

FRIENDS OF HIGH TOWN
MINUTES OF THE GENERAL MEETING
HELD AT 7.00 P.M. ON TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 13TH 2016

1. Attendees: David Landau, Chairman
 Maureen Allen, Secretary
 Luke Middleton, Media and Marketing Officer
 Fiona Morton, Treasurer
 David Alexander
 Jane Billington
 Lyn Bliss
 Russell Cartwright
 Emma Colclough
 Chris Grabham
 Kim Greig
 Andrew Malcolm, Local Councillor
 Clare McAnulty
 Marwish Mirza, Local Councillor
 Pete Savage
 Dan Warwick
2. Apologies: Philippa Collier, Ryad Khodabocus, Saida el Moujahid, and Csaba Sipeki,
3. Minutes of the last meeting

4. Neighbourhood Agreement

Emma Colclough, Community Safety Officer for Luton Borough Council, had come along to the meeting to explain about Neighbourhood Agreements and what this entailed. She said it was an informal agreement between the community and local council services, and it was not a contract which was enforceable by law. It was there to encourage the local community to take an interest in where they lived and to become proud of their local area and of Luton. Communities would be helped to join together to take more responsibility for their neighbourhood and to do things for themselves. It was only if people took this kind of action that life could change for the better for everyone. EC had been given responsibility for the High Town area and she appreciated what the area had to offer in terms of its history and community. The agreement would cover areas which were of concern to the local community such as litter, fly-tipping, car parking, etc. A group of local residents would be needed to draw-up the agreement and it would be the first agreement of its kind in Luton.

Attention was being given to various issues in the area. It had been decided by the council to close two of the three access points to Mussons Path after consultation with local residents, and this, and other issues of this kind, were discussed at the Burglary Reduction Group meetings which were held regularly. EC said that, because of the wide-spread interests of the group, it had now been renamed the "High Town Improvement Group". Chris Grabham asked how many local residents were needed to consult on the agreement. EC said it should be about five or six and be composed of a cross-section of the local community. She said she would welcome anyone who would like to join the group. If there were doubters that

anything would result from the agreement, EC said she would encourage them to come along. EC said if anyone wanted to attend the next meeting, or any future meetings, they should contact Maureen Allen, who will get back to them. It was important to hear from as many residents as possible on what they felt were the issues for High Town.

DL asked all of those currently involved in the High Town Improvement Group to give EC their names. The members included: Lyn Bliss, Philippa Collier, Kim Greig, Councillor Andy Malcolm, MA and DL. DL said that he would consider contacting Alex Bain-Stewart, as he might like to be involved in drawing-up the agreement. AM said he knew of another couple of people who might like to join the group.

The new LBC team of Enforcement Officers was due to start work in October and had been checking out the hot-spots for fly-tipping in Luton. They were a specially dedicated team and would also rely on information from residents. They had the right to issue fines to offenders and a structure had been drawn-up for this. Any rubbish dumped on council land would be removed, but if the rubbish was left on private land it would be the landowner's responsibility to remove the rubbish, even if the rubbish had been put there by someone else.

5. Fatal Collision, High Town Road

DL said that the collision, which had occurred on August 9th, had brought up a few aspects which he needed to discuss at the meeting. He had tried to contact the family of the 15 year old girl who had been killed to offer the condolences of the FoHT and to ask if there was anything FoHT could do to help. The collision had destroyed the shop front of the TV repair shop and, also, the front part of the flat above it. Because of the destruction caused by the collision, the Welbeck Square development, which had been due to start on the following Monday, had now had to be postponed.

The gentleman who had rented the TV repair shop for 28 years, Mr Chohan, now had no premises for his business. It had been thought that he might not carry on with his business, but DL had learnt that he now wants to carry on and he had put his phone number on the wire fencing surrounding what had been his repair shop. He hoped that the work to the shop and to the front wall of the flat above it would be completed in 8 months' time. It had been suggested that a collection was held to help Mr Chohan, as he said he was struggling financially. DL said that the fact that Mr Chohan is still working could be publicised on the FoHT website. He also asked members of FoHT to let people know about this. Another shop was being sought by Mr Chohan as a temporary base to use whilst his shop was being rebuilt, and DL said if anyone knew of any premises he could rent cheaply they should get in touch. When DL had asked about a collection for him, Mr Shah had said he would not ask for it to be done, but he would not have any objections if people felt strongly enough to organise this. Lyn Bliss said that, as he had lost his income, she thought there should be a collection in the High Town area for him. DL added that Mr Chohan also needed to replace his tools, and said he would be doing this gradually. Dan Warwick asked about the people who had been made homeless, and DL said that he had no information on this at the present time. LB was anxious to start a collection as soon as possible. KG said that collection boxes could be bought quite cheaply on Amazon. Clare McNulty said it might be better to look at online giving and set something up that way. People tended to give more when giving online, rather than the 20p or 50p they might put into a collection box. Fiona Morton said that if FoHT did buy collection boxes, these might come in useful in the future. It was said that it must also be borne in mind that some online giving sites do charge a percentage on what was raised, so care would have to be taken in which site was chosen. MA said that the hairdressers shop

next to the TV shop had also been affected, as people had not thought the shop was still open. DL said that he would talk to the owner about whether she would also like her shop to be mentioned on the FoHT website. DL asked if the meeting would like to vote on the suggested help for Mr Chohan, and it was unanimously agreed that he should be helped. DL added that he would also continue to try to contact the family of the young girl who had been killed.

Welbeck Square Development

DL asked AM if he could add anything to the information on the delay to the development. AM said that the council had asked the owner of the damaged property for a programme of work for the site. Once the work to the shop and to the flat above it had been completed, the work on the Welbeck Square development would take place.

6. Matters Arising

a) Clean-up Day

Luke Middleton said that, in collaboration with KG and EC, he had arranged for a clean-up day to take place on the following Saturday, September 17th, between 10.00 a.m. and 1.00 p.m. All those who wanted to take part should meet in the High Town Methodist church hall, where they would be able to collect litter pickers and black sacks. EC had also asked that those taking part made a note of any flytipping they came across. The areas scheduled for the clean-up were High Town Road, and the Paths Estate and Crescent Road areas. LB said she was hoping that another clean-up day could be arranged in the near future which would involve the pupils of St Matthew's school.

b) Funding Applications

i) Community Green Space Gardner – KG said that the application to Near Neighbours was in process, but there was an issue around whether the FoHT had a Safeguarding Policy. KG had been looking at writing a Policy in relation to this. FM said that FoHT did have a Policy on this, and KG asked her to email this to her as soon as possible so that she could read through it. Near Neighbours will be running safeguarding training courses for community organisations - KG said that the courses were open to anyone who would like to attend.

ii) Noticeboards

The application to “Your Say Your Way” for funding for the repair of the Noticeboards in High Town Road had been sent to Heather James.

iii) High Town's Got Talent

The application for funding for this project had also been sent to Heather James. It was planned to do this event at Christmas time, to tie in with the Christmas celebrations. The event would cover a wide range of talents, and, if funding were received, would be held either in the High Town Methodist church hall, or at the Hightown Community Sports and Arts Centre.

c) Luton Town Football Club development

DL said that he had been unsuccessful in his attempts to contact David Wilkinson, Vice-Chairman of Luton Town football club. The club had submitted plans to the council asking for planning permission for both the Power Court and Newlands Park developments. It was possible to view the plans online.

d) Ice cream van – dangerous parking

DL had already received a response on this from the Parks Department saying that the van had a licence to sell ice cream at the park, but he was awaiting a response from the Highways Department. He had suggested that the van be given proper access to the car parking spaces which were available, rather than parking in Havelock Road.

e) Conservation area

RC said that, because of the fatal collision, he had decided to delay writing to the council about the number of satellite dishes in the High Town Road area.

Railway Tavern

It appeared that work was being done according to the planning application. The new extension in Midland Road is to be a coffee house. DL said he was pleased with what they had done with the windows, and, so far, everything seemed to be progressing as it should.

7. AOB

Philippa Collier had raised concerns about the lack of lighting on the path which is by the side of High Town Methodist Church and leads to Wenlock Street. She had been concerned because of the approach of winter and the darker evenings. DL said he would be looking at this.

PC had also asked about access to gardening equipment for people living on the Paths Estate. The recent improvement work on the Estate meant that some home owners now needed to upkeep larger areas of grass near to their homes, and not all the residents had the funding to buy the equipment to do this. She had asked if there were any schemes which might allow residents to borrow such items as lawn mowers. No one at the meeting knew of such a scheme.

8. Notices & Information Exchange

a) LB said that the next HCSAC meeting was to be held on the following day, Tuesday, September 14th.

b) The next Burglary Reduction Group Meeting (Now known as the High Town Improvement Group) was to be held on Thursday, September 29th, in the High Town Methodist Church Hall. The meetings begin at 6.00 p.m. LB praised EC for her hands on approach with regard to all the matters which were raised at the meetings, these covered a variety of subjects from anti-social behaviour to flytipping.

c) Open Arts grant

FM said that, as Secretary of Open Arts, she had been involved in applying for a grant from Comic Relief. Because Comic Relief had not been happy with the banking arrangements for Open Arts, and because she had only been given two days' notice of this, FM had asked the FoHT committee if the FoHT bank account could be used for the grant, and this had been agreed. Open Arts would be working with Food Bank and would be involved in producing cookbooks and arranging workshops.

DL said that he had learnt that what had formerly been Déjà vu in High Town Road was not going to be an Irish bistro, as had been thought. It was going to be a pub and would be called

“The Well”. He had spoken to the manager who had told him that the building was nearing completion, but there was still a snagging list to go through before the building would be open.

LM said that there were two upcoming events at Hope Church. One on Saturday, October 1st when there was to be a table top sale between 9.00 a.m. and 12.00 noon, and on Saturday, October 15th there was to be another “Quiz and Chips”. The entry fee would be £2.00 per person for this.

KG said that on Saturday, September 24th, at 2.00 p.m., there would be the annual Peace Walk in Luton. This is an Inter Faith event and a public demonstration of community solidarity. The Walk would include a visit to the Shree Guru Ravidaass Temple, Luton Central Mosque and the All Saints Church Peace Garden. Information on the Walk would be available on the new FoHT website.

9. Date of the next FoHT meeting

The next meeting, will be held on Tuesday, October 11th, at 7.00 p.m. at High Town Methodist Church.