

FRIENDS OF HIGH TOWN
MINUTES OF THE GENERAL MEETING
HELD AT 7.00 P.M. ON TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 8TH 2016

1. Attendees: David Landau, Chairman
Maureen Allen, Secretary
Luke Middleton, Media and Marketing Officer
David Alexander
Russell Cartwright (part of meeting)
Philippa Collier
Kim Grieg
Pete Savage

- 2) Apologies: Lyn Bliss, Chris Grabham, Ryad Kohodabocus, Andrew Malcolm, Fiona Morton, Maahwish Mirza, Saida Moujahid, Csaba Sipeki, Jeremy Williams

- 3) Minutes of the last meeting

- 4) Matters Arising
 - a) High Town's Got Talent
Luke Middleton and David Landau had had meetings to discuss this event. They were very close to having a poster ready to advertise the High Town's Got Talent competition, and these would be put up around the High Town area. They were awaiting approval from Luton Borough Council. Application forms for entry to the competition were also available on the FoHT website and LM had set-up a web page on the friendsofhightown.org website. Lyn Bliss, Fiona Morton and Chris Grabham had already said that they would be willing to help with the event, which is scheduled for 2.00 p.m. on December 17th. The sound at High Town Community Sports and Arts Centre, where the event is to be held, is not very good, and a better service would be provided and paid for.

 - b) Transition Luton – Community Green Space Gardner
Kim Greig said that no applications had been received for the Community Gardner post. She felt that this was because the post had not been widely advertised. The post was to be publicised again for a further three weeks. The information had been shared with the “Green Team” and with various areas not contacted before. If no applications were received the project would be looked at in a different way. DL had made a number of suggestions, such as contacting LBC's Parks Department and Shuttleworth College. Philippa Collier asked what sort of person was needed. KG it would need to be someone who wants to work in and improve the green spaces in High Town and encourage community involvement in the work. He/she would be involved in the planning of which areas to work on. Whoever took on the role would be working with the support of LM, Simon Willis, Simon Barrow and Andrew Malcolm. The post is for a short period and was not expected to last beyond March 2017

c) Fatal Collision, High Town Road

DL said that, following on from the decision to organise a collection for Mr Chohan, whose TV repair shop had been destroyed in the collision, collection boxes had been ordered and were ready for collection. He had not been able to collect them because of problems with his car. The boxes had to be collected by November 10th. KG offered to give DL a lift to Gypsy Lane Retail Park to get the collection boxes.

d) Luton Town Football Club Development

It was hoped to have a meeting with the Club representatives in the near future to discuss any implications for the High Town area in regard to the Club's planned development in the town centre, but, so far, nothing had been arranged.

e) Conservation Area

i) Satellite dishes

DL had not received any updates from Russell Cartwright on this problem. He would be contacting RC to see if he had heard anything further from Luton Borough Council.

ii) The Railway Tavern Murals

Jeremy Williams had said he would talk to the builders currently working on the site about the murals which had been on the hoarding in front of the building. One of the murals was on the hoarding, but JW was to see if the others could be recovered. SNAP was to be consulted on what to do with any of the remaining murals.

iii) 94-96 High Town Road – change of shop front application.

DL said that Viva Pizza had applied to LBC Planning Department to change the window frontage from the current Victorian frontage to one with powder coated aluminium window frames. The owner was not looking to change the front of the building, only the windows. DL said that the new windows would not be sympathetic to the building nor in keeping with the conservation area. It was agreed that DL, on behalf of FoHT, would send an objection to the application. Any members of FoHT who felt strongly about the issue were asked to send their individual objections to the Planning Department (Reference No. 1601722FUL [94-96 High Town Road]).

iv) Flat above 59 High Town Road – retrospective HMO conversion

The shop, Brown and Lewis, at 59 High Town Road had applied for retrospective planning permission to turn the upper floors of the shop into accommodation. The upper floors had formerly been used by the shop for storage. Because of the shortage of accommodation in Luton, and the fact that the upper floors had been used previously for accommodation, the Council had agreed that this could go ahead.

v) High Town Methodist Church – path lighting

LBC were to get back to DL on the action they were taking to cut down any overhanging trees and replace the lighting. PC said that she thought that the Council had taken some action on this. DL said that he would be checking on the path to see exactly what had been done so far.

5. High Town Voice Meeting

DL said that the object of the meetings was to work with the High Town Sports and Arts Centre to get more community involvement and to try and ensure better use of the Centre. The last meeting had been very positive. St Matthew's School had offered lots of ideas and

DL felt that some inroads had been made. The school is the main user of the Centre, but there were spaces in the timetable which could accommodate local groups, a number of which already used the Centre. The school would be holding a competition to design a poster about litter and this would be held on November 30th. Pupil's parents would be encouraged to come along to the Centre to see a display of the posters which had been designed by the school's pupils. The Centre would also be providing some "mini nastics" for the under 5s, so that parents could see what was on offer at the Centre. The school had also suggested a sports event. Lyn Bliss would be going along on behalf of FoHT. If anyone attending the FoHT meeting wanted to help with the event they were encouraged to contact LB via email.

DL had received an update on the High Town Junior Football club which was being organised by Luton Town Football Club. Matches were taking place at Bells Close and availability was for years 5, 6, 7 and 8 from local schools. The idea was that parents would be encouraged to get involved and run the club.

Some of the "Your Say Your Way" funding had been given to Philip ?, for him to set-up a youth club at the Centre. He had done some research on what would appeal to those who would attend. The main interest had been football, but some children had also said that they needed space to "chill". It was intended that the club would be open between 5.30 p.m.-7.30 p.m. on a Friday evening.

There was now a full list on what was happening at the Centre on Hightownluton.com, and there had been a discussion on liaising with the Centre about any events, so that they could be given the maximum publicity via social media and the web.

St Matthew's School was to hold its Christmas panto at the Centre on Saturday, December 10th.

The school also hoped that an after-school club, which would be open to ex-pupils, might be set up at the Centre on a Wednesday evening between 6.00 p.m.-8.00 p.m. This would be for contemporary dance/street dance lessons. It was felt that this would offer an opportunity to those pupils who could not afford to attend the local dance schools in the area. A date had yet to be decided on for this to start.

6. High Town Team Meeting

DL said that there was nothing new to report. The work on Welbeck Square would not be able to commence until the work on the damage to the TV repair shop had been completed. AM was going to try and find out when this was likely to be.

It was hoped that the Council would bring forward its plans for housing in the area. AM had raised the issue of the site on Midland Road and plans for development there.

There had been a change in the business rates for the shops in High Town. If the rateable value of a shop was under £12,000 they would not be paying business rates, and there would be a new business rate for those shops which came into the £12,000-£15,000 bracket. This would apply to all the shops in High Town Road.

Christmas Lights

This would be looked into further and there would also be an assessment of costs.

It was hoped that Christmas style bollard covers, made by High Town Arts, might be put along High Town Road, these would be similar to the covers made for the High Town Festival. KG expressed her concern that these might be stolen if left overnight. It was hoped that this could be avoided if they were only put out when Flamingo Arts were using their shop. DL was to contact Caroline Wallace about this.

Harthill Adventure Playground

KG said that this was an LBC community centre. The centre only seemed to be open for a few hours each day, and Heather James had asked KG to ask for any feedback from anyone who had used the centre. Both HJ and KG appreciated that the centre was slightly outside of the High Town area boundary.

7) Community Safety Group Meeting

The meeting, which had been held in the previous month, had provided an opportunity for local residents to meet with the police and council officers to discuss matters of concern to them in the area. Emma Colclough had been made aware of the problem areas in High Town in regard to litter and fly-tipping. KG said that there had been confusion over one area in Edward Street, where it had been thought the area she had referred to was private land, but it had later been established that the land did belong to LBC and the rubbish which had collected there had been removed. AM and Rachel Hopkins, another councillor, had attended the meeting. It was remarked that all those who had attended the meeting on behalf of the police and the council had seemed genuinely interested in the issues affecting the area. The new environmental team were going to be informed about the areas where fly-tipping was an issue. KG said that the advantage of the last meeting, as opposed to previous meetings, was that residents were able to go to those who could help with the issues of importance to them. It had not been a “formal” meeting like those held in the past. PC said that more local residents needed to be aware of this type of meeting, and when and where it was being held. DL said that it was really the job of LBC to publicise the meetings. FoHT did as much as they could to help and did send out emails to make people aware of what was happening locally. When the High Town noticeboards were in use they would also be able to provide local information to encourage the local community to be involved.

8) Notice and Information Exchange

a) There was to be a High Town soup night at Flamingo Arts on the evening of Wednesday, November 9th, between 7.00 p.m. and 9.00 p.m. The entrance fee would be £2.50.

b) The next High Town Improvement Group meeting was to be held on Thursday, November 24th at 6.00 p.m. KG said she hoped more people could be encouraged to attend. The group were involved in improving the area and had seen some success in tackling reports of fly-tipping, and anti-social behaviour, etc.

c) Poster competition

As discussed earlier in the meeting, this was to be held at the High Town Community Sports and Arts Centre on Wednesday, November 30th, and was scheduled to start at 10.00 a.m.

d) Christmas Community Craft Fair

This was to be held at Hope Church, Villa Road, Luton, on Saturday, December 3rd, from 10.00 a.m.-1.00 p.m. There would be workshops and craft stalls.

e) Event for fundraising – Fight Against Modern Day Slavery

PC said that on November 12th there was to be a Fancy Dress Quiz Night at the Indian Cricket Club, starting at 6.30 p.m. The aim was to get funds to help with the fight against modern day slavery.

f) Local property developments

i) Duke Street Car Park

An application had been made to LBC to build a block of flats at 52 Duke Street (car park area). This would comprise of four one bedroom flats, and two two bedroom flats. The plans could be looked at on LBC's website (Application No. 16/01951/FUL).

ii) 223 High Town Road

The application to change the property from a three bedroom house into an HMO to accommodate six people had been approved by the Council. Concern was raised about the number of HMOs in the High Town area.

iii) 35 Charles Street

The building was on the corner of High Town Road, and LBC had been asked for permission to turn the former business premises into a leisure facility. This had now been approved by the Council.

iiii) 275 High Town Road

The property had sought permission to make alterations to the front of the house. They were going to replace the current upvc windows with sash windows, and do a couple of other alterations. DL commented that he thought that the alterations to the property were more sympathetic.

9) Any Other Business

PC expressed her concern at some of the work being undertaken on the Paths Estate. At the start of the work things had looked really promising, but so many fences had now been erected that it not only looked awful, but they would not help to engender any community feeling and would have a negative effect on trying to create this. Sometimes, PC said, the decision on where to erect the fences had been left in the hands of the site foreman. The positioning of the fencing was also becoming a security issue. DL agreed that this was a serious matter and he asked PC to make a list of all the recent alterations to the estate which were causing problems for those living there. He recommended that she also contacted AM on these issues.

10) Date of the Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, December 13th at 7.00 p.m. at High Town Methodist Church.

