



## Chair's Report – Annual General Meeting – May 2017

Events of last year:

### Building conservation

- a) Railway Tavern: works have been effectively completed for the planned café, shops and offices, but no-one appears to have leased the units as yet.
- b) Painter's Arms: after gaining planning permission, works were carried out to make the first floor flat into three flats.
- c) The Freeholder: after gaining planning permission, works have started to make this a B&B.
- d) We intervened in the change to the shop frontage of 94-96 High Town Road, to ensure it respected the historic fabric of the Conservation Area.

### High Town Masterplan

Receiving updates from Luton Borough Council's delivery group. The most significant that we can expect LBC to consult soon on a block of flats that they wish to build between Back Street and Taylor Street.

### Outreach & diversity

In 2016, we had the first active involvement of the Polish community in the High Town Festival, with the Polonia group making an appearance in the opening parade. This year, we will also have a Roma Choir involved and a greater range of church choirs. We have had a very productive first meeting with representatives of St Matthew's Church, which has already led to their involvement in our projects.

### High Town's Got Talent

In 2015-16, we put on a dancing event to bring different communities together in High Town and it was decided that we should try a talent event next time around. Your Say Your Way funding was granted by Luton Borough Council and a successful event was held at High Town Community, Sports and Arts Centre in December. Up to 100 people turned up and the quality and range of performances was outstanding. The winners won a small cash prize and the chance to play the High Town Festival. We intend to replicate the event this year.

### Christmas Tree Festival

We took part in this fundraiser for the High Town Methodist Church, dressing our own tree, which took its place in the main church building.

### High Town Festival

We helped to support and publicise last year's event, and we had a stall, which brought new subscriptions and database members. The line-up for 2017 is possibly stronger than it has ever been (I will report back on behalf of LM later). We will have a stall again.

### Litter & flytipping

We had a very successful clean-up day, supported by Luton Borough Council with Your Say Your Way funding, council officials and workers, where 50 volunteers took part and collected 100 bags of rubbish. It is the first of four that we intend to do in 2017.



### High Town Community Gardeners

We have supported the work of the two gardeners funded through the Near Neighbours programme. They have already made a difference in terms of tidying existing plots, replanting at the Burr Street Car Park and being involved in our clean-up days.

### Parks

We have kept an eye on the standard of our parks and there will soon be a Green Flag visit on May 18<sup>th</sup>, which at least one FoHT member hopes to attend. Concern has been raised about the removal of some park benches (more on this from LB later) and we also intend to carry out a clean-up at some point in the coming year. We were active participants in the consultation exercise for a new bandstand at Wardown Park in 2015-16. Work is due to start after Luton International Carnival this year (2017).

### Hightown Community, Sports & Arts Centre

We have continued a constructive dialogue with the Centre's management to ensure they are meeting the needs of the community and to encourage more people to use the facilities there. That included

### Prostitution

Kept a watching brief, with members attending multi-agency meetings this year.

### Nuisance motorbikes

These became a serious problem in the High Town area for the first time in 2015-16. Following police action, this problem has largely died down, but we need to continue reporting any incidents to the Bedfordshire Police non-emergency number and to the Operation Meteor email address.

### Sub-committees

- a) The Burglary Reduction Scheme sub-committee became the High Town Improvement Action Group. It has led the ongoing fight to keep our streets clean and free of anti-social behaviour, with the support of Luton Borough Council officers. However, it is unfortunate that we have been told one of those officers, Emma Colclough, can no longer support us as much as she did.
- b) High Town Team  
We were the lead group that secured Portas funding, which paid for a design scheme for Welbeck Square. This was due to be implemented this year in one of the first Luton Borough Council actions to support the High Town Masterplan. Work was due to start shortly after the tragic car crash into the shop on the corner of Welbeck Street, so has been postponed indefinitely.  
The HTT supported the High Hats pop-up shop on High Town Road. When it closed, because it was no longer financially viable, further support was given to Luton artists to use it as workshop space. They were very appreciative of the opportunity and thought it benefitted their work. One, Stephen Whiting (of Clod Magazine and The Knockouts), has gone on to secure University of Bedfordshire funding, had a successful exhibition in the town centre and has another coming up soon. The shop's future remains unclear.



### High Town Community Worker

We have supported Luke Middleton in his continued work for High Town ward and he has been extremely helpful to FoHT in this role. His time in the role comes to an end in June and there will be a meeting this week, to see if a replacement can be found.

### The Future

1. Continue our work through our sub-committees, the High Town Festival committees and – funding allowing – the Community Gardeners. Continue to provide accurate information to people in High Town about what is happening in the ward
2. Meet regularly as a committee, to help provide more consistency and speed as a group, eg. the minutes, financial information, use of media. We started the year well on this, but I let this slip.
3. Increase our active and passive membership through events / reaching out to more community groups / using social media, including Nextdoor.



## Media Officer Report – Annual General Meeting – May 2017

### Press Releases

A couple of press releases / short write ups were written and sent out around the High Town Festival last year, this year's coming and the High Town's Got Talent event in December.

### Social Media

236 Likes to 297 Likes on Facebook (61 up from last year)

157 Followers to 282 Followers on Twitter (125 up on last year)

### Mailing List

Continued to send mailing campaigns including agendas, minutes and pieces of information relevant to High Town. The current mailing list contains 95 people.

### Brand

The brand has been continuing to be used throughout mailings, posters, flyers.

### Website

Maintaining our website which was built last year keeping up to date ownership of other common domain names which redirect to new main website and dates of meetings and other events.

### Video

2 Videos were produced in association with other projects working with FoHT. A review video of High Town's Got Talent and High Town Big Clean Up.

### Newsletters

Collated information and produced Friends of High Town newsletter for spring. Yet to be printed and delivered.



## Going Forward

We hope to continue to develop our presence and awareness in High Town with posters in the new community notice board being built next to the school.

We would also like to enable our website, social media and mailing to be regularly filtering through appropriate information and news and updates, by writing and working with others to write posts and or press releases and information sharing.

We will also seek to hopefully look into ability of more newsletters to be produced to support the better communications in the area and the awareness of FoHT.