out of the park should be scheduled outside the procession's arrival window and access-controlled away from the crowd flow.

4. Legal and Good-Practice Framework

Three frameworks are directly relevant: general health and safety / event-licensing duties, The Purple Guide, and Martyn's Law (the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025). This section summarises each; it is general planning information, not legal advice, and the Council should confirm its specific duties with its insurers, legal advisers and Essex Police.

4.1 General duties and permissions

- As event organiser, the Council (or its appointed Event Manager) holds a general duty of care to participants, spectators, staff, marshals and residents/businesses along the route.
- A road closure on the High Street will require a Temporary Traffic Regulation Order / Road Closure via Essex County Council Highways, typically requiring significant lead time (commonly 12 weeks or more) — this should be actioned early.
- The Public Gardens are owned by Braintree District Council; permission/licence to use the park for the laser show, carol singing and food trucks will need to be agreed with them, alongside any land drainage/electrical supply requirements for the laser rig.
- A formal, written risk assessment and Event Safety Plan should be produced and, given the scale, submitted to the local Safety Advisory Group (SAG) — a multi-agency panel (police, fire, ambulance, highways, environmental health) that reviews plans for events of this size.
- Public liability insurance covering the procession, park activity, torches (if used) and food vendors should be confirmed, with vendors required to hold their own valid public liability and (for food trucks) gas/fire safety certification.

4.2 The Purple Guide

The Purple Guide is the HSE-endorsed UK reference for health, safety and welfare at outdoor events and is the standard SAGs and local authorities expect organisers to work to. Relevant chapters for this event include crowd management, fire safety, medical and first aid provision, traffic management (including road closures and vehicle marshalling), structures and electrical safety (for the laser rig and staging), and communications/major incident planning.

- The Purple Guide does not set a single fixed steward-to-crowd ratio; it requires the ratio to be set by risk assessment. Low-risk, static, seated events can be planned around roughly 1 steward per 250 attendees; higher-risk events involving crowd movement, road interfaces, darkness and naked flame — as here — are typically planned closer to 1 marshal per 100 attendees, increased further at pinch points, junctions and the hill itself.
- For a 1,000-person moving procession with a road closure, hill descent and multi-activity destination, this points to an indicative minimum of around 15–20 marshals/stewards, plus dedicated traffic and medical provision (see Section 6).

4.3 Martyn's Law (Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025)

Martyn's Law received Royal Assent on 3 April 2025. Government guidance has indicated an implementation period of at least 24 months before the duties fully commence, meaning it may not yet be in legal force by December 2026 — the Council should check the current commencement date before the event, as this may change.

The Act creates two tiers based on the number of people reasonably expected to be present at the same time: a standard tier (200–799 people), requiring public protection procedures for evacuation, invacuation, lockdown and communication; and an enhanced tier (800+ people), which adds a requirement to consider reasonably practicable physical security and monitoring measures. Both tiers are based on the number of people expected, not ticket or seating capacity.

Two scoping points are relevant to this event:

- Publicly available guidance indicates the Act's 'qualifying event' duty (which triggers the standard/enhanced tier requirements for an event) applies where there is a means of checking attendance is authorised — e.g. ticketing, passes or membership control. A free, open-access procession on the public highway for a ceremonial/entertainment purpose has been specifically identified as falling outside the current definition, and it is unlikely the Council would be required to operate a ticketed access-control point for a free community procession or an open park gathering.
- On that basis, this event is likely to fall outside the strict statutory scope of Martyn's Law as currently drafted. However, this is a scoping judgement based on general guidance, not a legal determination — the Council should confirm this understanding with Essex Police or legal advisers given the event draws roughly 1,000 people to a defined public space.

Recommendation: regardless of strict legal applicability, given the scale of the gathering, the Council should voluntarily build the Act's four core themes — evacuation, invacuation (moving people to a safer place on site), lockdown, and communication with those present — into the Event Safety Plan, and should contact Essex Police for a free Counter Terrorism Security Adviser (CTSA) walk-through of the route and park. This is good practice independent of the legal threshold and is increasingly expected by SAGs for gatherings of this size.

5. Procession Illumination Options

5.1 Option A — Flaming torches

Traditional wax, paraffin or bio-ethanol flambeaux/torches give the strongest visual and atmospheric effect and are used at established UK torchlight events (e.g. Edinburgh's Hogmanay Torchlight Procession). Where used safely, established practice includes:

- Torches lit only by trained stewards immediately before departure — participants do not self-light.
- Hand-guards fitted to protect against dripping wax/fuel.
- Fixed extinguishing/collection points along the route and at the finish; no naked flame permitted beyond these points.
- A ban on any other open flame (candles, sparklers, lighters) among participants.
- Fire extinguishers, fire blankets and trained fire-marshals at intervals, with an exclusion/safe-spacing distance maintained between torch-bearers.

On Halstead's route, flaming torches carry added risk that is not present on flat ground: fuel or wax dripping onto the person behind on a descent, increased fall risk while carrying an open flame downhill, and proximity to close-set timber-framed conservation buildings. If this option is chosen, the Council should restrict flaming torches to adult participants only (stewards/dignitaries/lead group), with the bulk of the 1,000 participants using the glow-stick/LED alternative below — a 'lead torches, mass glow' hybrid is a common compromise at UK community processions.

5.2 Option B — Glow sticks / battery LED alternatives

Chemical glow sticks or, preferably, reusable battery LED wands/lanterns remove the fire risk entirely while still producing a strong 'river of light' visual effect, particularly effective after dark and complementary to the laser show at the park.

- No fire risk, no fuel/wax handling, no exclusion zones or fire-marshal cover required for the light source itself.
- Suitable for children and less mobile participants without additional restriction.
- Unaffected by wind or light rain, unlike open flame.

- Reusable battery LED wands are preferable to single-use chemical glow sticks on environmental/waste grounds (chemical contents and plastic disposal); if chemical glow sticks are used, the Council should arrange collection points and disposal in line with local waste guidance.
- Lower insurance and stewarding burden than flaming torches, though normal crowd, hill and road-closure marshalling requirements in Sections 3 and 6 still apply in full.

5.3 Comparison

Factor	Flaming torches	Glow sticks / LED
Fire risk	Present — requires fire marshals, extinguishers, exclusion zones	None
Risk on the hill descent	Elevated — dripping fuel/wax, fall-with-flame risk	Low — normal slip/trip risk only
Proximity to timber buildings	Additional caution required along conservation frontages	No additional measures needed
Suitability for children/families	Restrict to trained adult handlers	Suitable for all ages
Weather resilience	Poor in wind/rain — may trigger cancellation of this element	Good in most conditions
Marshal/training burden	High — dedicated fire-trained stewards needed	Standard crowd/route marshalling only
Visual/atmosphere	Strongest traditional effect	Strong, modern, pairs well with laser show
Typical model used elsewhere	Adult stewards/lead group only, mass use rare without heavy controls	Common for full-crowd participation

Illumination consumable/hire costs themselves (torches, fuel, glow sticks, LED wands) are excluded from the cost estimates in Section 6 and Appendix A at the Council's request, since these depend on supplier and quantity and are best obtained as separate quotes.

6. Event Management and Staffing Options

Three broad models are set out below. All three still need to satisfy the marshal numbers and competence standards in Sections 4.2 and 7 — the difference is who employs, trains and takes responsibility for the marshal team, and who holds the 'competent person' role for the Event Safety Plan.

6.1 Option 1 — Volunteer-led

Description

Council staff and community volunteers plan and station the event, recruited via local groups, businesses and residents; no paid marshals or external event manager.

Advantages

- Lowest direct cost; strong community ownership and visibility.
- Can work well for the lower-risk, static elements (park welfare point, information tables, litter/waste).
- In association with a traffic management plan, this is possible where there are no naked flames

Limitations

- Volunteers cannot be assumed to have the competence the Purple Guide expects for higher-risk roles — fire safety, road-crossing control, crowd management on a steep gradient.

- Liability sits more heavily with the Council if an untrained volunteer is placed in a safety-critical role and an incident occurs.
- Volunteer availability/reliability on the night, and turnover between briefing and event day, is a known weak point for safety-critical positions.

Recommendation: if used at all, restrict volunteers to low-risk welfare/information roles, not flaming-torch handling, road-closure points or the steepest section of the hill, and always pair with a paid competent person overseeing the plan (see indicative cost below).

6.2 Option 2 — Paid professional Event Manager (fully outsourced)

Description

An external, specialist event management/production company is contracted to plan the event, supply and manage a paid, qualified marshal/steward team, produce the Event Safety Plan and risk assessments to SAG standard, and hold operational control on the night.

Advantages

- Specialist expertise and a pre-trained, insured, qualified marshal team; the contractor typically carries much of the operational and reputational risk.
- Fastest route to a SAG-ready Event Safety Plan; usually includes its own public liability and event insurance.
- Best fit if flaming torches are chosen, given the specialist fire-marshal competence required.

Limitations

- Highest direct cost of the three options (costs listed above)
- Less institutional/local knowledge retained by the Council for future years.
- Needs early procurement — suitable contractors for a December date should be approached and appointed well in advance (ideally by September 2026).

6.3 Option 3 — Paid marshals managed by the Town Clerk as Event Manager (in-house hybrid)

Description

The Town Clerk takes the formal Event Manager / accountable role, and the Council directly engages a paid marshal team (via a stewarding agency or a recruited, trained casual team) rather than outsourcing the whole event. Volunteers can supplement low-risk roles under this model.

Advantages

- Cost sits between Options 1 and 2 while still providing a paid, briefed, contracted marshal team for safety-critical positions.
- Retains institutional knowledge and control within the Council for future community events.
- Keeps the Town Clerk directly across the safety plan and SAG liaison, which can strengthen the Council's ongoing relationship with the SAG.

Limitations

- The Town Clerk is unlikely to already hold specialist major-event safety competence (fire safety, crowd dynamics on a gradient, laser safety) — this model only works well if paired with a competent event-safety adviser/consultant who co-signs the risk assessment and Event Safety Plan, or if the Clerk completes recognised event-safety training beforehand.
- The Council carries more direct liability than under Option 2, since it is the Council (via the Clerk) acting as Event Manager rather than a contracted specialist.

Recommendation: if this option is chosen, budget for a part-time competent-person adviser (event safety consultant) to support the Clerk, and prioritise this model for the glow-stick/LED illumination choice; if flaming torches are also wanted, add a specialist fire-marshal supervisor to the paid marshal team.

6.4 Indicative cost comparison (excluding torch/glow-stick illumination costs)

Figures below are indicative UK planning ranges for a single evening event of this scale, based on typical 2026 day/hour rates for event marshals (c.£13–£16/hour), freelance event management (c.£250–£450/day) and standard event support costs. They exclude the illumination method itself, the laser show, food truck fees (normally self-funding via pitch fees) and park hire charges, and should be replaced with actual supplier quotes before budget approval.

Cost item	Option 1: Volunteer-led	Option 2: Paid event manager (outsourced)	Option 3: Town Clerk as Event Manager + paid marshals
Event management fee	£0 (in-house/volunteer time)	£900 – £2,250 (3–5 days at £300–£450/day)	£150 – £350 (Clerk overtime/TOIL, if applicable)
Competent-person / H&S adviser support	£350 – £600 (recommended, half–1 day)	Included in event manager fee	£350 – £700 (half–1 day, to support Clerk)
Paid marshals (c.15–20, ~5 hrs incl. briefing/clear-up)	£0 (volunteers) + PPE/kit ~£150–£250	£1,200 – £1,800	£1,200 – £1,800
Radios/comms hire	£100 – £200	Often included	£100 – £200
First aid / medical provision	£300 – £600	£300 – £700 (may be included)	£300 – £700
Traffic management for road closure	£500 – £1,200 (still needs accredited provider)	£500 – £1,500 (often arranged by contractor)	£500 – £1,500
Event/public liability insurance top-up	£150 – £350	Often included	£150 – £350
Indicative total (ex. illumination)	£1,400 – £3,200	£4,200 – £7,900	£2,750 – £5,600

Note: Option 1's low headline cost understates its risk exposure — the safety-critical gaps identified above (fire, traffic and gradient competence) typically still need to be bought in, which is reflected in the 'competent-person adviser' and traffic management lines even under a 'volunteer-led' model. See Appendix A for equipment costs in addition to the staffing/service costs above.

7. Marshal and Steward Training Requirements

Whichever staffing model is chosen, the Purple Guide expects marshals/stewards to be competent, briefed and clearly identifiable. The following training structure is recommended, scaled to role risk.

7.1 Baseline — all marshals (paid or volunteer)

- Pre-event written briefing and walk-through covering the Event Safety Plan, individual position/role, radio protocol and chain of command.
- Core crowd management awareness: managing flow, spotting crowd distress or crush indicators, and safe intervention.

- Emergency procedures aligned to the four Martyn's Law themes even if not legally mandated: how to support an evacuation, an invacuation (moving people to a safer place within the site), a lockdown, and how to relay official communications/instructions to the public.
- Incident and near-miss reporting procedure.
- Safeguarding/vulnerable persons awareness, given the family and child-heavy audience expected for carol singing and the laser show.
- High-visibility clothing and identification (role-labelled tabards) for all marshals.

7.2 Formal qualification — supervisors and lead marshals

Lead/supervisory marshals should hold, or be working towards, a recognised UK stewarding qualification such as the Level 2 Award in Understanding Stewarding at Spectator Events (AUSSE) or the Level 2 Certificate in Spectator Safety, both aligned to the SkillsActive Spectator Safety National Occupational Standards referenced in the Sports Grounds Safety Authority's Green Guide. Although developed for sports/spectator venues, this is the recognised UK benchmark competence standard for event stewarding and is accepted by most SAGs as evidence of competence.

7.3 Torch-specific training (only if flaming torches are used)

- A supplier/manufacturer-led toolbox talk for every torch-handling marshal, covering safe lighting and extinguishing procedure, fuel handling and storage (COSHH-compliant), and safe hand-over to participants.
- Fire extinguisher and fire blanket use (practical, not just theory).
- Operating fixed extinguishing/collection points and enforcing the 'no self-lighting, no other open flame' rule.
- A buddy system for fire marshals stationed on the hill section specifically, given the added risk identified in Section 3.

7.4 Hill and traffic-specific training

- Gradient-specific briefing on controlled pacing, use of holding points to prevent concertina/crush on the descent, and marking of kerb/step hazards.
- A weather go/no-go checklist and who is authorised to invoke it on the night.
- Marshals on road-closure or vehicle-interface points should hold, or be provided by an accredited traffic management contractor, appropriate street-works signing, lighting and guarding competence.

7.5 First aid and welfare

- A minimum number of marshals (or a contracted event medical provider) should hold a valid First Aid at Work or Emergency First Aid at Work certificate; for a 1,000-person, after-dark, gradient event, a dedicated event first-aid provider is recommended over relying solely on marshal-level first aid.
- A nominated welfare/lost-child point should be established at the park, clearly signed and briefed to all marshals.

7.6 Debrief and refresher

A structured post-event debrief with all marshals and the Event Manager should feed into next year's plan, and — if the procession becomes an annual fixture — an annual refresher (rather than full retraining) is recommended for returning marshals.

8. Site-Specific Measures at the Public Gardens (Town Park)

8.1 Laser light show

- Commission the laser display only from a supplier compliant with BS EN 60825 (laser product safety) who provides their own laser safety risk assessment and a nominated Laser Safety Officer on site.
- Confirm the laser beam trajectory and power against nearby buildings, trees and — if applicable — any aviation notification requirements.
- Ensure the laser display starts only once all flaming torches (if used) have been extinguished and collected, avoiding any interaction between naked flame, fuel vapour and laser equipment, and reducing dazzle/collision risk for anyone still moving through the crowd with an open flame.
- Barrier and steward the laser generator/control area to prevent public access.

8.2 Carol singing and general park crowd

- Define a capacity limit for the park based on a head-count/density assessment of the available open space, paths and the bandstand area, and identify entry/egress points separate from the food truck vehicle route.
- Use marshals to filter the procession into the park in a controlled manner rather than allowing free-flow release from a funnel point, to avoid a crush at the transition from street to park.

8.3 Food trucks

- Require all food vendors to provide current public liability insurance, a valid gas safety certificate (if using LPG) and their own fire extinguisher, and to site trucks with clear pedestrian separation and vehicle egress that avoids the main crowd flow.
- Schedule food truck arrival/set-up before the procession departs the High Street, and any departure after the crowd has dispersed, to avoid vehicle movements through pedestrians.

8.4 Welfare and contingency

- Provide accessible toilets, a warm-up/shelter point given the December evening temperatures, and a clearly signed lost-child/welfare point.
- Agree a weather contingency (e.g. shortened route, delayed start, or cancellation thresholds) in advance and communicate it publicly before the event.

9. Recommendations Summary

- Illumination: use glow sticks or reusable LED wands for the mass of participants; if a traditional flame effect is wanted, restrict genuine flaming torches to a small, trained adult lead group only, following the fixed-lighting/fixed-collection-point model.
- Staffing model: adopt Option 3 (Town Clerk as accountable Event Manager with a paid marshal team), supported by a competent event-safety adviser, as a balanced default; move to Option 2 (fully outsourced event manager) if flaming torches are used for the full crowd or if the Council wishes to transfer more risk and liability externally. Volunteers can supplement low-risk welfare/information roles under either model but should not be sole cover for the hill, road-closure or torch-handling positions.
- Marshal numbers: plan for an indicative minimum of 15–20 marshals/stewards, weighted toward the hill section and the street-to-park transition, plus dedicated traffic management and first-aid provision.
- Training: all marshals receive the baseline briefing in Section 7.1; supervisors hold or work towards a Level 2 stewarding/spectator safety qualification; add torch-specific and hill-specific training modules if relevant.

- Legal/regulatory actions to start now (August 2026): apply for the road closure via Essex Highways (long lead time), agree park use with Braintree District Council, submit the Event Safety Plan to the Safety Advisory Group, contact Essex Police for event notification and a voluntary CTSA site visit, and confirm event/public liability insurance.
- Build the Martyn's Law four themes (evacuation, invacuation, lockdown, communication) into the Event Safety Plan voluntarily, and re-check the Act's commencement date and scope closer to the event, as implementation timing may change.
- Refer to the appendices for a detailed equipment and cost list (Appendix A), a comparison of Council duties at 750 vs 1,000 attendees (Appendix B), and governance guidance on risk-based decision-making and incident consequences (Appendix C).

10. Sources

This report draws on the following publicly available guidance, current as of August 2026. The Council should verify current requirements directly with the relevant bodies before finalising its plan.

- ProtectUK — Martyn's Law overview: protectuk.police.uk/martyns-law
- Policy Pros — Martyn's Law capacity assessment and standard tier guidance: policypros.co.uk
- Security Journal UK — Martyn's Law 2026 guide: securityjournaluk.com
- The Purple Guide — official guidance: thepurpleguide.co.uk
- Dorset Council — HSE Purple Guide summary (crowd management): dorsetcouncil.gov.uk
- Edinburgh's Hogmanay — Torchlight Procession safety information: edwinterfest.com
- Lyme Regis Carnival — Torchlight Procession guidance: lymeregiscarnival.co.uk
- Sports Grounds Safety Authority (SGSA) — steward qualifications and training: sgsa.org.uk
- NGTC / NCFE — Level 2 Certificate in Spectator Safety and AUSSE course information: ngtc.co.uk, ncfe.org.uk
- Halstead Town Council — facilities information: halsteadtowncouncil.org.uk
- Wikivoyage / local travel guides — Halstead High Street and Market Hill topography: en.wikivoyage.org/wiki/Halstead
- K4 Security / VIP Protection Services / TheWorkCrowd — 2026 UK event steward and event management day-rate guides (used for indicative costings)

Appendix A — Equipment and Estimated Costs

This appendix lists the physical equipment and consumables needed to deliver the event safely, in addition to the staffing/service costs in Section 6.4. Illumination consumables (torches, fuel, glow sticks, LED wands) are treated separately in Section 5, since they depend on the Council's chosen method and supplier and were excluded from these figures at the Council's request. Some items below may already be included within a contractor's quoted fee under Options 2 or 3 (for example, a traffic management contractor typically supplies its own signage and cones) — the Council should check what is and is not included before adding these costs on top of a supplier quote.

Equipment	Purpose	Estimated cost	Notes
Hi-vis marshal tabards/vests (~20)	Marshal identification	£120 – £180	Purchase; reusable in future years
Two-way radios (~15–20 units)	Marshal communications	£150 – £300	Hire, one evening, incl. spare batteries
Pedestrian guardrail/barriers (~40–60 units)	Pinch points, closure ends, park entry funnel	£300 – £550	May be part of a traffic management contractor's kit
Laser exclusion fencing	Cordon around laser rig and generator	£100 – £180	Required regardless of contractor
Fire safety kit (extinguishers ~10, fire blankets)	Only required if flaming torches used	£200 – £350	Not needed for glow stick/LED-only option
Torch/ember collection bins	Safe collection of spent torches	£50 – £80	Only if flaming torches used
Marshal-level first aid kits, blankets, hand warmers	Supplementary welfare/first aid	£60 – £120	In addition to professional medical provision (Section 6.4)
Handheld megaphones (~4–6)	Marshal crowd instructions on route	£60 – £150	
PA system and microphones	Announcements/carol singing at park	£250 – £550	Confirm if already supplied by carol/laser contractor
Portable lighting towers / festoon lighting	Hazard lighting for kerbs, steps, level changes on hill	£180 – £450	Distinct from decorative procession illumination
Signage (directional, welfare, lost child, closure notices)	Wayfinding and resident notification	£120 – £220	
Portable/accessible toilet units	Park welfare provision	£350 – £650	Number depends on final capacity assessment
Bins, bags, litter-picking kit	Waste management on route and in park	£60 – £120	
Generator(s)	Power for PA/laser if not self-contained	£150 – £400	Confirm with laser/PA suppliers first
Cordon tape, cable ties, clipboards, spares	General consumables	£40 – £80	

Indicative total (excluding illumination): approximately £1,900 – £4,400, before removing any items already bundled into a contractor's fee. If glow sticks/LED are chosen instead of flaming torches, the fire safety kit and torch collection bins (together approximately £250 – £430) are not required, reducing the indicative total to approximately £1,650 –

£3,970. These figures are generic and some equipment is already available either as Council equipment or will be provided by the relevant contractors e.g., Laser display team

Appendix B — Council Duties and Responsibilities: 1,000 vs. 750 Attendees

This appendix compares how the Council's duties and the practical scale of the safety operation would differ if the event were planned around 750 attendees rather than 1,000, to illustrate how sensitive the risk profile, staffing and cost base are to the attendance estimate discussed in the caveat at the front of this report — which, as an unticketed street event, the Council cannot fix or guarantee in either direction.

Duty / consideration	At ~750 attendees	At ~1,000 attendees
Martyn's Law tier (if ever delivered as a ticketed/access-controlled activity)	Standard tier (200–799): evacuation, invacuation, lockdown and communication procedures required; no mandatory physical security measures	Enhanced tier (800+): the same four procedures, plus a duty to consider reasonably practicable physical security and monitoring measures — a materially higher bar
Purple Guide marshal numbers (indicative, moving crowd/road interface)	c.8–11 marshals at a 1:75–1:100 ratio	c.10–15+ marshals at the same ratio, with more required at pinch points and the hill
Medical/ambulance cover category	Often supportable by an enhanced first-aid provider with 1–2 first responders	Often triggers a higher Purple Guide medical planning category, e.g. a crewed ambulance or additional first-aid points
Public/event liability insurance	Cover typically adequate at standard community-event limits (e.g. £5m)	Insurers may expect or require a higher limit (e.g. £10m) given the larger foreseeable loss
SAG documentation and scrutiny	Still expected, but often a lighter-touch review	Larger events attract closer SAG scrutiny and more detailed traffic/crowd management plans
Road closure / traffic management complexity	Same route length, but a shorter safe closure window and lower pedestrian density may be achievable	Longer closure window typically needed, more marshals at closure points, greater congestion risk at the park funnel
General duty of care standard (HSWA / common law negligence)	Standard of care proportionate to a smaller, more easily controlled crowd	A larger, harder-to-control crowd increases foreseeability and potential severity of harm, raising what is 'reasonably practicable' for the Council to do
Council governance / sign-off	Delegated sign-off (Clerk/committee) may be sufficient	Given the scale, formal full Council sign-off of the Event Safety Plan is advisable, with the decision minuted

Because attendance cannot be capped at an unticketed street event, the Council should plan primarily for the 1,000-person column above, while recognising that if turnout is confirmed to be significantly lower nearer the date, some elements (marshal numbers, medical cover, insurance limit) could reasonably be scaled back — and, conversely, that a higher-than-expected turnout would push the event further into the more demanding requirements shown above.

Appendix C — Risk-Based Decision-Making: Governance Commentary

Decisions on the safety-critical elements of this event — illumination method, staffing model and marshal numbers — should be made on the basis of a documented, suitable and sufficient risk assessment, not on preference for tradition, atmosphere, cost-saving, or a wish to avoid perceived bureaucracy. Under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and the general common law duty of care, the legal test is not the elimination of all risk but reasonable practicability: the Council must be able to show that foreseeable risks were identified and proportionately controlled. A decision that knowingly departs from documented safety advice for reasons unconnected to risk — for example, 'residents expect real torches' or 'we don't want it to look over-managed' — weakens the Council's ability to demonstrate reasonable practicability if something goes wrong, even where the eventual incident has nothing directly to do with the specific point overridden.

C.1 Consequences if an incident is attributable to a failure to take suitable and proportionate steps

If a serious incident occurs — for example, a fall on the hill involving a naked flame, a crowd crush at the park funnel, or a fire risk materialising near a timber-framed building — and it can be shown that the Council did not commission, or acted against, a suitable and sufficient risk assessment, a range of consequences can follow for both the Council and the Event Manager.

Consequence type	Town Council (as corporate body / event organiser)	Event Manager (Town Clerk, in-house officer, or external contractor)
Regulatory / criminal	HSE investigation and possible prosecution under HSWA s.3 (duty to non-employees); in the most serious cases, prosecution under the Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act 2007	HSE enforcement action against the individual/organisation directly responsible for the plan; potential personal liability where failings are shown to be grossly negligent
Civil	Negligence claims from injured participants, spectators, marshals or residents; insurers may contest or reduce indemnity if documented advice was disregarded	Named personally/organisationally in civil claims; possible professional indemnity exposure
Professional / reputational	Local and potentially national media scrutiny; loss of public confidence; harder to secure future SAG, Highways or Police approval for events	Referral to a professional body where one applies; lasting damage to future employability or contract opportunities
Financial	Uninsured losses, legal costs, potential fines, increased future insurance premiums	Legal costs, potential fines, loss of future work

C.2 The protective effect of a documented, risk-based process

UK law does not require organisers to eliminate all risk from an inherently public, outdoor, after-dark event; it requires that foreseeable risks are properly identified, that control measures are proportionate to those risks, and that this reasoning is documented. A Council and Event Manager that follow the process set out in this report — a written risk assessment, a SAG-reviewed Event Safety Plan, competence-appropriate staffing, and evidenced training — are far better placed to defend their decisions if an incident nonetheless occurs, because the standard they are judged against is reasonable practicability, not

perfection. This is the strongest practical argument for treating the options in this report as risk-led decisions rather than preference-led ones.

C.3 Governance recommendation

Where councillors or officers wish to depart from a risk-based recommendation in this report — for example, choosing to permit flaming torches for the full 1,000-strong crowd, or relying on a volunteer-only marshal team for safety-critical positions — that decision should be taken formally by full Council, not informally by an individual officer or committee chair. The decision should be explicitly minuted to record that members were made aware of the risk assessment findings, the specific risk being accepted, and the reasons for accepting it. This creates an auditable paper trail that materially improves the Council's position if the decision is later scrutinised following an incident, and is a markedly stronger position than an undocumented, informal, preference-driven choice.

Recommendation:

1. That HTC agrees that arrangements have already been agreed, following Option 1, for this year's procession, using the Town clerk as the Event manager, with the added safety measure of the Traffic management company.
2. That HTC agrees to reconsider the arrangements for the procession in 2026, early in 2027, following a debrief from this year's glowstick and laser event.



Sarah Greateorex Town Clerk