

FRIENDS OF HIGH TOWN
MINUTES OF THE GENERAL MEETING
HELD AT 7.00 P.M. ON TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 14TH 2017

1. Attendees: David Landau, Chairman
Maureen Allen, Secretary
Fiona Morton, Treasurer
David Alexander
Russell Cartwright
Jacqueline Esma-John, Deacon, High Town Methodist Church
Chris Grabham
Maahwish Mirza
Pete Savage
2. Apologies: Lyn Bliss, Philippa Collier, Kim Greig, Ryad Khodabocus, Andrew Malcolm, Luke Middleton, Saida el Moujahid, Csaba Sipeki, John Wright

3. Minutes of the last meeting

4. Matters Arising

Jacqueline Esma-John introduced herself to the meeting. She explained that five churches come under her care, one of which is High Town Methodist church. She said she had been impressed by the involvement of the local community in the High Town area, and by the various groups working to improve the area and give it a community feel.

a) Luton Town Football Club development

It had been planned to hold a general meeting, open to all who wanted to attend, with representatives of Luton Town Football Club to discuss the impact on the area of the new football ground, and the other developments planned for the Power Court site. The Club Chairman had said that there had been a delay in the planning process, and DL would be contacting the Club at a later date about holding a general meeting.

b) High Town Methodist Church – path lighting

This had been raised by Philippa Collier. DL had contacted LBC, as the lighting on the path needed to be improved. He had followed this matter up on the day of the meeting and had been told by the Council that this had been done, as the Parks Department had cut back the overhanging tree which was causing a problem, and it had been thought that the contractors had changed the old lights to the new brighter ones. DL had informed them that the lights had not been changed and the council had told him that they would be chasing the matter up with their contractors. DL would be monitoring the situation.

5. Conservation Area

i) Satellite Dishes

Russell Cartwright said that he had been going back over time and comparing street views of High Town Road on Google, and some of the satellite dishes had been in place for more than 10 years. He had been able to identify the satellite dishes which had not been in place for this period of time (any satellite dishes which have been in place for 10 years or more are entitled

to stay). RC had sent a list of these to the Council's Planning Officer, but he was unsure if the Council would have the resources to follow the matter up.

ii) 94-94 High Town Road – change of shop front application

The shop, which had formerly been called “Viva Pizza”, had now been renamed “Peri Peri Chicken”. FoHT had objected to the proposed new shop front and the security shutter, as they were not in keeping with the conservation area. The application had subsequently been withdrawn, and a new application had been submitted, which had been approved as it met the requirements of the conservation area. Unfortunately, the shop had now made a third retrospective application to change the shop front, and this application was almost the same as the original application, which had been opposed. The application included plans to install plate glass windows, which were not appropriate for the conservation area. They had also rendered the brickwork, and this had not been included in the shop's submissions to the Council. It had been thought that the retrospective submission would not need to be put on a public notice, as a shop front would not be considered to be a permanent structure. DL suggested that an objection to this application should be made and should include three points:

- 1) That the door to the shop be changed to something more appropriate and in keeping with the conservation area
- 2) That the rendering be removed from the brickwork
(DL would be checking with the Council's Conservation Officer to see if this would be possible)
- 3) DL would complain that the retrospective submission should have gone for public notice, and this should have been put on the Council's website.

Maarwish Mirza asked to be included in the recipients of any email DL sent to the Council on this matter.

iii) 80 High Town Road – change of use from commercial to residential

Maureen Allen said that she had objected to the proposed application to change the former TV repair shop into residential accommodation. She had objected on two fronts: firstly, to the proposed creation of four self-contained studio flats, which she felt, given the space available on the site, would be creating sub-standard living accommodation. Also, that the proposed building would make drastic changes to what had once been a shop front which had been in keeping with the unique architecture of High Town Road. MA said that the Council's Conservation Officer had also put in an objection to the proposed change of use, and had given detailed reasons why this development should not be allowed. DL said that he thought that the Council would not give permission for this development, and that FoHT should keep an eye on the situation.

iv) 17 High Town Road – building works

This building, which had previously been a café, was on the corner of Cross Street, near to the top of High Town Road and close to the train station. DL had noticed that building work was taking place at the back of the building, and he said that he had been not aware that any recent planning permission had been sought for this. After looking into the matter, DL discovered that permission had been given for a ground floor extension to the building in 1999, and building work should have started in 2000. DL felt that the situation was ambiguous and that this should be investigated to see if the building work was following the correct procedure, but, at the moment, he felt the work looked questionable. He said he would be looking into this further.

6. FoHT Newsletter

DL said that Luke Middleton had some funding left over from his role as High Town Community Worker, and he had been given permission to use the money for the next FoHT Newsletter. It had been decided to use a company to do the bulk of the deliveries in the High Town area. The Newsletter would be going out at the end of March, and DL asked that anyone who had something they wanted included in the Newsletter contact LM as soon as possible.

7. High Town Community Gardners meeting

PC and Doris Brittain had been working to clear some of the green spaces in High Town, and it was intended to create a peace garden at the side of the Methodist Church, extending to the care home at Milner Court. There would also be “insect hotels”. It was hoped to get some children from St Matthew’s school involved in the gardening project, and the work would be taking place over the next two or three months. The peace garden would form part of the 2017 Peace Walk, scheduled for September 24th. The Peace Walk would include visits to the Mosque in Dudley Road, High Town Methodist Church, and St Matthew’s Church.

Saturday, March 4th is the date for the Great British Spring Clean and FoHT would be taking part. The areas included in the “clean-up” would be:

- 1) Kingston Road, Edward Street, Cobden Street and North Street
- 2) Wenlock Street, the Paths Estate and Albion Court.

Later clean ups would be in:

- 3) The main shopping area in High Town Road, Clarendon Road and Mussons Path.
- 4) Crescent Road, Old Bedford Road and New Bedford Road.

JE-J had suggested getting some of the congregation of the High Town Methodist Church involved in the proposed clean-up on March 4th.

DL added it would be necessary to have some fluorescent jackets, so that the general public would know where those taking part were from, and for safety reasons.

8. High Town Voice Meeting

The object was to get the High Town Sports and Arts Centre more involved in the community. Anti-litter posters, which had been created by the pupils at St Matthew’s school, had been on display at the Centre, and parents had been encouraged to go along and see them. Twenty-five people who had visited the Centre had filled in feedback forms, and seven of those had said that they had not visited the Centre before.

It was hoped to soon have a junior football team playing in the park, and people were being sought to get involved in the team. Anyone volunteering would need to know the rules on the safeguarding of children. It was intended that arrangements would be in place for the team to start playing in the 2017/18 season. Anyone interested should contact Dan at St Matthew’s School.

Philip B? -Moore had received a grant from the “Your Say Your Way” scheme to start a youth club at the Centre, and he would be starting the club in April, after the Easter holiday.

MUGA (multi-use games area) – An event would be launched on the following Friday (17th February) at St Matthew’s Primary School.

There would be some changes to the Centre’s kitchen area, and there would now just be a coffee area for those using the Centre. The kitchen would be used for training purposes by the Bridge Project

The Centre has also started a “knit and knatter” group, which had been requested by the Centre’s customers. More than twenty people had expressed an interest in joining the group. St Matthew’s School have a meeting club on Wednesdays, and they will see if this can be incorporated into the group.

The Centre would be giving more publicity to the fact that the Centre is available for hire, and they would also working in partnership with a company who hire out nerf guns.

9. High Town Festival – General Meeting

As LM had not been able to attend the meeting, it was hoped to get an update from him on this at the next meeting.

If anyone wanted to hire a stall at the Festival they should contact Heather James.

10. AOB

Drill Hall - permission had been given to extend the rear of the property, and to put bedrooms in the roof area.

MM said that the pyramid which had been built alongside the building in High Town Road had been put there for publicity purposes. The building is used as a beauty salon, and the pyramid was there to publicise the treatments the salon offered.

There had been attempts to get a schedule from the council for its street cleaning services. Andy Malcolm had put in a request for this and had received no response. He had managed, on that day, to get a response, although the response had not been particularly helpful. Street cleaning was done in the High Town area on a fortnightly basis, but no definite schedule had been produced. An attempt had also been made to find out the schedule for emptying the public litter bins, but, again, the response had been vague. MM said that she would try and find out more information. DL urged those attending the meeting to send photos of any fly-tipping, etc. to the council via “Fix My Street”, or to contact the council via their other reporting systems, i.e., the “Love Clean Streets” app. The council’s enforcement team were now in operation and used the information to deal with these sorts of incidents.

MM said that on the date of the next FoHT meeting (March 14th) there would be a ward forum. She was unsure if this was being held at the Methodist Church Hall, as on the previous occasion. DL asked MA to check this.

11. Notices and Information Exchange

The Luton Beer Festival would be taking place from Thursday, February 16th until Saturday, February 18th.

a) Charles Street housing development

DL said that this development was going ahead. The developer was the Hightown Housing Association, which was based in Hemel Hempstead.

b) Car park next to 52 Duke Street – building works

The development, which is for flats, had been permitted. The design was for period style housing.

12. Date of the next FoHT meeting

The next meeting, will be held on Tuesday, March 14th, at 7.00 p.m. at High Town Methodist Church.