



Annual General Meeting May 2018

Chair's Report

Events of last year:

Building conservation

- a) Railway Tavern: despite indications that the units would be leased, no-one appears to have done so yet. Difficulties with contacting the owners and working with future lessees has stymied plans to repurpose the traditional red public telephone box.
- b) Painter's Arms: members kept a watching brief on the internal renovations to this Grade 2 listed building, which were carried out sympathetically.
- c) The Freeholder: works have continued slowly to make this a B&B.
- d) Following our intervention, the site of the former TV Repair Shop at 80 High Town Road was turned down to create four tiny flats. The repair to the building has been carried out in a satisfactory manner, to comply with the Conservation Area requirements and appears to be nearing completion.
- e) Greenbank Music Village on Cobden Street got approval to demolish its building, a former C19th chapel and build four terraced house, which some members opposed. Demolition is almost complete.
- f) Station House, Midland Road. FoHT and members successfully opposed an unsympathetic extension. It was refused by LBC's planning committee.

High Town Masterplan

Luton Borough Council has applied to build a block of flats between Back Street and Taylor Street, as they indicated before the 2017 FoHT AGM. Works are well underway on the Hightown Housing Association plot on Charles Street.

Outreach & diversity

We are maintaining our association with the Polish community group, Polonia, for the 2018 High Town Festival. We have worked extensively with Edible High Town, Signposts and the Penrose group on our Clean-up and Fix-It Days. The Swaminaryan Hindu temple on Crescent Road took part in one Clean-up day, where they kindly provided refreshments and the use of their building. Neighbourhood policing has returned to High Town and officers have often been at our general and sub-committee meetings. Sadly, the involvement of St Matthew's Church congregants has fallen away, after successful involvement at the start of the year.

Fix-It Day

Last month (April 2018), we ran a day at the Hightown Community, Sports and Arts Centre, where people could bring items for repair and learn a little about reuse and recycling.

High Town's Got Talent

We intended to replicate our successful 2016 event last year, but we did not get funding in time. However, thanks to Near Neighbours, we will be able to do so later this year instead.



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. We will have a stall again.

Litter & flytipping

We have completed four successful clean-up days, doing what we promised to do in 2017. We had a lot of engagement from High Town's Neighbourhood Enforcement Officer since our last AGM, although this has fallen away recently, because he has become a Team Leader with extra responsibilities. We expect officers to be directly involved with our work again, as they are recruiting extra staff soon.

High Town Community Gardeners

Edible High Town and FoHT have provided each other with mutual support. The – literal – fruits (and veg) of their labours can be seen at the Burr Street Car Park. They have also started work this year at plots on Old Bedford Road, Edward Street and Kingston Road. We have already mentioned their collaboration with us on Clean-up Days. They are becoming a separate entity from FoHT, largely for financial reasons, but will continue working closely with us.

Parks

We have kept been successful in keeping an eye on our parks, with LBC addressing problems with graffiti and vandalism, albeit slowly at times. Luckily, there have not been major problems. We are supporting the efforts of local people to reopen the Pavilion in Bells Close Recreation Ground and its toilets. Mystery surrounds the reasons why a new bandstand at Wardown Park was not built in the last year, as promised. We will endeavour to find out why not.

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. There have been major changes to the building to make it a health hub. This has involved some refurbishment and changes to the internal layout. We have had some concerns raised about this within the last couple of days.

Sub-committees

- a) The High Town Improvement Action Group continues its ongoing fight to keep our streets clean and free of anti-social behaviour, with the support of the police and Neighbourhood Enforcement Officers.
- 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 in 2017 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 was postponed. Hopefully, this work will be resurrected once the rebuilding work is complete.
The HTT supported the High Hats pop-up shop on High Town Road. This has now been successfully leased to 33 Arts and 33 Records.



High Town Community Worker

We have supported and managed – with others - Sam Willis in his new role working for High Town ward and he has been extremely helpful to FoHT in this role.

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 let this slip.
3. Increase our active and passive membership through events / reaching out to more community groups / using social media, inc, Nextdoor.

Treasurer's Report

All accounts since formation FoHT have been audited and reconciled with bank activity. A revised format created for ongoing maintenance.

New procedure for monthly payment of volunteer expenses and supplier expense introduced.

Please find separate sheet showing the position of the accounts at the end of March 2018.

Secretaries Report

Website update with as many historical minutes as could be located.

Sub-section to display the High Town Improvement Action Group Minutes created and populated.

75% (9 out of 12) monthly minutes distributed within two weeks of previous meeting. *(1 Month minutes missing)*

75% (9 out of 12) monthly Agendas distributed two weeks prior to the meeting.



Media & Marketing Officer Report

Mail list grown from 96 to 180 members.

Website

Updated with tabs to separate years of minutes, additional sections for volunteers and polls saw the site receive an increase of 40% in traffic across the year.

Hosting the Luton Great British Spring Clean schedule saw a monthly increase in unique visitors by 320% in March 2018.

Social Media

Facebook, 306 followers up from 282.

Twitter, Added 143 new followers, averaged 2.53k impression per month.

You Tube, no new content was produced in the year, a video of the Fix-It Day was commissioned and is in editing stage.

Other

Banner produced for meetings and events such as High Town Festival.

A radio interview was secured in October and two press releases published.

Stall at High Town Festival arranged.

Newsletter compiled in full colour and 3750 copies distributed.

Increase in networking within the Luton Voluntary sector has increased the profile of FoHT within Luton and Bedfordshire.