

FRIENDS OF HIGH TOWN
MINUTES OF THE GENERAL MEETING
HELD AT 7.00 P.M. ON TUESDAY, JANUARY 10th 2017

1. Attendees: David Landau, Chairman
 Maureen Allen, Secretary
 Luke Middleton, Media and Marketing Officer
 Fiona Morton, Treasurer
 David Alexander
 Lyn Bliss
 Russell Cartwright
 Philippa Collier
 Mark Davie
 Chris Grabham
 Kim Grieg
 Ryad Kohodabocus
 Andy Malcolm, Local Councillor
 Dan Warwick
 Jeremy Williams
 John Wright

- 2) Apologies: Maahwish Mirza, Saida Moujahid, Csaba Sipeki

3) Minutes of the last meeting

Fiona Morton confirmed that these had been done.

4) Matters Arising

a) High Town's Got Talent

David Landau said that the event, which had been held on Saturday, December 17th, at the High Town Sports and Arts Centre, had been a great success. There had been eight acts and he estimated the audience to have been about 60 people. This number was disputed by some people at the meeting, who said they had estimated the audience to have been in excess of 100 people. The quality and variety of the acts had been excellent, and DL extended his thanks to Lyn Bliss's husband, and to Fiona Morton and Chris Grabham (the Mouse Assassins), who had performed at the show. The winning act, Badgers and Rum, had received a cheque for £50 and would be performing on the main stage at the High Town Festival, which is taking place on July 1st. DL also expressed his thanks to the three judges of the competition, and to LB, Kim Greig, Saida Moujahid and Ryad Khodabocus. The "Your Say Your Way" grant of £1,250 had been spent on the event. Luke Middleton said that posters advertising the competition had been put up in local shops and at the local school. A press release had also been sent out and Facebook and the FoHT website had been used for publicity. He added that it would have been good for the acts to have had a bit more cultural diversity to reflect the cultural mix of the High Town area. Jeremy Williams said he was pleasantly surprised at the quality of the acts and that the event had been worth attending. KG also said she had been impressed by the acts. The meeting extended their thanks to DL and LM for their organisation of the event. DL said a complication of the YSYW grant was

that it meant a narrow time frame for the event to be organised and paid for. The grant had been awarded in September, and LM was going to mention this aspect to Heather James. It was hoped a similar event might be organised next year. Maureen Allen suggested that Vauxhall might be approached for funding. Mark Davie said it might be good to look for sponsorship in kind. DL said that he would be asking at the meeting being held with the High Town Sports and Arts Centre on the following day, why the bar on the hall side had not been open when this had been specifically requested. CG asked if the Centre had given a concessionary rate for the use of the hall, and DL said that this had not been the case.

b) Transition Luton – Community Green Space Gardner

Kim Greig said that Philippa Collier and Doris Brittain had taken on the job of the Community Greenspace Gardner and they were being helped by KG, LM and RK. Over the course of the last week or two, work had started in High Town Road to clear the triangle of space near to the Railway Tavern. There were another couple of potential projects. The main intention behind the work is to add some colour to the green spaces and make them look more respectable. Areas being considered were the green space near to the nursing home in Wenlock Street, and the space on Old Bedford Road, which is adjacent to a worship hall. The meeting was asked to suggest any further spaces which might be included. There was to be a community gardening day on Saturday, January 21st, and everyone was encouraged to go along and help. There would be further community gardening days: one in February and one in March. It was also thought it would be good to get the local school involved.

c) Fatal Collision – High Town Road

DL said that FoHT collecting tins had been placed in several shops in High Town to collect money for Mr Chohan, whose TV repair shop had been destroyed in the collision. Andy Malcolm said that FoHT could increase any money collected to a decent sum. DL said that it was hoped to give Mr Chohan £100.

d) Luton Town Football Club Development

It was hoped to have a public meeting with the Club representatives in the near future (when there wasn't a match) to discuss any implications for the High Town area in regard to the Club's planned development in the town centre. The proposed meeting would be held either at the church hall, or at the High Town Community Sports and Arts Centre. If the Centre were to be used for the meeting, DL suggested that the Club should be asked to pay for the use of the Centre.

e) Conservation Area

i) Satellite dishes

Russell Cartwright had nothing further to report on this.

ii) The Railway Tavern Murals

SNAP had said that the murals belonged to them and they would like them back. No progress had been made in finding out what had happened to the murals since work had started on the Railway Tavern.

iii) 94-96 High Town Road – change of shop front application.

DL said that Viva Pizza, which was next to Lucia's, the hairdressers, had withdrawn their original application to LBC Planning Department to change the window frontage from the current Victorian frontage to one with powder coated aluminium window frames. The owner had submitted new plans which were, more or less, the same as the original design of the

windows. A basic framework for the windows was already in place and this followed a more traditional design. It was thought that any further work to the shop front and windows should be monitored.

f) High Town Methodist Church – path lighting

LBC were going to cut down any overhanging branches of the trees in the middle of path to allow more light onto the path. PC said that this had not been done. DL said that he would be following this up with the council as this meant that the middle of the path was still inadequately lit.

5. FoHT Newsletter

LM said that three newsletters in total had been sent out. The first two had been funded by “Your Say Your Way”, and the third was funded by JNB Publishing. A print run of 5,000 newsletters had been provided and this enabled delivery to all the households in High Town Road, the surrounding area, and the local school. The last newsletter had been delivered in April/May 2016. LM and DL were currently trying to get a sponsor to enable another two newsletters to be printed, and it was hoped to have the newsletter available for delivery in the local area by March 22nd. KG asked how much each newsletter costs to produce, and LM said that this was £185, plus the cost of distribution to an estimated 3,500 households. LB said that on the first occasion the newsletters had been delivered entirely by volunteers. DL commented that there were now more households in the area since the first delivery of the newsletter had been made. LB said there had been a problem in gaining entry to blocks of flats in order to deliver the newsletters, and distribution agencies knew how to do this. Several companies were suggested who might be approached for funding.

6. High Town Team Meeting

It had been confirmed that the building on the corner of Charles Street and High Town Road is going to be the new home for the martial arts organisation ACS MAGFA. The building’s use had been changed from office to leisure facility use.

Notice Boards

Heather James, Luton Council, had been in touch with NOAH to ask if they would be able to help with the work needed on the notice boards in High Town Road. The situation was still uncertain and it had been agreed to wait a couple of months before approaching someone else about the work. RC asked if there was a design for anyone to follow. DL said that the design would not be changed from what was there already. LB said that the notice boards needed to indicate where any notices should be placed, as the current design meant that some information might be obscured. PC said it might be worth consulting Luton Arts Centre.

Welbeck Square

AM said that any further development in this area was on hold until the shop which had been demolished in the fatal collision had been rebuilt. He thought the owners of the site might be putting in a planning application to change the use of the site to residential. AM would be enquiring further on what was happening in relation to this and would be asking the council to ensure that there was some movement in regard to the site.

Masterplan

The plans for development in the area were on a large scale and this might lead to some public meetings to discuss them. The plans involved the development of the car parks in Back Street, two of which were owned by the council and the third was currently let to the

Enterprise Centre. It was intended to build housing on the sites. KG expressed concern about parking in the local area, and MD said that any developments would have underground parking. DL said that one of the spaces under consideration for development had been used illegally to sell cars, and this had now been closed down. There was also a caravan on the site which was being used by someone (again illegally) for accommodation.

Christmas Lights

DL said that HJ would be asking Flitwick Town Council how they provided funding for their Christmas lights, and she would explore whether it might be possible to use their system for the funding of them in High Town. PC suggested that there might be a “High Town Festival of Lights” which would extend across the different religious faiths. DL said he would suggest this at the next High Town team meeting. PC said that local people could get involved in making the lights. MA suggested that the Carnival Arts Centre might be approached for advice.

7) Christmas Tree Festival

FM and CG had decorated the FoHT Christmas tree, and FM had gone along to the Christmas carol service, which had been held amongst the Christmas trees. The deaconess had conducted the service and all had gone well.

8) Christmas Dinners – held at High Town Methodist Church Hall and Hope Church

The church hall had 30-40 guests for Christmas dinner. The object had been to provide food and company for those who would have been alone on Christmas day. Maureen Drummond had obtained the funding for this from the “Your Say Your Way” scheme. Christmas lunch had been provided at Hope Church for about 40 people, with the same object in mind. FM, who had gone along to the Methodist church on Christmas day, said it had been a successful and enjoyable event.

9) High Town Community Worker

LM said that he had been the High Town Community Worker for the last two years, but at the end of March he would no longer have that role. He would still be working at Hope Church, but not in the capacity of the neighbourhood community worker. Luke would continue in his voluntary communications role for FoHT, but there were no plans to replace him as the community worker for High Town. DL thanked LM for his hard work and this was echoed by the meeting as a whole. LM was thanked by everyone for his commitment and the hard work he had put into his role as community worker over the last two years. DL asked that a recorded vote of thanks to LM was noted in the minutes.

10) AOB

PC voiced her concerns over the lighting problems on the Paths Estate. DL said that he thought that this matter should be registered on “Fix My Street”, on the LBC website. It could also be raised at the next meeting of the High Town Improvement Action Group.

11) Notices and information exchange

a) Gas main works in High Town Road

DL said that these would be on-going from January 16th until March 3rd. Work had initially started at the junction with Kingston Road. The work would result in road closures and hold-ups.

b) Hightownluton.com

If anyone wanted to keep up with the latest happenings in the area they should consult the Hightownluton.com website. It was intended to keep this as up-to-date as possible.

c) High Town Voice Meeting

The next meeting would be taking place on the next day, Wednesday, January 11th.

d) High Town Improvement Action Group

The next meeting of the group would be taking place on Thursday, January 19th, from 6.00 pm-7.00 pm at the Methodist Church Hall.

12) Date of the next FoHT meeting

This will be held on Tuesday, February 14th, at 7.00 p.m, at High Town Methodist church.