

FRIENDS OF HIGH TOWN  
MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING  
AND GENERAL MEETING  
HELD AT 7.00 P.M. ON TUESDAY, MAY 10TH 2016

1. Attendees:
- David Landau, Chairman
  - Maureen Allen, Secretary
  - Fiona Morton, Treasurer
  - Lyn Bliss
  - Annie Bygrave
  - Russell Cartwright
  - Chris Grabham
  - Kim Grieg
  - Ryad Khodabocus
  - Andrew Malcolm, Local Councillor
  - Luke Middleton
  - Saida el Moujahid
  - Csaba Sipeki
  - Ezley Whyte
  - Jeremy Williams
  - Sam Willis

2. Apologies:

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

3. Annual Membership Fee

Those attending the meeting were asked to pay the annual membership fee of £2 per annum.

4. Chair's Report

DL said the FoHT had been involved in a lot of various issues over the previous year. He went on to list:

Railway Tavern

Pressure had been maintained on the owner of the property. DL had spoken to someone linked to him. The council had also been putting pressure on the owner to do the urgent work needed. There had been some progress on the site, with work going ahead on the building next to the Tavern. Signs had been added to the fence stating there would be a coffee shop, etc. to rent. With the publicity given in a local newspaper to the Masterplan for High Town it was hoped that this would add extra pressure on the owner, and highlight the need for the immediate attention needed for the site as a whole.

### Best-One/Vita Supermarket – 170 High Town Road

The urgent attention of the council's conservation department had been drawn to the fact that the windows had been removed from the shop without prior consultation with the conservation department. A conservation officer had gone to the site and issued a warning about the need for permission to undertake this kind of work. Additional planning permission was still required.

### The Freeholder

Planning permission had been sought to convert the former pub into a B & B. That permission had now been given by the council's planning department, and FoHT members would monitor how things were progressing and any impact on the local community.

### Wardown Park Bandstand

There had been a number of objections to the original plans for the new bandstand. The plans had now been changed and the updated plans had been approved with certain conditions.

### Parking

Information had been provided about the various changes proposed to several roads in the High Town area. Amongst the roads affected were Colin Road, Chadwell Close, Kingston Road, Mountfield Road, Preston Path, Sundridge Avenue, Woodbury Hill, Talbot Road, and Ridgway Road. Following the initial consultation the council had written again to those affected asking that any objections to the changes be sent to them as soon as possible.

### Luton Railway Station Lift

The lift at the station had been out of order for some time. There had been some progress made after DL had contacted Govia Thameslink and Network Rail. The local MP, Gavin Shuker, had also been involved in correspondence with the rail companies. The lift had now been given priority. Unfortunately, the proposed plans to update the station had been turned down by central government.

### High Town Masterplan

The plans to re-develop High Town with private developers had received more publicity in the local media and pressure had been put on the council to confirm a schedule for delivery. FoHT had sought to ensure that everyone is informed about the consultations on the Plan. The further consultations were due to finish at the end of May.

### Paths Estate

FoHT did have a minor involvement with the consultation on the proposed changes to the estate. The first stage of the changes is now complete, with the second stage about to begin.

### Proposed Morrison's

The company's decision to open a shop in High Town was changed, in accordance with the company's new policy of closing its smaller retail stores. There was currently a "To Let" sign outside what would have been the new store.

### Déjà vu

Work is currently underway at the building to turn it into an "Irish Bistro".

Community Allotment

There had been proposals to create a community allotment in and around High Town. Kim Grieg would be speaking later at the meeting on the progress on this so far.

High Town Dance Festival

Lyn Bliss had organised the Dance Festival in order to bring the different communities in High Town together. This event had successfully gone ahead in the Methodist Church hall. Following on from this, it had been suggested that a further event such as “High Town’s Got Talent” might be organised.

High Town Festival

The website, social media, and the media had all been used to get publicity for the Festival. There had been a FoHT stall at last year’s event to make more residents aware of FoHT and to encourage them to join. There were new plans for Welbeck Square and those would be implemented this year. Information on how to book a stall was available on the FoHT website.

Fly-tipping

A successful conclusion to this ongoing problem was being sought.

Trees

Information was provided on the need to cut down trees because of disease. FoHT is trying to establish how to help in the replacement of the trees which have had to be felled.

High Town Community Sports and Arts Centre

Meetings had been held with those responsible for running the Centre and the council to discuss more community involvement in the running and use of the Centre.

Anti-Social Behaviour

The group had been kept informed by the FoHT members who had attended the meetings held to discuss the problem of prostitution in the High Town area. The police appeared to be making progress on this.

Gypsy/Traveller problems

DL had written to the council on behalf of FoHT to ask them to provide a site for gypsies/travellers. There was no official Luton council site for them.

Nuisance motorbikes

Serious problems were experienced from nuisance motorbikes for the first time last year. There had been large meetings to discuss this. The police had been active in trying to tackle the problem and members of the public had been encouraged to contact them with any information or concerns. The situation had calmed down in the High Town area for a while, but had recently become of concern again.

Neighbourhood Watch

Two members of FoHT had joined the Neighbourhood Watch scheme.

High Town Community Worker

Luke Middleton had given his support to FoHT and had helped in many aspects.

Food Bank, which was now based in High Town, had sent a representative to talk to FoHT about the organisation's work.

An academic had attended a meeting to talk about a project he is undertaking on High Town and another area in Luton. He had asked for support and information from members of FoHT.

#### Media and Marketing

FoHT had a new look Newsletter and was on social media.

#### Finance

FoHT remained extremely strong financially. It had allowed those receiving grants for small projects to have those paid via the FoHT account.

DL said that it was essential that FoHT maintained its role in the High Town area and in the High Town Festival. It provided information to people in High Town about what is happening in the ward. It was hoped to get the minutes to members of FoHT in a more timely manner, and to make full use of social media. Efforts should be made to increase both active and passive membership of the group. There should be more effort to include the different community groups, ie there is a large Polish population in High Town. Unfortunately, two active members of FoHT had moved away, Peter Brook and Lisa Wright. There had also been the sad death of Nicola Centracchio, the retired owner of the Briganti Tailoring shop in High Town.

#### 5. Media and Marketing Officer's Report

LM had helped to write the Newsletters for FoHT and had helped in the writing and distribution of press releases for events such as the High Town Festival and the Dance Festival. There had been an increase in likes on social media up from 153 to 236, and on Twitter up from 104 to 157. The mailing system for FoHT members had now been changed to Mailchimp because of the increase in membership. The list of recipients stood at 62. There was a new logo for the group which was black, orange and white.

#### Website

A new website for FoHT had been developed and launched. This had been achieved with the combined efforts of LM, DL and Konni Deppe. The website address was [www.friendsofhightown.org](http://www.friendsofhightown.org). There were now also official email addresses for the committee members.

There had been meetings to discuss the financing of the FoHT Newsletter. JNB publishing had agreed to finance the printing of the latest Newsletter. The Newsletter had been distributed with the help of members of the group, and this had been co-ordinated by LB. Besides being delivered to homes, copies were available in local shops and would be available at the forthcoming High Town Festival on July 2<sup>nd</sup>. It was intended to continue to publicise and develop the presence of FoHT using most of the methods available on social media, and by use of the website, and at local events. It was also hoped to produce more editions of the Newsletter. It was important to let the local community know what the group was doing.

## 6. Treasurer's Report

Fiona Morton said that the balance brought forward from 2014/15 had been £743.30. For the financial year 2016/17 it was £6,237.58. Of this £4,830 was from the Portas money and £800 from HTB, so the balance, of approx. £600, was the amount actually belonging to FoHT.

As previously mentioned, some grants had been paid via the FoHT account. Konni Deppe had received a grant from Near Neighbours for "High Town (reusable) Bags", and the "Your Say Your Way" scheme had provided a grant of £1,500. Of this £1,239.05 had been spent and, as the remaining amount had to be used by the end of the financial year in which the grant had been received, Heather James had suggested using the remaining funds for the purchase of bunting for the High Town Festival. This had been agreed by FM as there had been no time to consult anyone else on this. The "Big Draw" grant had been for £1,020.

Donations to the group amounted to £36.15, and income from the previous year's High Town Festival had been £160. Income from the Dance Festival was £97.70.

Expenditure had been £473.30 for the High Town Festival (this was in the process of being claimed back from the council). Fees for the new website and domain names were £96.57, and a Christmas tree for the Christmas Tree Festival had cost £30. Of the Portas money £2,000 had been paid to "High Town Arts for All". The "Your Say Your Way" grant for Newsletters, etc. had taken up £1,239.05 of the £1,500 grant (the rest of the money to be used for bunting). "The Big Draw" had used £897.45 of its grant of £1,020.

The amount remaining in the account of approximately £600 was down on the previous year because of the expenses involved with the new website and paying the small sum for the Christmas tree. DL thanked all those involved with the events for their support.

## 7. Election of the Committee

DL was re-elected as Chairman, Fiona Morton re-elected as Treasurer, Luke Middleton was re-elected as Media and Marketing Officer, and Maureen Allen re-elected as Secretary.

LB asked if the minutes of the meetings could be sent out more promptly. DL said he agreed that the minutes were late in being sent out and he would ask LM to train MA to use Mailchimp to enable the minutes to be sent out more quickly.

## GENERAL MEETING

### 1) Minutes of the last meeting

There were no comments on the minutes of the last meeting

#### a) Allotment

KG said a meeting had been held just prior to the FoHT AGM/General Meeting. Attendees at the meeting had been LM, Ryad Khodabocas, Saida el Moujahid, Sam Willis, LB and KG. The meeting had discussed the points raised by the Revd. Malcolm Pritchard concerning the use of the land around St Matthew's Church. KG would be noting all the issues discussed and sharing them with the FoHT group at a later date. KG said it was felt that there would need to be strong management and organisation of any group involved with the allotment, and those interested in joining in the work on the allotment would need to make their interest known. A couple of people from the church's congregation were also interested in getting involved, and KG would be making contact with one of them, Luke Lerner, to discuss this further. It was

hoped LM might make the initial contact with Mr Lerner to enable a meeting. An approach would also be made to Tina Edwards at St Matthew's school to see if the school would like some involvement in the proposed allotment. Funding for this project might be available from the Near Neighbours Scheme.

b) High Town Community Sports and Arts Centre

There had not been any further meetings, but there was a community group meeting coming up on May 19th. A coffee morning at the Centre was taking place on May 20<sup>th</sup>, from 10.00 a.m. until 12.00 noon, and local community groups would be taking part. LB said she hoped it might be possible for FoHT to have a stall. KG said that Near Neighbours would be at the event. LB said that Dave Magill had managed to get the key to the notice board and an approach had been made to David Wright to get some information and news on the Centre which could go on the notice board. The noticeboard which is outside St Matthew's school was owned by Greenbank Music Village. Another notice board, which is outside the Railway Tavern, would need to be rebuilt. DL wondered if an approach could be made to Near Neighbours for funding for this. This could be brought up at the meeting on May 19<sup>th</sup>. Any money made from the coffee morning on May 20<sup>th</sup> would be donated to Luton Food Bank, which would be the major presence at the coffee morning. DL said he hoped that all the community groups in High Town would manage to attend. FM said it would be a good networking event.

c) Newsletter

LM said that the printing of the Newsletter had been delayed because of some confusion at the printers. Copies were now available and quite a few copies had already been distributed with the help of LB's organisation and the efforts of some members of the FoHT. Quite a few areas in High Town had been covered, but not the majority of the Crescent Road area. There were further deliveries to be made and DL said that if anyone could help with these they should contact LB. FM and Chris Grabham intended to deliver the Newsletter in High Town Road.

d) Nuisance motorbikes

It been decided to leave sending any letter of thanks to the police for the way that they had dealt with this issue for a couple of meetings. Unfortunately, the problem had now got worse in the High Town area. Some residents in the Round Green area had arranged another public meeting to discuss the issue. The meeting had been chaired by Justin Dealey, from BBC Three Counties Radio, and the discussion could still be heard on i-player. It was suggested that Luton Borough Council use CCTV in the areas affected to try and identify the bikers. A group of "legal" off road bikers from Hertfordshire had also taken part in the discussion. Because of the deterioration in the situation a letter would not be sent to the police at this time. Csaba Sipeki asked if there were any rules regarding the level of noise from cars. DL said he did not know what the conditions were in respect of this. Russell Cartwright said that if the condition of a vehicle being used on the road gave cause for concern this should be reported to the police on 101, and it would be down to the police to take action.

e) Conservation area issues

Freeholder – 45 York Street

Plans to turn the former pub into a B & B had been approved by the council. The owner had made several attempts to make a go of the previous business. If the conversion into a B & B did go ahead the new business should be monitored to see if this resulted in any anti-social behaviour as a result of the change of use.

#### 54 Duke Street

The planning application was in relation to the car park between La Phyzz and High Town Road. The plans, which had been for 10 one bedroom flats, had now been changed and re-submitted so that permission was now sought for 7 one bedroom flats and 3 studio flats. A decision was awaited from the council.

#### f) Clean-up Day

LM said that he had nothing new to report on this.

#### g) Parking permits and the one-way system consultation

Some of the suggestions by the council, such as the residents' only parking schemes in Kingston Road, Ridgway Road and Talbot Road were considered to have not been properly thought out by the council planners. The council had sent a letter dated April 22nd to those affected by the proposed changes asking for any objections in writing.

### 2. Any Other Business

Annie Bygrave said that Simon Barrow was still trying to find out from Luton council what their plans were on replacing the trees which had had to be felled.

### 3. Notices and Information Exchange

LM said that there would be an Open Morning at Hope Church on June 11<sup>th</sup>, from 9.00 a.m until 12.00 noon. Community groups would be invited and it was hoped that FoHT would be amongst those attending

#### Flamingo Arts/Makerspace

Luton Makerspace has moved into Flamingo Arts, in what had been "Shop 33" in High Town Road. It provided space where people could come and make things. Makerspace are on Facebook. They provide the opportunity to be creative in many areas ranging from Tee-shirts to wood carving.

LB said that Andrea Newman would be giving a talk on her book "The Hammer Blow" at the Petit Café on May 17<sup>th</sup>. All were welcome to attend.

### 4. Date of the Next Meeting

The next meeting of FoHT will be held on Tuesday, June 14<sup>th</sup> at 7.00p.m, at High Town Methodist Church Hall.