

FRIENDS OF HIGH TOWN  
MINUTES OF THE GENERAL MEETING  
HELD AT 7.00 P.M. ON TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 9<sup>TH</sup> 2016

1. Attendees: David Landau, Chairman  
 Maureen Allen, Secretary  
 David Alexander  
 Nick Berg  
 Lyn Bliss  
 Annie Bygrave  
 Russell Cartwright  
 Robert Dean, Neighbourhood Watch  
 Raj Desai  
 John Fullerton, Neighbourhood Watch  
 Jean Godden  
 Chris Grabham  
 Kim Grieg  
 Nadine Mee, Bedfordshire Police  
 Luke Middleton  
 Fiona Morton  
 Jeremy Williams  
 Lisa Wright

2. Apologies: Simon Barrow, Peter Brooks, Wendi Childs, Aysegul Gurbuz, Jan Horner, Ryad Kohodabocus, Andrew Malcolm, Saida Moujahid, Csaba Sipeki, Dan Warwick

3) Minutes of the last meeting

Lyn Bliss requested a couple of corrections to the previous minutes:

Catrina is not a new member of HSAC and the word “new” should be deleted.

Delete “engage with the community” and put “do outreach work”.

Paragraph beginning “LB was given” after “notified of events” insert “which is not available” and delete “to sign up for this”.

4. Matters Arising

a) High Town Community Sports and Arts Centre

David Landau said there had been a good response to the question on what sort of activities should be on offer at the Centre. A meeting had been arranged with the Centre for March, and this would be attended by LB and Luke Middleton, along with two representatives from the Centre. LB said that Dave Magill, who had been instrumental in setting up the Centre, had expressed a wish to attend the meeting. He had very strong views on how the Centre should be run. DL said he did not see any reason why Mr Magill should not attend the meeting. Jean Godden said it might be an idea if the local schools were approached to get a wider view on what the Centre should be offering to the community.

b) Newsletter

DL confirmed that J & D Publishing would be sponsoring the next High Town Newsletter. This would be an A4 sheet, which would be folded and printed on both sides. If anyone had any notes or items of interest these should be emailed to LM as soon as possible (email address: [luke.communityworker@gmail.com](mailto:luke.communityworker@gmail.com)). Because of limits of space it could not be promised that everything could be included. Nadine Mee asked about how the Newsletter would be distributed. LM said that on the last occasion distribution had been partly paid for, and partly on a voluntary basis. Fiona Morton asked about the inclusion of photographs in the Newsletter, to add more interest. It was felt that this would take up too much space, and it was more important to give information on what was going on. LM said he intended to bring a draft of the Newsletter to the next FoHT meeting in March, DL said that this year's High Town Festival, which is taking place on Saturday, July 2<sup>nd</sup>, would be mentioned in the Newsletter. It was also intended to give further publicity to the Festival via flyers, etc. There would also be an update on the nuisance motorbikes, and project Sentinel. It was also noted that High Town did extend over quite a wide area, and people such as the Moulton Court Residents' Association would be included in the distribution. FM said that, judging by previous years, there should be enough Newsletters available.

c) Railway Tavern

DL had sent an email to the Council's acting Conservation Officer, Valerie Scott, in the absence of Gemma Davies, who was on maternity leave. He wanted to make her aware that work had re-started on the Railway Tavern.

d) High Town Conservation area meeting

DL said he had sent a follow-up email to Valerie Scott asking about any progress resulting from the meeting held last year with Historic England, and the suggestions resulting from that meeting. These suggestions needed the Council's approval and involvement. He was awaiting a response.

e) High Town Conservation area – planning applications

i) The Freeholder, 45 York Street – A decision on the change of use for this building was still pending. This should have been reached in early December, but because of the number of planning applications currently being assessed by the Council, it was still awaited.

ii) Painters Arms, 70 High Town Road – The application was to convert the existing single flat above the Painters Arms into three flats, building an extension on the back of the building. The target date for the application was February 29<sup>th</sup>. Russell Cartright had enquired about the conservation of the building and had been told the building did not come under that remit. The view was expressed that putting three flats above an important historic building was not viable, and would affect the use of the accommodation for any future landlord.

5. Nuisance motorbikes

DL said that the meeting to discuss this had been well attended. There had been over 100 people from a wide area who had been affected by the problem of nuisance motorbikes. The meeting had also been publicised on local radio. One police officer apologised for the fact that the police had not done enough on this issue, one factor being a lack of resources.

Because of safety issues the police were quite often unable to give chase to the bikes. Sergeant Louise Bates, who is dealing with tackling the issue, also attended the meeting. She said the police were trying to assess where the bikes were most likely to be. The public were being encouraged to let the police know of any sightings of the bikes. The police had given this problem the title “Operation Meteor”. Any member of the public could email the police on the subject of the motorbikes at: [opmeteorinbox@bedfordshire.pnn.police.uk](mailto:opmeteorinbox@bedfordshire.pnn.police.uk). John Fullerton said that the police welcomed any information from the public and that was one of the reasons why Neighbourhood Watch was encouraged by them. The Neighbourhood Watch team had been working with the police and knew how many of the vehicles had now been taken off the road. FM said that she had reported an incident with bikers at 1.00 p.m. and had received a response from the police at 1.30 p.m. Nick Berg asked if the bikers were known to be local. Some bikers had been seen in Wigmore. JF said that the location of several of them was known and they had been seen in Luton, Houghton Regis and Hockwell Ring among other places.

JF said that “Operation Big Wing” would be taking place on Friday, February 12<sup>th</sup> as part of a countrywide day of action. The police would be encouraging people to sign up to their neighbourhood alert schemes and raise awareness of knife crime. They would also be targeting those who may have escaped arrest and would be making several arrests on that day.

Operation Turtle was also mentioned. This had been aimed at targeting the on-street-sex-trade. NM said the police numbers on this Operation, which had been incorporated into “Operation Sentinel” had been increased to 8 or 9. When asked, she said she had previously been working on this Operation on her own for approximately three years. Operation Sentinel, which would be working on this problem across Bedfordshire, was being led by Chief Inspector Sean Quinn. NM said that the object was to be tougher on all concerned in the trade. The working girls would be given help and encouragement to get them off the streets and into a different life style. They would be given a couple of chances, following arrest, to change their lives. If this did not succeed they would be facing a prison sentence. Kerb crawlers would also be arrested and would be informed that they now had a criminal record. JF said that any arrests would be followed up. Every encouragement would be offered for the women to adopt a lifestyle away from the streets. DL said the police were looking to find a solution for both the women and the local residents who are affected.

#### 6. Parking permits and one-way system

DL had gathered information on this. The benefits would need to be spelt out, but it was thought that a one way system might be the way forward. It made no sense why Kingston Road was not included (to go up Ridgeway Road and down Kingston Road). Chris Grabham said that part of the system was badly designed.

#### 7 Clean for the Queen

This was part of a national event and was being launched by “Country Life” magazine. The event in Luton was being sponsored by the homeless charity Signposts, which was being supported by the Council and the local Rotary Club. This would be happening in Luton on March 4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> and would be in the Farley Hill area and Kestrel Way. There would be equipment available. Anyone interested could contact Phyl Rainey at [phylrainey@signpostsluton.co.uk](mailto:phylrainey@signpostsluton.co.uk), 07921 687178. (LM supplied the contact details). The

clean-up would not be happening in the High Town area. JF suggested getting the local councillors involved in organising a clean-up of the area. LB said that this had already been done with the help of Heather James. Various agencies had been involved, who had promised to do work in the area, but nothing had come of this.

It was confirmed that both Lisa Wright and Lyn Bliss had now joined the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme.

#### 8. Tree Replacement

Simon Barrow would be asking the Parks Department whether they will be replacing the trees which have had to be cut down. The Council were going to seek sponsorship on a Luton-wide basis. There would be no point in FoHT seeking to do this if this had already been sought by the Council. SB would be getting confirmation on what was happening. CG said that more trees had been cut down in Moor Path. RC said that he had noticed that more trees had been felled in “Lovers Walk”, now renamed Wardown Walk.

#### 9. Any Other Business

##### High Town Festival

Information on taking a stall, etc for the Festival can be found on [hightownfestival.org](http://hightownfestival.org). In the next month DL will be putting together an early press release about the Festival.

If members of FoHT wanted to receive information and minutes of meetings they should sign up to Mailchimp. Because of the size of the mailing list it was now necessary to use this system to send out information. If anyone was experiencing problems with Mailchimp they should speak to LM. All members should have accepted the invitation to join Mailchimp by March 7<sup>th</sup>.

DL, LM and Konni Deppe had been working on a new website for FoHT, which would mean minutes would be available in advance of meetings.

NB said that he was concerned about the cutting down of the hedges around the High Town area. In some cases this was to extend people’s gardens. He was concerned that there might be large spaces left which would encourage the dumping of rubbish. DL said the residents of the Paths Estate had been consulted on plans for the area and he would be contacting Andy Malcolm to ask him to send him any information. Any update received by DL would be sent directly to NB.

##### Transition Luton

Following on from the transfer from fossil fuel, Transition Luton, a charitable environmental group which aims to help to encourage and inspire communities, would like to look at subjects such as food waste. As Luton is quite a big area it was hoped to centre on one part of Luton, that area would, they hoped, be High Town.

##### Food Bank

Food Bank is based in High Town and they have asked to come and talk to FoHT. It was agreed a representative from Food Bank should be invited to join the next meeting.

##### Rainbow Garden

AB expressed her dismay that the gardens at the three properties across the road from St Matthew's school had been cut down. She and other members of FoHT had worked on these to add some colour to the area, and a lot of hard work had gone into acquiring the plants and placing these in the gardens. Unfortunately, the new owner had decided to cut everything down.

#### Allotments

DL asked Kim Grieg if she had made any progress with asking if the spare land around St Matthew's Church could be used for allotments. KG explained that she had been doing what she could on this. DL said that if agreement could not be reached, perhaps FoHT should look somewhere else.

#### 10. Date of the Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 8th at 7.00 p.m. at High Town Methodist Church.