

FRIENDS OF HIGH TOWN  
MINUTES OF THE GENERAL MEETING  
HELD AT 7.00 P.M. ON TUESDAY, OCTOBER 13TH 2015

1. Attendees:       David Landau, Chairman  
                           Maureen Allen, Secretary  
                           Lyn Bliss  
                           Russell Cartwright  
                           Gail Denning  
                           Tina Edwards  
                           Jean Godden  
                           Chris Grabham  
                           Kim Grieg  
                           Jan Horner  
                           Fiona Morton  
                           Joan Samuel  
                           Julian Shaw  
                           Jeremy Williams  
                           Lisa Wright

2. Apologies: Simon Barrow, Peter Brooks, Annie Bygrave, Wendi Childs, Kath Gerrard, Martin Godden, Aysegul Gurbuz, Philip Horner, Ryad Kohodabocus, Andrew Malcolm, Luke Middleton, Saida Moujahid, Csaba Sipeki, Dan Warwick

3) Minutes of the last meeting

Because of technical problems printed versions of the minutes of the previous two meetings were circulated at the meeting. There was a correction to Item 6 of the minutes of September 8<sup>th</sup>. Plans for the empty shops in High Town were accredited to AM (Andy Malcolm), when this plan had been at the suggestion of LM (Luke Middleton).

4) Luton Space - Julian Shaw, King's College London

Julian Shaw had come along to the meeting to explain about his PhD research on Luton. This was a three year project on community and public space in the UK. One of the areas in Luton he was researching was High Town, which he said was because of the high social movement in the area and its community groups such as FoHT. There was a website for the research - lutonspace.wordpress.com. Among the other areas for research were Bury Park and Farley. JS was trying to get local people involved and so far 270 people had expressed an interest in his project. One of the reasons he had chosen Luton was because of its cultural diversity. JS wanted to get the local community in High Town involved as much as possible, particularly in regard to the changes in the area. The community and the area had changed dramatically over the last 100 years. Members of FoHT were encouraged to get involved.

## 5. Matters Arising

### a) Dance Event

Lyn Bliss said that the event had gone well and everyone had enjoyed themselves. She particularly expressed her thanks to Jan Horner who had provided the refreshments. About £80 had been made from the event and 58 people had signed in to show attendance. LB said that although the event had been a success she was disappointed that the attendance of people from High Town itself had been low. LB had wondered if a dance event had been the right choice to attract local people. Tina Edwards said that the piece in the Newsletter should have included more on the family aspect. LB said that the event had been aimed at the wide local community spread across High Town and to reach a large spread of ethnic groups. TE said that the use of social media was important in reaching people. Fiona Morton said an alternative to a dance event could be a Christmas choir competition which might perhaps include the local school.

Joan Savage said that she did not feel that folk dance was particularly popular at the present time. LB said that the event had not only included this aspect, and other modern dance forms had been included. DL said that he had received an email from Tina's Dance School saying that if the event were to be held next year they would like to get involved. Gail Denning said that an event of this nature needed a few people to organise it, rather than just the two members of FoHT who had had responsibility for this. Local groups needed to "own" the event. DL said it would be a complex matter to contact all the groups that might be involved and to ensure their input and participation. Lisa Wright said the question now was to decide if FoHT wanted a High Town community event? Jeremy Williams said there was a need for community events in the area and it was usual for any event to have a slow start. People needed to hear at least three times before they came along. A different type of event could be considered. FM agreed with this and said that a lot of attendance at events depended on word of mouth. JS said it might be an idea to have a dance festival within the High Town Festival itself. LB said that the idea had been to have a festival in the summer and one at Christmas, and also to have an event in-between those times. It would be good to have an event following the summer festival but more people would need to be involved in the organisation of it and the type of event should be gauged by using social media.

### b) High Town Community Sports and Arts Centre

(Meeting attended by DL, LB, Andy Malcolm and Aysegul Gurbaz)

DL said that prior to the meeting with the staff from the Centre he had received a good response on Facebook, with 8 people in 48 hours suggesting ideas on what the Centre should be offering. The meeting was with Dave Wright, the Facilities Manager, and Mary Shennick, a Manager. Dave Wright said that the centre would welcome more community involvement. Because of financial considerations the Centre was restricted in its opening hours, at the weekend these were 9.30 a.m.-2.00 pm on Saturdays, and 9.30 a.m.- 4.00 p.m. on Sundays. The use of the café area was also restricted because of the rules governing food hygiene. There were excellent parking facilities for the centre on Concorde Street, but because of fears of misuse this wasn't well publicised. Those using the car park needed to give their car registration number to the reception desk at the Centre. There were quite a few varied events going on, including exercise classes for the over 60s. Those on benefits received concessions, and the Centre was part of the Active Luton scheme. The Centre also had monthly sign-ups and an online booking system.

LB had asked about emailing people who were interested in the sports activities at the Centre. They said they were looking into setting up a system to email people who might be interested in what is going on.

No particular incentives could be offered to those living in the High Town area as this could be seen to be discriminating against other sections of the community and the Centre was available to all of those living in Luton. DL had suggested publicising some of the Centre's events in the FoHT Newsletter. It was also suggested that improvements might be made to the Centre's website to make it clearer what was going on and when. DW and MS said that they were looking into this.

The meeting had been held in the Centre's café and the area seemed devoid of any colour and very institutional. It had been suggested to the Centre they might want to brighten up the area with some children's artwork from St Matthew's school. A painting event had been also been suggested, with perhaps the introduction of a "Kid's Corner" with some facilities for children.

JS said the Centre also had a meeting hall which could provide a meeting space for those living in High Town. LB said that the hall could be hired at a cost of £125, but that this did not include any access to the café.

The Centre's facilities were used by St Matthew's School from 9.00 a.m-3.30 p.m. on Monday-Friday.

LB said that although she had been promised a list of all the facilities offered by the Centre she had not heard anything from them since the meeting. It had been hoped to publicise any activities on the Greenbank Community Noticeboard.

JS asked about any activities other than sports at the Centre. It was after all High Town Community Sports and Arts Centre. DL said that the Lighthouse Theatre Group had done productions there. He mentioned "Applause, Applause".

DL said another meeting would be arranged to discuss progress on the points raised.

#### c) Newsletter

DL said that funding for the Newsletter had been secured by LB, but he needed confirmation that the meeting felt that the Newsletter should continue. £100 had been raised towards the production of the next Newsletter. JW said it would be good to make the Newsletter more attractive by the inclusion of photos. DL also felt it might be good to have an increase in the size of the Newsletter. JW thought FoHT should ask a couple of the businesses in High Town for sponsorship. It was suggested the Bricklayer's Arms, and the printers of the Newsletter, JNB Publishing, might be approached. It was hoped the next Newsletter might be available in early spring 2016.

#### d) People's Park – conservation work day

DL said he was speaking on behalf of Simon Barrow. LB and Dave Magill had turned up to help after the long grass was cleared in Bell's Close. This was to make way for the wild flowers planned for that area.

## Trees

DL said the financing and type of replacement for the diseased chestnut trees was being looked at and it was hoped to give an update at the next meeting.

### e) Railway Tavern

DL had written to the owner of the Railway Tavern, Mr Shah, enquiring about his future plans for the building. This had followed his application to Luton Council to build a one-bedroom flat next to the main site. This application had been refused by the Council. DL had not, so far, received any response from Mr Shah.

### f) Luton Railway Station Lift

DL and Gavin Shuker, the local MP, had both been in contact with National Rail on the subject of the lift at Luton station and future improvements. The lift was now working.

### g) High Town clean-up

DL had not been able to move this forward.

Following the clean-up of Musson's Path more rubbish had appeared.

## 6. Christmas Tree Festival

High Town Methodist church were encouraging local groups to sponsor a tree in the church hall. Any money collected from the sponsorship would be used for the fund to repair the church organ. DL suggested that FoHT sponsor a tree and this was unanimously agreed. JS said that she had a large collection of Christmas decorations which could be used for the FoHT tree. KG/FM/JS all said that they would help decorate the tree. All the trees would be on display 13<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> December and the event would finish with a traditional carol service.

## 7) High Town Team

Caroline Wallace confirmed that the money relating to the High Town Team would be transferred into the FoHT bank account. FM had confirmed that such a transfer would have no effect on any aspect of the FoHT account.

Shop 33 which had closed would now be providing local workshop space for the arts, and as soon as the shop refurbishment was finished, the shop would be opening.

The High Town Team website was nearing completion.

## 8) AOB

### Bandstand

There had been another meeting to discuss the plans for the new bandstand in Wardown Park. This had been attended by Friends of the Earth and Luton Friends of Parks. A more traditional design had been put forward and there had been a drawing to show how the new bandstand would look. Concern was expressed that too many events were planned for the bandstand. The local Rotary Club were financing the project and the contact in regard to this was Alan Corkhill, chair of the bandstand committee. David Oakley Hill was representing FoE. The architect responsible is Mark Power, of MillsPower.

Russell Cartwright brought to the attention of the meeting the application to open another hot food outlet in High Town Road at No. 52. The planning application number was 15/01085/COU.

#### 9. Notices and Information Exchange

Burglary Reduction Scheme Meeting – the next meeting was to be held at 6.00 p.m. on October 29<sup>th</sup> at High Town Methodist Church.

Luton Tackling On-Street-Sex-Trade Meetings – DL had been unable to confirm the date of the next meeting.

Nicola ‘Nic’ Centracchio, who had worked as a tailor in High Town until his retirement had died. His funeral at Our Lady Help of Christians church was to be held the next day, on October 14<sup>th</sup>. Mr Centracchio’s wife still had a hair dressing salon in High Town Road. DL suggested writing her a letter of condolence on behalf of FoHT and this was agreed by the meeting.

The Fireworks would be returning to Pope’s Meadow this year after an absence of a couple of years due to funding restrictions. This would be taking place on Saturday, November 7<sup>th</sup>.

The Luton Half Marathon would be on Sunday, October 25<sup>th</sup>. This would mean the closure of several roads in the town, including some in the High Town area. Csaba Sipeki would be taking part in the marathon.

#### 10. Date of the Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, November 10<sup>th</sup> at 7.00 p.m. at High Town Methodist Church.