

## Friends of High Town (FoHT)

### Minutes: 9.9.14

1. Attendees: Simon Barrow, Lyn Bliss, Peter Brooks, Annie Bygrave, Russell Cartwright, Saida el Moujahid, Kevin Foley, Chris Grabham, Kimberley Greig, Ryad Khodabocus, Bilal Lake, David Landau, Marie-Louise Lowcock, Fiona Morton, Joan Samuel, Pete Savage, Dan Smith, Lisa Wright.
2. Apologies: Linda Farrell, Sue Lake, Cllr Andy Malcolm, Cllr Roxanna Whittaker.
3. Minutes of the last meeting: DL apologised for the late delivery and said he would consider them approved if there were no objections within the next week.
4. Flytipping and environment

DL said success had been achieved in:

- a) clearing an overgrown hedge on Old Bedford Road, which JS had brought to the attention of the group, although another requires work; thanks to 2 High Town residents, there is a potential prosecution over flytipping on Kingston Road, which has largely stopped dumping at that particular spot
- b) LB said Keep Britain Tidy's 'Big Tidy Up' will take place on Sunday 19th October and would FoHT support it.

Action:

- a) DL to follow up on overgrown hedge on Old Bedford Road.
- b) DL asked LB to lead on Big Tidy Up in High Town with The Woodcraft Folk.

5. Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs)

LW told meeting that she had noticed an increase in HMOs in High Town and she was worried about the impact.

The meeting identified 3 main areas of concern:

- a) reduction in much-needed family homes
- b) an increase in anti-social behaviour
- c) an increase in the number of vehicles parked on already congested streets.

DL stressed that he felt it was important to note that: a) was the most important issue, because b) & c) could happen whether there were HMOs or not; the degree of anti-social behaviour is very dependent on the quality of the landlord and he had noticed some apparently well-managed HMOs locally.

DL said that planning law had been relaxed so that HMOs did not require planning permission, but councils had the power to reinstate this in their area and some had.

Action: DL to circulate information about council powers and the views of landlords opposed to restrictions, so that FoHT members can make an informed view before a vote on further action.

#### 6. Railway Tavern

Expecting update on Chelsie Chinnick-Blair's attempt to buy the former pub on the corner of Midland Road and High Town Road. CCB did not attend meeting, so no update provided.

Action: ask CCB to present any update when she has it.

#### 7. High Town Team

DL reported back on the morning's meeting:

a) Updated photos of the proposed High Town Gateway were shown to FoHT. Most members opposed the design on the following grounds:

- i) design was a Victorian pastiche
- ii) should be iron not steel
- iii) white is inappropriate colour
- iv) thought it was going to arch across whole road
- v) do not feel they were consulted well enough.

FoHT members voted to ask for there to be a pause for further thought on the design.

b) Welbeck Square design cost increased from an initial £20,000 approx. to £65,000 approx. This is because Groundwork had not considered the full costs of lifting existing paving.

FoHT members suggested: spending money from Gateway on Welbeck Square; incorporating design work of Gateway in the Square.

c) Luton Culture cannot take on finding funding for The Blockers Seaside hat sculptures. The social enterprise business High Hats will now take this on.

d) Urban planner Dr John Montgomery has been appointed by LBC as a consultant to work on a cultural strategy for High Town.

Action: DL to ask HTT to take on board points a) and b) and to help High Hats achieve c).

#### 8. Park fitness equipment

£10,000 made available by LBC Parks Dept. to fund new equipment, but at August meeting FoHT members wanted to see more alternatives presented and some members said they would provide DL with specific examples. DL was waiting for FoHT members to come back with these alternatives, but none were forthcoming for September meeting.

In addition, FoHT members suggested fitness activities in the park, such as boot camps or Tai Chi. NWV suggested that boot camps should not have military branding, as people may object for a number of reasons. DL said the £10,000 was only for capital spending. KG said something such as the Near Neighbours fund could pay for fitness activities.

Action: DL to wait for any new info and forward to LBC Parks Dept. for consideration; DL to suggest fitness activities to parks .

## 9. Highways

PB and DL had written to LBC Highways about traffic calming measures at Old Bedford Road/North Street junction, which the group had agreed was dangerous for pedestrians. Following FoHT's concerns, RW also contacted LBC Highways. Highways said they would wait to see the impact of Inner Ring Road on traffic flows and make an assessment in the next financial year (after April 2015).

Action: DL and PB to follow up in April 2015.

DL had also asked LBC Highways to provide on-road speed limit markings for the 20mph zone and to ensure the enforcement of 20mph limits in High Town. Highways said it was not the norm for them to mark roads and residents should identify problem roads, so they could assess them.

Action: FoHT members identified these roads: Clarendon Road, Dudley Street, Frederick Street Passage, High Town Road, Kingston Road, Old Bedford Road, Wenlock Street. DL to tell LBC Highways.

JS said cyclists on pavements were a problem in High Town. There were conflicting views from the group.

Action: DL to work on a) police enforcement, b) improve education for cyclists, c) ensuring sufficient bicycle training, d) increase safe cycling zones within High Town.

## 10. Notices & information exchange

- a) Hat wearing record – achieved in Wardown Park, High Town on 16<sup>th</sup> August 2014.
- b) Guerrilla Gardening – a call to FoHT members to help AB replace a hedge in the Burr Street car park with suitable plants in October.
- c) ML said someone has started a business from a house garage on Clarendon Road. She has informed RW, who has started to deal with it.
- d) Next SoLuTions meeting about On-Street Sex Trade and Anti-social Behaviour is 6pm, Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> September 2014, High Town Methodist Church Hall.

## 11. Date of next meeting.

Action: Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> October 2014.