

FRIENDS OF HIGH TOWN  
MINUTES OF THE GENERAL MEETING  
HELD AT 7.00 P.M. ON TUESDAY, 14<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2017

1. Attendees: David Landau, Chairman  
Maureen Allen, Secretary  
Luke Middleton, Media and Marketing Officer  
David Alexander  
Caroline Anderson (part of meeting)  
Hayrettin Aydin  
Lyn Bliss  
Russell Cartwright (part of meeting)  
Pete Savage
  
2. Apologies: Philippa Collier, Chris Grabham, Kim Greig, Ryad Khodabocus, Andrew Malcolm, Maarwish Mirza, Fiona Morton, Saida el Moujahid, Csaba Sipeki, Jeremy Williams, John Wright.
  
3. Minutes of the last meeting
  
4. Matters Arising
  - a) Luton Town Football club development

As David Landau had not had the time to follow this up, and to request a meeting with representatives of the club regarding the implications for the area of the planned development, he had asked Andrew Malcolm to follow this matter up on behalf of FoHT.
  
  - b) High Town Methodist Church – path lighting

DL said that work had been started by the council on improving the path lighting, but this had not been finished. DL had notified the council that if the work was not restarted in two weeks, the matter would be escalated. He had received the council’s apologies in regard to this, and they had said that they did not know why the work had not been completed. DL had contacted the council many times on this problem.
  
  - c) Conservation Area:
    - i) satellite dishes  
RC would be providing an update on what response he had received from LBC on whether they would be taking any action regarding some of the satellite dishes in the High Town Road conservation area (the council could only take action if the dishes had been in place for less than ten years).
  
    - ii) 94-96 High Town Road – change of shop front application  
A number of issues had been raised at the last FoHT meeting concerning this retrospective application. One particular point had been that the recent application had not been advertised, so that anyone who might object would not necessarily be aware and, therefore, would be unable to express their viewpoint. A further point was that the premises was a primary shopfront in the High Town Road conservation area. DL had put in a formal complaint on

behalf of FoHT. He had checked the situation against policy, and, in respect of a conservation area, it states that the council “must advertise locally, and in the local newspaper”. DL understood that to do this might take the council time and effort, but, as this ruling applied only to conservation areas and there were only three such areas, this would not add greatly to the council’s workload. Lyn Bliss asked about the objections to the new shopfront itself: these had been to the installation of plate glass windows, the new door, and to the rendering which now covered the previously exposed brickwork. DL said that, as no one had been aware of the recent resubmission, there had been no opportunity to object. DL would be reporting back on the situation.

iii) 80 High Town Road – change from commercial to residential

The application was for the conversion of the ground floor shop space and the single flat which had been above that into four self-contained bedsits. DL had objected on a number of grounds: the fact that the shop is in the conservation area, the intended use of upvc windows on the first floor, where there had previously been wooden windows, and the proposed size of the flats. Pete Savage suggested that DL speak to Dermot Mee? of LBC, in relation to this. Another concern was that to allow this work to go ahead would set a precedent and the unique Victorian and Edwardian buildings would be lost. It was also felt that there should be enough housing provision in the High Town area in the years to come to enable the proper support of the shops in High Town Road.

iv) 17 High Town Road

Building had only just started on this site, but planning permission had been granted in 1994. In those circumstances, a new application should have been submitted to the council. DL said that the council were unable to issue a “stop notice”, because they were currently building on the site, rather than demolishing a building. The council will now have to wait until the building work is completed before they can take any action. As there were currently fifty such cases in Luton at the present time, it would take the council some time to work through the backlog.

d) Friends of High Town Newsletter

Luke Middleton said that it had been possible to send out a FoHT Newsletter over the last couple of years, as funding had been secured by LB from “Your Say Your Way” to cover the cost of the first of the newsletters, and JNB Publishing had funded the second newsletter. The aim was to give High Town residents an update on what was happening in the High Town area. It was planned to send a newsletter out at the end of the month, and the deadline for any information or news for the newsletter was the following day. Funding for the current newsletter had been provided out of the funding left over from LM’s role as High Town community worker, his role as community worker ends at the end of the month.

e) High Town Clean-up and Community Gardening Day (Saturday, 4<sup>th</sup> March) – feedback

LM said that this had been a very successful event. Fifty people had attended, and some people from the church had joined in with the event after it had started. The last litter pick had about twenty people joining in, so the number of people taking part had more than doubled. Feedback had been mostly positive. DL had contacted St Matthew’s church in relation to the event. The door knocking and leafleting had also had positive results in regard to turn out. LB said that there were a couple of areas where she thought there could be improvement. Someone should be at the door of the meeting place to greet everyone as they arrived, as some of those arriving did not know anyone and it was important to make them feel welcome. Quite a lot of people had not come back to the church hall after the event.

Also, what rubbish is to be recycled and how, should be clearly defined. It was also felt that some of the groups were too big, and people should have been divided into groups of five or six people. 100 bags of waste had been collected in one morning. Maureen Allen commented that on the Monday, 6<sup>th</sup> March, following the High Town clean-up, she had seen the council's street cleaning service going down Edward Street and Kingston Road. This was a waste of the council's time and effort and pointed to the fact that it was impossible to get a schedule from the council on when the street cleaning service would be working in High Town. DL said that he had been informed that each street in Luton was scheduled to be swept every two weeks, but it was impossible to know when that would be. The High Street was cleaned daily, and the public recycling bins were emptied once a week, on a Tuesday. DL suggested it would be useful to put a schedule on Facebook. Some of those attending had been involved in the gardening day with Philippa Collier and Doris Brittain, who had worked on the green spaces in Edward Street and in the Kingston Road area.

#### 5. St Matthew's Church informal meeting

DL said that the meeting had resulted in a very positive exchange. He had explained to some of the church members about the aims of FoHT. Caroline Anderson had come to the FoHT meeting that evening and it was hoped that there would be more communication between the two groups. The church might be involved in the forthcoming High Town Festival by having a stall at the Festival. DL said that it would be good to maintain contact with the church.

#### 6. Neighbourhood Enforcement Team walkabout

There are six neighbourhood enforcement officers for the whole of Luton. They are responsible for helping to clear areas affected by litter and fly-tipping, and their remit also covers anti-social behaviour and illegal HMOs (the team feedback information on these aspects to the appropriate council department). DL had met one team member whilst she had been working in the High Town area. He had directed her to some hot spots in the area, and had taken her to a couple of places which were particularly problematic. There had been a suspected illegal HMO, and some land with an enormous amount of fly-tipping. The enforcement officer had said that the fly-tipping was the worst case that she had seen. An on-the-spot fine of £400 had been issued, and she had contacted a more senior officer to look at the site. DL was told that people needed to be educated about their responsibility in regard to rubbish and the dropping of litter. If a lot of rubbish was left outside a recycling bin it would be checked to see if a name and address was amongst the rubbish and a fine would be issued. If someone dropped litter, or spat in the street, they would also be fined. Luton council was now issuing the highest number of fines in the country. One of the enforcement officers had been present at the High Town Clean-up day, and DL felt that the officers were making a positive start to their new role in the town.

#### 7. High Town Voice Meeting

Noticeboard – LB said that repair work needed to be done to the two noticeboards in High Town, but, so far, no one had been able to do the work. An application to “Your Say Your Way” had secured some funding for this.

MUGA – This had been launched. It will be based in a corner of St Matthew's school, and will be established in 2020.

High Town Sports and Arts Centre would be working with the Irish Centre on taster sessions.

The youth group for 8-12 year olds will be starting on May 5<sup>th</sup>.

A pre-school have asked the Centre if they can use their hall every day. This would help with the Centre's funding, but it would mean that the hall would not be available for hire.

A Knit and Natter group would be starting at the Centre on March 21<sup>st</sup>, from 11.30 a.m. until 1.30 p.m.

There would be board games at the Centre on Friday, March 31<sup>st</sup>. This was being held in aid of the NSPCC and the entry fee would be £5.00 for a family of four. Any children taking part should be aged 5 years plus. Those attending would be asked to bring their own refreshments.

In the future, a drinks machine will be located near to the Reception area at the Centre. It had been planned that a charity would be moving into the kitchen area at the Centre, in order to make bread. Unfortunately, this would not now be going ahead as the kitchen area did not have the correct facilities.

St Matthew's school, the Irish Forum and High Town Methodist church were now involved in the discussions on how the Centre can become more involved with the local community.

#### 8. High Town Team Meeting

There had been some indication on what would be happening to the former Studio School in York Street. The building was owned by the Educational Funding Agency, and it would be used in the future for the overspill of pupils from Luton's primary schools.

The hightownluton.com website gives general information on the High Town area, i.e. shops, the Luton Irish Forum, etc. It was hoped that LM might continue to run the site, and funding for this was being looked at.

DL said that, on the subject of the noticeboards in High Town, it was intended to ask a local joinery company if they would take on the work, and to get a quote from them. The company in mind was "Knock-Out Joinery".

#### High Town Masterplan

This would involve the building of flats and it was hoped that a planning application would be submitted in the near future. AM had been tasked with finding out timescales.

Heather James had looked into the question of Christmas lights for the High Street, and had found that these would be too expensive. It was hoped that the High Street shops might be persuaded to make more of an effort with decorations at Christmas time.

#### High Town Gardeners

The High Town gardeners had been given funding for the period December 2016-March 2017. FoHT had put in an application to the Luton Airport Community Fund for further funding, and was waiting to hear if their application had been successful.

#### 9. AOB

MA brought up the question of the collection which had been held for Mr Chohan, who had lost the TV repair shop he had rented for twenty-eight years, following the fatal collision in High Town Road in August last year. It had been agreed that a collection would be held for

him and FoHT would make up any shortfall to enable him to be given £100 to help him, now that he had lost his business. Because of the length of time since the collision it was decided to give Mr Chohan £100, the shortfall to be made up from the FoHT funds. DL said that he would ask Fiona Morton, the FoHT treasurer, to set this in motion.

#### 10. Notices and Information Exchange

a) Disco Sound and Lighting had moved out of High Town Road, and the shop was now available for rent.

b) Seacott Motors have moved from High Town Road to Hitchin Road. DL did not know at present what was going to happen to their old premises.

c) LM's last FoHT meeting

DL said that LM was attending his last FoHT meeting. He had been attending meetings in his role as High Town Community Worker for the last two years, but this role would finish at the end of the month. LM had said that he would still be involved in helping, in a voluntary capacity, with the arrangements for this year's High Town Festival. DL wanted to formally thank LM for all the work he has done for the community over the last two years. LM had also played a major role in publicising both FoHT, and events in High Town, on social media. He had also worked hard on producing the FoHT Newsletters before they went to the printers. Those attending the meeting added their thanks to those of DL.

d) LM said that there was going to be a Table Top sale at Hope Church on Saturday, March 25<sup>th</sup>. The previous Table Top sale, held last October, had been very successful.

#### 11. Date of the Next Meeting

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