



# Rochford Parish Council

In the past, our beautiful Christmas tree was made possible through the generous sponsorship of the Chamber of Trade and the assistance of a local farmer. Unfortunately, changes in circumstances have led to their inability to continue supporting us. We explored alternatives, with a kind parishioner offering a tree from their garden. Regrettably, after consultation, it was deemed unsafe to move the tree in one piece.

The council faced a critical deadline at the end of June, requiring a final decision to allow ample time for tree ordering, the submission of the Event Management Plan to District Council (six months prior to the event), and the procurement of necessary insurance. Complicating matters further, an ownerless bench was unexpectedly placed in the centre of the square. Health and safety concerns regarding the bench prompted the council to exercise caution, ultimately leading to the decision not to have a tree this year.

Another factor that was considered by the council was the Climate Emergency that was declared by District Council earlier in the year. The Parish council considered whether felling a 25-year-old tree that is shipped from overseas was appropriate at this time.

Regarding the Christmas lights, it was decided that as we were unable to safely have a tree this year we would replace all of the lights in the angles and in the festoon lighting that hangs around Rochford. As the council must have the fixings that hold the lights up around the town stress tested, to ensure they meet the correct standard of safety. Sadly, this year many of the mounting brackets and bolts failed the test, requiring them to be replaced. This triggered a lengthy process of trying to find and contact the building owners to gain their consent before the fixings could be replaced. As we have been unable to get in contact with most of the building owners, we could only put-up lights where you currently see them now.

We understand the disappointment this has caused, and we want to emphasize that many setbacks were beyond our control. The council has diligently worked throughout the year to ensure that some festive spirit could be shared, and we remain committed to resolving the issues with the Christmas lights around the square as building owners grant us permission.

We appreciate your understanding and continued support as we strive to create a joyful and safe holiday season for our community.