

FRIENDS OF HIGH TOWN
MINUTES OF THE GENERAL MEETING
HELD AT 7.00 P.M. ON TUESDAY, 12th JULY 2016

1. Attendees: David Landau, Chairman
 Maureen Allen, Secretary
 Fiona Morton, Treasurer
 Luke Middleton, Media and Marketing Officer
 Simon Barrow
 Lyn Bliss
 Chris Grabham
 Andrew Malcolm, Local Councillor
 Maarwish Mirza, Local Councillor
 Jeremy Williams
 Sam Willis
2. Apologies: Russell Cartwright, Kim Grieg, Jan Horner, Ryad Khodabocus, Saida el Moujahid, Pete Savage, Csaba Sipeki

3. Minutes of the last meeting

4. High Town Festival

David Landau said the Festival had been successful and, despite the variable weather, roughly the same number of people had attended as last year. He said the participation of St Matthew's school had helped attendance numbers. FoHT had managed to recruit four new members, and had received some donations. Thirteen people had also been added to the mailing list. DL expressed his thanks to Jeremy Williams, who had come along to the FoHT stall and had given away badges saying, "You are Welcome". Andy Malcolm commented that, although there were less stalls than last year, there was a good attendance. It was encouraging that the Polish shops had participated and it would be an idea to talk to them and get them further involved. He said it would be good to get the involvement of people from across Luton. LM said there had been more diversity. Unfortunately, a couple of the acts who had promised to perform had not done so, among them Exit Black and Luton Sixth Form College. DL said it had to be borne in mind that performers were not paid for appearing at the Festival and were just reimbursed for any expenses. Next year the programme for the Festival should be ready by March and it should be stressed to performers that they confirm that they are absolutely sure that they will be appearing.

LM said that "Luton on Sunday" had published a piece on the Festival, and Three Counties Radio had also featured the Festival via a quiz, with the clues leading to the High Town Festival. "Luton at Large" had also publicised the event. This was in addition to the information LM had supplied on social media.

It was remarked that there had been a better representation of the ethnic groups in High Town with the Luton Irish Pipe Band, and the participation of the Polish community, who had featured the Polish symbol of a dragon. DL had managed to speak to the man who organises

the Polonia group. There was to be a Festival meeting on July 21st. Lyn Bliss said that there was a lack of vegetarian food available and she thought it would be good to have a vegetarian stall at the Festival. Also, there had been comments made by some people about the “petting enclosure”. Concern had been expressed for the young animals. AM said some comments had been made to him on this also. He did know that the owners of the animals have to follow certain guidelines on the care of the animals. Chris Grabham said he had appreciated the fact that the Polish shops had brought stalls out onto the pavement and hoped that they could be encouraged to participate next year. DL said that the shops had been approached, but he had not been aware that they would be having the stalls. The African hairdressers had wanted to get involved by setting-up a stall to sell African food, but AM said that the council required hygiene certificates, and, as they were not professional caterers, they had not been able to provide those. CG said the Festival had also coincided with the opening of the Cultural Quarter and he had wondered if there could be some collaboration. AM said that they had been invited to participate and had been unable to attend, but they had given the High Town Festival publicity on their website. Maarwish Mirza felt it was unfortunate that the Festival had been held during Ramadan. LB said that the Muslim members of FoHT had said that they felt that this would not be important when the decision on the date had been made. DH said that the Festival date had been decided on as it was prior to the end of term for local schools, and he pointed out that the Festival being held during Ramadan was not due to happen again for 33 years if the Festival were to take place in early July. MM said that the Muslim community would most certainly take part if the Festival was not during Ramadan. DL said that Heather James, Luton Borough Council, did have a list of stall holders across the town who could be asked to participate. Simon Barrow said he thought the decoration of the bollards had been really effective. Also, all the stalls being placed down the high street was a much better idea. He wondered if the Design Makers Fair stall holders could be approached, along with stall holders from Hitchin market and a farmers’ market. The children’s presence at the opening ceremony had made a huge difference to the Festival. Maureen Allen said that the cream teas organised by the Women’s Institute had also been extremely popular. LB said that Sarah, one of the helpers on the Woodcraft Folk stall, had had her bag stolen. DH said that this had been really unfortunate, but he had heard that only a small amount of money had been lost, and Sarah’s bank cards had been cancelled before they could be used.

5. Matters Arising

a) Allotment and High Town Herb Garden

DL said that Kim Grieg was unable to attend the meeting, but he hoped an update would be available at the next meeting,

There was to be a collaboration between FoHT and Luton Transition to work on the land located at the junction of High Town Road and Midland Road. Because of lack of funding LBC was not able to allocate much money for the upkeep of small plots of land such as this, and had given permission for the clearing up of this triangle of land. The work was to be done on the following Saturday and would be publicised on social media. Anyone who was interested could go along. It was intended to tackle the weeds and the rubbish which had accumulated. It was remarked that Kath Gerrard was a qualified herbalist and her advice might be sought in the future. Fiona Morton said she would publicise the proposed work by putting up a notice on the Open Arts Community Facebook page. Sam Willis said that

people would be asked to bring their own equipment. It was hoped to have use of some of the items used in the town centre clear-ups, such as litter pickers and sharps boxes.

b) Nuisance motorbikes

DL said that some of the bikers who had caused problems for residents in the past now appeared to be riding motorbikes with number plates, and it might be possible pass this information to the police when the bikers stopped at any point. This might lead to more opportunities to prosecute the offenders. DL felt that this matter should now be passed to the Burglary Reduction Group, so that they could discuss further action with the police and LBC. MA said that she would raise the matter with Emma Colclough, who heads up the Group on behalf of LBC.

c) Conservation Area issues

DL said that Russell Cartwright had conducted a survey into the number of satellite dishes in the area, and he hoped he would be able to give an update on this at the next meeting.

Gary Roberts, LBC, had asked whether FoHT wanted to maintain its Community Right to Buy. DL said that the implications of this Right needed to be looked at closely. This legislation entitles a listed community group or society to the right to buy a building or land which is of interest and value to the local community, but the legislation was very complicated.

Work was progressing on the Railway Tavern and close attention needed to be paid to this in regard to the rules on the conservation of the building.

CG asked about the “pyramid” which had recently been built on the corner of York Street and High Town Road. It was commented that it was not known if this would be a permanent structure, and it was unsure if this was meant to advertise the beauty salon which was next door to the pyramid.

d) Street Association

Philippa Collier had been interested in starting a Street Association on the Paths Estate, and it was hoped she would give an update on this at a future meeting.

e) Ice cream vans – dangerous parking

DL said that the vans which parked in Havelock Road, close to the children’s playground, made it difficult for drivers to see oncoming traffic and raised all sorts of issues. DL was raising this matter with Parks and Highways. The vans had to pay for a concession to sell the ice creams and a parking space should be allocated in the parking areas near to the children’s playground. DL said one of the spaces should be specifically marked for use by an ice cream van. It was also disturbing that the engine of the ice cream van was constantly running. It was said that this could not be helped as this was needed for the refrigeration of the ice cream.

f) Luton Town Football Club development

DL said that he had asked David Wilkinson, Luton FC Vice-Chairman, for a general meeting to discuss the implications on the High Town area of the planning application to build the new football ground at Power Court. DL had said that the meeting could be held at a weekend, afternoon, or on a week day. He was waiting for a response.

g) Luca Restaurant and Café – alcohol license application

It was confirmed by DL that the application had been successful and they had been granted their license. It was now a question of monitoring the situation. CG said that there had not been so much noise coming from the café over the recent few weeks.

6. Hightown Community Sports and Arts Centre meeting

LB said that they had had a stall at the High Town Festival and managed to get lots of feedback. It was intended to use the noticeboards in High Town to publicise activities/events at the Centre, and it was hoped that the noticeboard which needed repair might get the repair done by Noah, with the materials needed donated by Travis Perkins. LM had almost got all the websites talking to each other and HCSAC was prominently featured on the Active Luton website. There was now an excellent school display on the HCSAC noticeboard, including photographs, to encourage parents to come along to the Centre. It was hoped to have a school arts exhibition/competition around the subject of “litter”, which, hopefully, could be tied into a clean-up day in High Town. Tina Edwards was to get back to LB on this. Heather James had already found someone to talk to the pupils at St Matthew’s school on the importance of not dropping litter. LB thought it would be a good plan to have a prize for the pupil who collected the most rubbish during the proposed clean-up day.

St Matthew’s school had already drawn-up plans for a multi-use games area at the Centre, but the area for this had yet to be decided on as the original site was not suitable. This would be controlled by the school and the Centre, and would need financing. People could use this facility by booking it.

Luton FC had granted money to St Matthew’s school to have a High Town Football team based at the Centre. DL said that this would be good for the profile of High Town. It was hoped to have a youth club night at the Centre and DL was intending to pursue this.

LB said it had been suggested that the Centre had better leaflets and information about what it could offer. DL agreed and said that they needed more targeted marketing. Matters seemed to be progressing well at the Centre.

7. Burglary Reduction Group

In KG’s absence MA gave an update. She said that attendance at meetings had fallen and it was important to keep the group going and to publicise it in the High Town area as a whole. DL said that MA should contact the new Police and Crime Commissioner, Kathryn Holloway, to see if the police could help by publicising the Group on their social media channels. MA said the more members the group had the better, as Emma Colclough was endeavouring to put in place a “Neighbourhood Agreement” for the High Town area, and she had had a disappointing response from local residents when she had tried to publicise this by having a stall at the High Town Festival. MA was to contact Kathryn Holloway and consult with EC about getting more publicity for the group. KH had held a meeting in Luton where she had stressed the importance of community policing and there were various hotspots in the town where she intended to direct her attention, ie Bury Park, the town centre and some areas of High Town. It was unsure how the police would publicise this.

It was agreed it was important that incidents of fly tipping were reported to the council so that they could take action on this growing problem.

8. AOB

LB said that she had been approached about concerns regarding the new plans for parking permits, etc in Ridgeway Road. The individual who had raised these concerns had written to the Council for more clarification. It was agreed that this matter should be discussed further when the Council had responded.

9. Notices and Information Exchange

a) Picnic in the Park – Wardown Meadow

There was to be a picnic in Wardown Meadow aimed at the under-fives. This would be taking place on Wednesday, July 13th.

b) Rounders – Pope’s Meadow

Rounders games were being held in Pope’s Meadow each Saturday. All could join in and the sessions were free of charge. Games usually started at 10.00 a.m.

c) Poetry – HCSAC

There was to be a poetry event at the Centre on August 6th-7th.

d) Sex-trade

DL said he would try and find out the date of the next general meeting to discuss this problem. The police had succeeded in removing the majority of sex workers from the streets, but the trade was now operating from houses and flats in the area.

10. Date of the Next Meeting

The next meeting, will be held on Tuesday, August 9th, at 7.00 p.m. at High Town Methodist Church.

