

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

1. Attendees: David Landau, Chairman  
 Maureen Allen, Secretary  
 Russell Cartwright  
 Anthea Cowen  
 Tina Edwards  
 Chris Grabham  
 Kim Grieg  
 Jan Horner  
 Andrew Malcolm, Local Councillor  
 Luke Middleton  
 Fiona Morton  
 Csaba Sipeki  
 Jeremy Williams  
 Lisa Wright
2. Apologies: Simon Barrow, Lyn Bliss, Annie Bygrave, Wendi Childs, Natalie Feerick, Aysegul Gurbuz, Ryad Kohodabocus, Saida Moujahid, Dan Warwick
- 3) Minutes of the last meeting  
 Luke Middleton said that an incorrect name for the sponsor of the Newsletter had been given. The company sponsoring the next Newsletter was JNB Publishing, and not as shown.
4. Matters Arising  
 David Landau said that another item had been added to the agenda – The High Town Festival.
- a) High Town Community Sports and Arts Centre  
 David Landau confirmed that the meeting to discuss more community involvement with the Centre was to go ahead on Thursday, March 17<sup>th</sup>. Lyn Bliss and Luke Middleton, along with two representatives from the Centre would be attending, along with Dave Magill, who had been instrumental in setting up the Centre.
- b) Newsletter  
 DL said that LB had asked that he remind the meeting that volunteers were needed to deliver the Newsletter and anyone able to lend a hand should get in touch. LM asked if there were any further additions to the content of the Newsletter. Tina Edwards mentioned the “Prevent” training at St Matthew’s School. This was in relation to fears about radicalisation of students, and supporting students to act in non-extremist ways.

Maureen Allen mentioned that Heather James had requested that there might be a collaboration when the Newsletter was delivered, to include the delivery of an anti-burglary information sheet. She had also asked that information on the Anti-Burglary Group and the help sheet might be included in the Newsletter. LM said he would contact her about this.

c) Railway Tavern and High Town Conversation Area Meeting

DL said there was some building work being undertaken on the area close to the Railway Tavern site, but nothing appeared to have been done to the main site. There was an advertisement about the availability of coffee shop space, at the front of the building. DL, when he had tried to pursue the issue with Valerie Scott, the acting Conservation Officer, was told that she was no longer in this role. He was referred to another member of the architectural practice where she was based.

d) 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.

ii) Painters Arms, 79 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. Russell Cartright said that the first part of the application for listed building consent and the alterations to the upper floor interior had been granted by the Council. A second application was to be made to the Council concerning further work. The view was expressed that this alteration was not viable for this historic building and would jeopardise the future use of accommodation for any incoming landlord.

e) Parking permits and one-way system - Ridgeway Road, etc. DL said that he had heard nothing further on this.

f) Nuisance motorbikes

DL said that the problem with the nuisance motorbikes appeared to be getting less. Lisa Wright said that she had not needed to contact the police on this subject for a month. The police, it was said, had received over 300 emails to the dedicated address in relation to nuisance motorbikes. LW said it was still an issue for those living in Dunstable and Houghton Regis. Jeremy Williams suggested a letter should be sent to the police thanking them for the action they had taken on this in the High Town area. It was agreed that a letter should be sent.

g) Tree replacement

DL said that he had heard that Luton Council were already seeking a sponsor, because of the costs involved in replacing the trees which had had to be felled because of disease. If action was already being taken he did not want to duplicate this. He had asked Simon Barrow to investigate and let him know the current situation. Andy Malcolm said that he had seen some new trees in Pope's Meadow.

5. High Town Conservation Area – 70 High Town Road

The former "Best One" store had been closed and work was going ahead to refurbish the shop. DL said there were concerns that the shop, which had formerly opened as a Co-Op in 1907, was being altered without any permission, and with no reference to the Council's

Conservation Department. He had at first been told the shop might be a Tesco, but had subsequently found out that the building was going to become a Polish mini market. What added to DL's concerns was that the windows on the ground floor had been taken out, and as they were the original windows, he was worried that they might be replaced. Also the entry door was to be moved and changed into a sliding door. DL had contacted the Council as a matter of urgency on this matter, and the Council had sent a conservation duty officer to the site. KG said that she had been told that some damage had been done to the building next to the proposed mini-market as a result of the work.

Concerns were also raised about the metal grill on the shop at 23 High Town Road. RC was asked to look into this.

#### 6. Burglary Reduction Meeting

LW said that there had been a discussion about the content of the leaflet on how to keep your home safe, which it was planned to deliver to households in the High Town area. Operation Fidelity had been targeted to help those areas which were vulnerable to burglaries, and High Town was one of those areas. The next Burglary Reduction meeting was planned for Monday, April 25<sup>th</sup>.

DL mentioned the problem of the dumping of debris in Musson's Path. It was hoped the addition of a chain link fence would help to stop this problem.

#### 7. Spring Clean

LM said that he was due to have a meeting with Gavin O'Brien on the following Friday afternoon, and he would report back to the next meeting on this.

#### 8. Allotment

Kim Grieg said that she had spoken to the Revd. Malcolm Pritchard, from St Matthew's church, about whether the church might allow the use of the land near to the church building as an allotment. He was agreeable to further talks on the matter. It was possible that the Near Neighbours scheme would provide a grant for this. It might work in the allotment's favour that All Saints church in Bury Park had taken part in a similar scheme and now had an "eco garden". It was also hoped to have the involvement of St Matthew's school in the project if it were to go ahead. Jan Horner mentioned that Martyn Godden was involved in similar work on a small piece of land behind the Methodist Church in High Town, in an aim to improve the area.

#### 9. High Town Masterplan

AM said he did not, at the present time, have any information to pass on to the meeting. He was waiting for further information and clarification.

#### 10. Media and Marketing

DL said the new FoHT website had been a collaboration between himself, LM and Konni Deppe. LM showed the proposed new website to the meeting. The previous website had been out of date, but with the redesign it now looked very modern. There had also been a redesign of the logo. It would be easier to put photographs on the website, and information would now be provided on FoHT meetings and membership details, along with alerts on upcoming events. Information on the High Town Festival had been included. AM suggested

the site should also provide next FoHT meeting dates. Because of the diverse nature of the population in High Town it was suggested that the welcome to the site should be in Polish, Albanian and any other languages where there was a significant population from that country. DL asked TE if any of the interpreters at St Matthew's school might be able to help with that. Andrea Cowan asked about the use of Twitter. LM said Facebook would be used, as you could say more on this. RC asked if the site would have an archive. LM said that the minutes of meetings would be available.

### Mail Chimp

LM said that the switch over to this system would be taking place soon. This was necessitated by the current size of the mailing list. Those not signing up would not be receiving any future mailings. He said if anyone was experiencing any problems they should contact him.

### 11. High Town Festival

Information on taking a stall, etc for the Festival can be found on [hightownfestival.org](http://hightownfestival.org). Application forms could be taken to St Matthew's school, or to Noah. KG suggested there should be a link to the application form on Facebook.

LM said a press release had been prepared and was ready to go. Various groups would be taking part in the entertainment, including Exit Black, the Knockouts, and the Luton Youth Jazz Band. Konni Deppe would also be performing.

TE said St Matthew's school was also planning to be involved in the Festival. It was hoped to have a sports event taking place on the day, with perhaps a barbecue along with events in the playground.

The Festival would be opened from the Irish Forum with the Irish pipe band and a parade of 100 children in costume. The Festival would have the slogan the "community event of the year".

CG asked if there would be a stage for busking. DL said that a stage would be available. He said Mark Rivers would be looking after the busking stage.

### 11. AOB

CG said that the coming weekend would be the last time Wardown Park Museum would be open to the public for a while as it was going to be closed for refurbishment.

KG said that she had just returned from a meeting with a Street Association in Birmingham. It was part of a national initiative to help streets become more friendly and integrated. She felt it was something worth exploring further and encouraging in High Town.

### Barnfield College Studio School/Skills Academy, York Street

DL said that the Academy was to close in the summer as the number of students at the Studio School/Skills Academy had dropped significantly. As this was quite a sizeable building, DL said he was anxious to know what would be taking its place.

### Luton Station Lift

DL said that he would be contacting the train company as the station lift was again out of order.

### 12. Notices and Information

#### High Town Sports and Arts Centre – Healthy Walks

These would be commencing on Fridays and all abilities would be welcome. The walks would start from the Centre at 9.30 a.m. and finished back at the Centre at 10.30 a.m., where participants would be offered refreshments at a reduced cost.

#### Scandinavian Café

The café was being refurbished and it was thought it would be reopening as a branch of the Dolce Vita Pizza chain.

#### Déjà vu

Work was being done to the building and it was going to reopen as part of the Irish Bistro chain of restaurants.

#### Hightown Club, Oxen Road

DL said that there was going to be a free entry gig on May 6<sup>th</sup>. Information was on Facebook.com/Donkey Hall.

#### St Patrick's Day Festival

KG said that she would be out with the SOS bus for this event on the coming Sunday, March 13<sup>th</sup>. The Festival would start between 10.30 a.m.-11.00 a.m. There would be music, dance and refreshments.

### 13. Date of the Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, April 12th at 7.00 p.m. at High Town Methodist Church.