

FoHT MEETING MINUTES

FRIENDS OF HIGH TOWN AGM 11TH JUNE 2013

DETAILS

The meeting was held at Methodist Church Hall, High Town Rd on 11/6/13. The meeting started at: 7pm and finished at 8:30pm.

ATTENDEES

People present at the meeting:

<i>Name</i>	
David Landau	
Annie Bygrave	
Russell Cartwright	
Joan Samuel	
Andy Malcolm	
Roxanna Whittaker	
Fiona Morton	
Kim Greig	
Lisa Wright	
Naomi Wynter-Vincent	
Linda Farrell	
David Alexander	
Alina Pullinger	
Mike Missen	

APOLOGIES

People who were not present at the meeting:

<i>Name</i>	
Chris Grabham	
Marie-Louise Lowcock	
Fiona Martin	
Simon Barrow	

KEY FINDINGS AND DECISIONS

The following new findings and decisions were made:

- Membership card with loyalty discount for High Town Residents to be assessed

MEETING ACTIONS

The following meeting actions were agreed:

<i>Due Date</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Person responsible</i>
12/07/13	Barclays bank: painting materials & volunteers for Zoen shop refurb.	DL
12/07/13	Arrange for food venues to sell an item for £1 over Festival weekend	AM & F Morton
ASAP	Distribution of 5 point Campaign Plan to FoHT members and addition to website	AB
9/7/13	Press release for Rainbows charity re: garden and their charity work	F Morton & N W-V
9/7/13	Ballpark figure for FoHT marketing campaign	F Morton
9/7/13	High Town loyalty card groundwork	N W-V
9/7/13	FoHT poster options	JS

9/7/13	Obtain chippings for Rainbow garden	AB & SB
12/7/13	Relaunch of FoHT website and purchase of domain names	N W-V
9/7/13	'Mediterranean Café square' – check with council re any existing gardening plans for this	DL & AM

May AGM Meeting minute's corrections received and addressed:

- Subs paid by N W-V and F Morton.
- 'Art 33 shop' changed to 'Shop 33'
- Address for Luton Rights changed to 15 New Bedford Rd, junction of Inkerman St and Collingdon St.

Prostitution & Drugs

DL: Introduced the subject.

JS: Indicated a well-balanced article in Luton on Sunday about the petition of High Town Against Prostitution and the work of the councillors and Azalea.

RW: Told the group about Azalea and her relationship with the charity.

RW: Azalea Outreach Project was set up to help women get out of prostitution. Volunteered to work with them for 2.5 years and was then involved with the charity as a councillor for another 2.5 years. The charity is funded by individuals, charity grants and churches and not by the council. Works alongside the police and drugs agencies. They have to be part of the solution – cannot do it alone. Police have to tackle kerb crawling, drugs and serious related crimes. Eight women have been helped off of drugs, out of prostitution and out of Luton over the past 2 years.

[Getting women out of prostitution is] -not happening as fast as some would like – limited resources of a small charity. Has been said that Azalea draws in women from outside the area, but prostitution has been in High Town for 12 years, Azalea has only been working here for 4 years (so although our cup cakes are really good, this is unlikely). Those who object [to the charity, to the councillors] refuse to talk to Azalea or local councillors so we have been unable to tell them about the work we are doing.

The approach taken to the problem attempts to model other successful areas in the country and worldwide. The greater part of this has to be police action. There has been talk of a 5 year plan. Have been telling the police that they need to take consistent action over the long term (at least 18 months) but they do a few weeks push then stop - due to limited resources. Reluctant to try to implement a 5 year plan with the police *[as this is unlikely to be adhered to]*. So Azalea's work is limited to what the police can do.

'Nordic model' – addressing kerb crawlers, serious organised crime and drugs. Assisting prostitutes to leave the business.

[AB note: RW mentioned the 'Nordic Model' but research indicates this may be a misnomer since in many Nordic countries the problem has apparently not been successfully addressed ([Prostitution in the Nordic Countries Conference Report 2008](#)). In Sweden however, prostitution is considered as 'male violence against women and children'. Sweden was the first to introduce social measures in tandem with police measures, which included ground roots school and public anti-prostitution education. Visible prostitution in Sweden has decreased to considerably lower levels whereas those in Norway are still high in comparison to the country's population number (2008 figures). So the model to be used in the UK should perhaps be the 'Swedish Model'??]

N W-V: Has FoHT group taken a view on High Town Against Prostitution?

DL: Not so far. I have been trying to encourage Shazad [*the person who raised the petition*] to come to the meeting to speak or at least to allow his views from our interview notes to be read out to the group [*but so far he has not agreed*].

N W-V: Is there a time frame for [*FoHT*] taking a view on this issue?

LF: By publicizing the prostitution issue, High Town Against Prostitution may be damaging the area's reputation more and drawing more women to High Town to work.

RC: Other people's views have not been aired to that group [*High Town Against Prostitution*]

JS: 'No confidence in our local councillors' is an oblique approach [*not a direct approach to the problem*]. Shazad has also now lost confidence in the council and other people involved [*in the petition/cause*].

N W-V: Supports the excellent work done in this area (including Azalea) to address the prostitution issues.

RW: Will be producing a newsletter telling people about the good work. Good to promote the positive aspects of High Town rather than the negatives, e.g. the Festival

LW: Asked what is actually going on in Azalea, other than a cup of tea?

RW: Difficult for Azalea to find a platform to promote their work, partly because positive news isn't so newsworthy. The negatives are good news for the media.

DL: Interesting news stories is what reporting is all about. Suggests reporters have access to Azalea for a day or a week, perhaps to report 'a day in the life of a volunteer'. There are other ways of getting the story out.

AB: Would one of the ladies who has left prostitution be willing to give an interview about how Azalea helped her?

RW: Problem is they are still classed as vulnerable people and we shouldn't use [*take advantage*] of them.

AM: Best to avoid mentioning prostitution at all and instead promote the positives about High Town.

AB: Agreed. But until the other side's [*High Town Against Prostitution*] issues are addressed and other views put forward to them they will not move forward. We cannot run away from this issue – that doesn't work.

DL: Luton Drug & Alcohol Partnership [*Addaction*] in Clarendon Rd. Feedback from Andy:

AM: Questions asked by this group:

Q. Do they own the building? A. No it is privately leased (not from the council).

Q. Do they give out methadone? A. No they do not.

Q. Are they moving from the site? A. They are not moving.

Q. Have there been any official complaints? A. No complaints have been made.

DL: Have people here who live in Clarendon Rd been impacted in any way by Addaction being close by it?

LF: No issues at all. No problems. I have worked with them. Lots of them [*the attendees*] have steroid addiction - not other drugs. That seems to be the most common thing. The newspapers like to be full of it [*report negative issues*].

JS: Only seen one girl *[walking the street]* the whole time I have lived here. *[Prostitution]* does not impact me at all. Didn't know it was going on until I saw the petition and spoke with Shazad.

DL: Ward Forum on Thursday *[13th June 2013]* for the anti-prostitution group. Will address this further next meeting.

The High Town Team Update

DL: HTT met this morning. Feedback:

High Town Gateway:

Typographer Jonathon Barnbrook (famous for David Bowie album covers). Will create a new typeface for 'the creative quarter' (High Town & Bute Street) gateways. Will take into account old shop signage. One arch/gateway for High Town and one for Bute Street - 5.9m wide, 2.9m high. Located at exit of station bridge. Materials not known yet.

DL: Murals – murals probably will be words not pictures. Also mural planned in Bute St. Have to get landlords' permission first.

LF: Solicitors owning Railway Tavern now acting ultra helpful *[regarding murals on their fencing etc]*.

N W-V: Time frame for Gateway?

AM: Depends on how long it takes to create the typeface. Probably not before September.

JS: Notion of a 'creative quarter' is great positive image for High Town.

MM: Had meeting in Marjorie's about the creative quarter. Would like to get a collaboration going. Pushing forward with this in High Town. Will try to get hold of their discussions and results *[to feed back to group]*.

LF: Connection with that to the HTT meeting - some people are going to both groups.

AM: Everyone spoken to, who is part of the 'creative collective', considers HTT as a part of it. Good promotion for High Town.

DL: Other feedback from HTT:

- No permission has been given from landlord for a mural on fencing below billboard *[at end of High Town Rd]*
- Shop that was 'Zoeen' now leased by Luton Culture to form a hat shop. Sell hats from local factories, display hats, encourage hat making sessions for people. Hope that it will be up and running for the Festival. Call for volunteers to clean, tidy and repaint. Free paint offered by Barclays for community projects so will try to get this, plus help from their community help team – *DL action point*.
- Shop 33. Every Wednesday DL will be there working on FoHT matters at a desk, where he will be available to people who want to talk to him. Calls for volunteers to take over at times if he can't make it. Shop is open 11am – 6pm.

F Morton: Bunting maker is one of the artists displayed in Shop 33. Friends of High Town bunting? Can drape it around our stalls at other events to advertise group.

LF: Get it made in durable material if to be outside (nylon, plastic). Local printers – we have contacts.

DL: Festival – FoHT will have a stall. Also live music including Konni, and Alina's husband Jeff's band (Johnny Chocolate).

LF: Gospel choir, children's dance group. Main stage. Buskers, street performers. Sat night & Sun night Painters & Freeholders live bands. Shop 33 will be open. Scandie Café open.

DL: Burr Street car park main stage. FoHT stall will be there. Push all food venues to sell one item for £1 all weekend. *AM & F Morton – action point*

JS: How is the rest of High Town going to know it's going on?

AM: Poster in development will be ready by end of week. To be displayed in shop windows. Newsletter being made. Leaflets to be dropped in houses. Adverts in Luton Line and other local newspapers.

LF: Publicity being worked on.

Grandparents Day

DL: Have contacted Tina Unsworth regarding this and will give feedback later.

Railway Tavern

DL: Contacted Gemma Pike to ask why hasn't something more been done [*regarding making building safe from further vandalism, restarting the development*]. Architect in charge is in contact with owners of site. Started development before full permissions received, now waiting for technical conditions to be approved by council before continuing. Admit this does not prevent them from making the building less vulnerable. Gemma to push the owners to protect the building further. Will implement new FoHT 5-point campaign plan. AB to put this on our website and send out to group by email– *AB action points*. Eventually hope is that local politicians will put pressure on them (and possibly if necessary the local media later).

JS: Does English Heritage have an interest?

DL: They did respond [*with a helpful email*] but since the building is not listed they can't intervene. But they are interested in coming down and speaking to the group.

JS: That is something positive to get written up in local paper.

Guerilla Gardening

AB: Went to do the weeding at Rainbow's garden but someone had already done it so thanks to them for that. We took stock of the plants that had died and have reserved others to replace them in the autumn.

Have spoken to the Secretary of the Allotments at Stockingstone Rd and been told of a phone number on the notice boards to phone to obtaining chippings. However no phone number was present on the boards so we still have to find this –*AB & SB action point*

F. Morton: Rainbows may want a press release about the new garden and to promote the work of the charity.

DL: Speak to N W-V about that – *F Morton & N W-V action point*

DL *Gave an update with more detail about People's Park improvements and maintenance – action point AB to ask DL to email her this for inclusion in the minutes.*

RC: If they remove a lockable bollard [*from the exit to Havelock Rd*] will they replace it with an unlockable bollard?

DL: No it will be replaced with a new lockable bollard.

DL: There were some council plans for the square of land between Mediterranean Café and the TV shop so will have to check first if it is appropriate to 'guerilla garden' it – *action point AM & DL*

Memberships, Marketing

N W-V:

- Will use DL's AGM talk as the basis for a press release – *action point*
- Move existing FoHT website to a Wordpress site – *action point*
- Will change domain name to friendsofhightown.org, and possibly also buy up the remainder of the similar domain names – *action point*
- Ideally will be live by next meeting or by Festival date.
- Suggests a membership card with loyalty discount for some the local businesses.

MM: In agreement with idea of loyalty card. St Albans has one and a lot of people carry it.

N W-V: If 4-5 retailers get involved, could make this a reality.

JS: People don't know there is a FoHT group. Have to advertise ourselves.

N W-V: Combined marketing strategy planned. Sticker for windows for High Town shops and in residents' homes.

DL: F Morton to give us a ball park figure for marketing – *F Morton action point*.

Group looked at JS's FoHT advertising poster. Agreement that wording was good.

JS: Will also do some other FoHT poster layouts – *JS action point*.

N W-V: Relaunch website, get loyalty scheme started – *N W-V action points*.

N W-V: Proposed a monthly FoHT social event – local café, Bricklayers Arms, Shop 33, after meeting drinks, meal in local restaurant? Meeting with one of the group speaking about their interests/background followed by drink/meal/chat?

MM: People could bring wine – corkage.

AOB

RC: Hessian now put down on Station Rd slope - which has been cleared. Do we know what is planned?

Mixed attitudes to this in group – slope now tidy but damage has been done to naturally occurring flora.

AB: Was upset. Had gone by 2 weeks before and counted over 30 different species of wild flower on the slope. *No action points agreed on this subject.*

Next Meeting 9th July 2013
