

FRIENDS OF HIGH TOWN
MINUTES OF THE GENERAL MEETING
HELD AT 7.00 P.M. ON TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 8TH 2015

1. Attendees: David Landau, Chairman
 Maureen Allen, Secretary
 Lyn Bliss
 Annie Bygrave
 Russell Cartright
 Natalie Feerick
 Jean Godden
 Jan Horner
 Chris Grabham
 Andy Malcolm, Local Councillor
 Luke Middleton
 Fiona Morton
 Jeremy Williams

2. Apologies: Simon Barrow, Peter Brooks, Wendi Childs, Martin Godden, Kim Grieg, Aysegul Gurbuz, Philip Horner, Ryad Kohodabocus, Saida Moujahid, Joan Samuel, Csaba Sipeki, Dan Warwick, Lisa Wright

3. Minutes of the last meeting

David Landau said that although the minutes had been done it had not been possible to circulate them owing to problems with both his and the Secretary's computers. This had followed on from problems with Windows 10. Because of the length of the mailing list, DL thought that it would be better for those attending FoHT meetings to join Mailchimp which enables access to 10,000 contacts. Those on the mailing list would be sent an email and a link to join Mailchimp.

DL encouraged everyone to do this.

4. Luton Space – Julian Shaw, King's College London

It had been hoped that Julian Shaw, King's College London, would be attending the meeting in connection with his research into spaces and places in Luton. This would cover use of space in Luton.

5. Matters Arising

a) High Town Road Conservation Area (including the Railway Tavern)

DL said that there would be a meeting with English Heritage, now called Historic England, in the following month. They would visit the area and meet Andy Malcolm. It was hoped funding might be secured from the English Heritage Lottery Fund to help with regenerating and conserving the area.

Russell Cartwright had brought to the attention of DL that a planning application had been submitted to the council by the owner, Mr Shah, for residential use of the site alongside the Railway Tavern. Work had been begun some time ago to the land alongside the Tavern, but the new plan was to add a first floor extension to create a one bedroom flat. There were only

7/8 days left to write to the council with any comments on this application. The application number was 15/01222/FUL. In the following discussion it was felt that Mr Shah should be encouraged to do something to the whole site, and permission should not be given until his plans as a whole were known. Andy Malcolm said it might be worth approaching the council to suggest this. Annie Bygrave put the point that the owner may need to generate income from the proposed smaller development to enable the whole site to be developed. Natalie Feerick said that councils can serve improvement measures on private sites. That suggestion could be made. Lyn Bliss said that she thought that Mr Shah should be asked about his plans for the site as a whole. If that course of action did not prove fruitful, then the suggestion by NF should be taken up and the council could be approached on that basis. DL said that he would try and contact Mr Shah to ask what his future plans were for the Railway Tavern.

b) High Town Community Sports and Arts Centre

DL said that there would be a meeting with the Manager of the Centre on Thursday, September 17th at 10.00 a.m. LB would be attending and Luke Middleton said he would be interested in attending the meeting also. Chris Grabham felt it would be good to have a notice in High Town Road showing the Club's activities. He said that the space near to the Railway Tavern would be a good spot. AM said it would be a good idea to have a report on the Centre's activities delivered to a FoHT meeting every six months. He and Aysegul Gurbaz would be at the Centre on September 17th for their weekly surgery. He said they would look into the meeting. AM felt it was mainly a problem with communicating to the community as a whole what the Centre could offer. Fiona Morton said that information on the Centre could be included in any future newsletters.

c) Luton Tackling On-Street Sex Trade Meetings.

DL said that he had not been able to obtain information on any future meetings

d) Luton Railway Station Lift

Both DL and LB had received responses to their letters on this. The response from Gavin Shuker to DL was that the fact that the lift had been broken for such a long period was of major concern to many people in Luton. People needed to know the future plans for the station and the many improvements which needed to be done.

Thameslink had responded to say that the delay in repairing the lift had been caused because a part needed for the lift repair had to come from Italy. They had felt that the comments about signage to warn that the lift was out of order had been a valid point. They would look into providing signage in both Station Road and Midland Road should the lift break down for a long period in the future.

e) People's Park – conservation work day and trees

AB spoke on behalf of Simon Barrow to inform the meeting that work would be done at the top of Bell's Close to encourage wild flowers. Strimmers would be used and the area would need to be cleared using rakes. Volunteers were need for this. This was due to happen on Wednesday, September 23rd between 10.00 a.m-4.00 p.m., but this would have to be postponed, if it rained, to either Saturday, September 26th, or Wednesday, September 30th. If the work was done on a week day rakes would be provided, if at the weekend volunteers would need to bring their own rakes. DL would email to ask for volunteers. Jean Godden suggested that the request for volunteers for this work should also go on the noticeboard in the park. DL agreed to contact the council to ask if this might be done.

Trees

SB was to speak with Trevor Tween and David Oakley Hill about the canker problem with the horse chestnut trees, which is a national problem. It was necessary, because of the budget cuts, to find free trees to replace them, but advice was needed on finding the right replacements.

DL suggested inviting the council's arboriculturalist to the next meeting of FoHT to speak for five minutes on this subject. He said he would contact him.

SB would also be contacting CG to check on the exact date of the 150th anniversary of the opening of People's Park, as it might be possible to arrange some events to celebrate this anniversary.

f) Newsletter

LM had a proof of the newsletter to show to members of the meeting. This had been put together by LM/DL and Jeremy Williams. Everyone agreed they had done a very good job. DL would be asking for volunteers to help deliver these.

g) Dance Event

LB said that five dance groups would be participating in the event, which would be taking place on Saturday, October 10th.

LB was concerned about providing refreshments on the day. Jan Horner said she would approach other churches about donating cakes to the event. In order to have a full discussion on how refreshments would be provided and by whom AB suggested that those involved meet at her home in Havelock Rise. Dates suggested were 7th/8th October.

Additional helpers and a qualified first aider were also required.

6. High Town Team

The Team's main aims would be to encourage new businesses into the area and demonstrate that High Town would be an excellent area in which to set up a business. There were plans to set up a very simple website in connection with this.

It had been suggested that the Team become a sub-committee of FoHT. FM would be checking on any banking problems which might be encountered as a result of this. She confirmed that she had already set-up online banking for the FoHT account. She had also drawn up a spread sheet for the FoHT bank account. The High Town Team currently had funds of over £7,000. It was agreed that the High Town Team would become a sub-committee, proposed by RC and seconded by JW. LB proposed that any financial aspects were cleared with the bank by FM before this did happen and this was seconded by JW as a proviso.

Empty Shops

AM was looking into getting use of one of the empty shops in High Town by different groups in the area. It would give any groups/individuals an insight into setting up and running a business for a week, or on a longer term basis. Finance would need to be agreed for this, and the aim would be have this in operation for the summer of 2016.

7. Burglarly Reduction Scheme

DL said that he and some other members of FoHT had attended the meeting. Some council officers from the Private Sector Housing Team had attended to outline plans regarding registering and tackling Houses of Multiple Occupation. The first phase of looking at HMOs of three storeys or more, to see that they met all the requirements set down in law, had been ongoing and nearing completion. The plan was to then look at HMOs of two storeys to see if they complied with legislation. If HMOs had occupants who displayed anti-social behaviour it was possible, if this continued, to close the house for a period of three months. This would obviously be to the detriment of the landlord.

It was also possible to tackle private landlords if the property had any defects which might be a danger to the public, ie loose tiles on the roof of the house. Rubbish could be ordered to be removed from a front or back garden if the rubbish was of the type which encouraged vermin.

Some rogue landlords in the Luton area had been given huge fines when they had not taken action on properties which had been found to be a danger to their occupants. The team also tried to encourage the public to report any houses in their area which appeared to be a problem, and the Team's contact details were easily available on the Council's website.

Work had been done on Musson's path to clear the area of rubbish, and a fence erected at one of the houses to prevent the reappearance of the rubbish. Work had also been done on Frederick Street Passage.

Rolling bins were being tried to get rid of large items of rubbish. This was being trialled in Marsh Farm.

Street Watch

Those interested in joining would be asked to complete vetting forms. There would also be information on joining Street Watch at the Dance Festival on October 10th.

8. High Town Clean Up

It was suggested that this might be done in the spring, but that if any other activities of this nature were happening in the local area prior to that AM suggested the clean up of the area might be included in those.

9. AOB

JH said that High Town Methodist Church would be holding a Christmas tree festival from December 12th-19th, and they were looking for sponsors for trees. There would be events at the church in addition to this.

10. Notices and Information Exchange.

Hope Church had organised some quarterly events and there would be a "Quiz and Chips" night on Friday, September 18th. Entry would cost £2.00.

There was also a Youth Drop in at Hope Church for young people aged between 12-18 years planned for various dates until the end of the year.

11. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting would be on Tuesday, October 13th at 7.00 pm at the High Town Methodist Church.

