



Minutes of Friends of High Town Tuesday 10th October 2017

Attendees David Landau (Chair), Fiona Morton (Treasurer), Kevin Poulton (Media & Marketing), Cllr Andrew Malcolm, Chris Grabham, David Alexander, Russell Cartwright, Ian MacBeveridge, Viki Salkin, Maureen Allen, Sam Willis, Jeremy Williams, John French, Asim (PCSO)

1. Apologies Lyn Bliss (Secretary), Philippa Collier, Kim Greig, John Wright, Cllr Maahwish Mirza, Dave and Karen Brown, James Hardiman.

Viki informed the meeting that she would be relocating to Melbourne so this would be her last meeting, she stated it was nice to meet a group of people that came together for the local area. The group wished her the best for the future.

2. Minutes of the last meeting Agreed with no amendments

The meeting started with David informing the group that Lyn had indicated she wished to step down from the role of Secretary and that elections to the post would need to be held. This led onto the discussion of holding a Special General Meeting in January 2018, to put forward to the group the concept of incorporating Friends of High Town, to remove potential liabilities from committee members. **(Committee)**

Asim introduced himself to the meeting as a PCSO for Central, Dallow and Biscot areas, who had previously held some responsibility for High Town, particularly the Paths estate. He said 3 main priority issues across the area, 1) Prostitution 2) Drugs 3) Behaviour of 6th form students. He distributed an anti-social behaviour guide that had been produced by LBC to the group. He also suggested that in some streets the formation of a closed "Whatsapp" group had been effective.

He reconfirmed that Chloe Phipps would be the dedicated PCSO to High Town, and she would be fully in the post in approximately a month. Kevin informed the group that Chloe had already joined the mailing list, and was in contact with the group.

David enquired whether he perceived High Town to have a higher crime rate than other parts of Luton that he worked. In his opinion, the drug offence was on par with areas such as Biscot, but High Town had the added prostitution issues that led to a higher rate of offences.

The group thanked him for taking the time to attend tonight's meeting.

3. Matters arising

a) Other building works/planning applications

i) 19 – 21 Burr St, A revised planning application has been submitted, David to inspect to determine if action is now required **(Action DL)**

ii) 37 High Town Rd, Planning permission has been declined.

iii) 236 High Town Rd, Retrospective planning permission had been declined, a question arose to what action would now be taken to ensure the property reverts to its previous state.

iv) 80 High Town Rd, Building work continues, The work to number 78 (hairdressers), had entered week 4 of a projected 3-week project, that meant they were unable to trade.



b) Conservation Area

i) Russell had been informed by LBC that the laminated sign above 90 High Town Rd, was not a significant enough infringement of procedures for LBC to consider expending resources. Russell agreed to write to ask for further clarification on the procedures and an example of what LBC would consider as significant. **(Action RC)**

ii) Change of procedure on re-notification within a conservation area, awaiting a response.

d) People's Park

i) LBC Parks department has agreed to replace the missing 3rd bench, and fill in the hole. An email from Paul Merryworth said that no funds were available to replace bins. The question regards how much a Bin cost was raised. Cllr Malcolm asked for a copy of the email to be forwarded to him.

(Action DL, AM).

ii) Tree replacement grant – no grant application to Greggs was made, Jane Conway has indicated a Luton Tree Strategy is being devised and JW suggested to the group that postponing any application until that is completed (Spring 2018), so that trees can be purchased ready to be planted in (October 2018), it was stressed the strategy would look to plant a diverse range of trees, so as not to be susceptible to one disease. Discussion around felling of Horse Chestnut trees took place, and a question arose if the disease was killing the trees and making them unsafe, or simply just unsightly. Jeremy agreed to enquire. **(Action JW)**

iii) Toilet facilities –received feedback that they would remain closed and that in addition to the previously indicated anti-social behaviour (drug taking), the toilets had been vandalised to the extent that extensive money would be required to bring them to standard. The group felt that this was a very vague response, and challenged for a more precise sum to be disclosed. Cllr Malcolm agreed to determine the amounts involved, David highlighted the situation that the closure meant young children were potentially exposing themselves in order to urinate if they were using the park.**(Action AM).**

The dream of the building being taken over by a group, who could operate some sort of venture whilst also maintaining a toilet facility, was again raised.

d) Marshalling at Luton Half Marathon.

Due to not being able to raise sufficient numbers of volunteers, it is with regret the group agreed to formally inform Signposts were are unable to provide a team. Individuals who had come forward will be advised how they can still join the Signposts marshalling team on the day.

e) Parking in Kingston Rd.

Further discussion around the yellow lines took place, Cllr Malcolm had already taken on board the action point from the HTIAG, as the road in question also fell within the round green ward, it was suggested that the Cllrs for Round Green also be invited to apply pressure. A number of individuals from Round Green agreed to raise the issue **(Action AM, IM, JF & KP)**

David informed the group he had made contact with the Managing Director of the company that owned Bread vans often illegally or at least inconveniently parked. The MD had agreed to talk with



the transport manager to discuss the issue with the drivers. A discussion with regards if the vans held resident parking permits arose.

4. New Items

a) A half-year statement of accounts was circulated to the group, KP advised that some historical funds had been moved from FoHT General Account to the Festival and that LBC had been invoiced for £1474.80 for festival funds.

A question around High Towns Got Talent was raised, the group were informed that the 1st draft of an application had been made to Near Neighbours and if the event were to be held, it would likely take place around Jan 2018.

Both the Clean-up project and the Gardening project phase 1 have been completed and returns made to the appropriate grant providers

A copy of the financial statement will be circulated with the minutes.

b) **New planning applications**, There were no new applications that were raised.

5. Feedback from other groups

a) HTIAG

Both PCSO and LBC Enforcement are now attending, and unexpectedly we had 2 PC's in attendance, as well as Cllr Andy Malcolm.

- i) Kingham Way, both issues have been referred to the appropriate departments of LBC by James, expecting feedback at next meeting.
- ii) The plants at Junction of Kingston Rd & High Town Rd have now been cut back.

Paths. ~ Philippa is awaiting a date for the 2nd meeting regarding regeneration, reported that the fencing appears to have led to an increase in daytime prostitution.

Discussion around if the tenants of 51 Berkeley Path would return after Temporary closure notice, and told a permanent eviction procedure was being processed.

A property in Albion Court that had been boarded for some time was raised and is being investigated why this hasn't now been returned to housing stock.

Drop bollards have been installed in front of some Garages, is a small success to report.

Edward Street.

A lack of police response for an attempted break-in, lead to a discussion around Police response and numbers. Informed only 12 PC's will be on duty to cover the 3 main towns in Bedfordshire on a Saturday evening. On Cllr Andy Malcolm advice, referred to raise this at Council level.



Some pro-active Police work has shut down a Drug den that was establishing itself in the empty garage on Midland Rd.

Kim raised suspected sewage overflow from pipes around number 22.

A question around cleaning of drains before winter was raised, and a schedule is being sought from LBC.

b) High Town Voice

Meeting started by a confirmation that the main aims of the meeting were to develop the community usage of the Centre, to that end we are looking at what Management Information / Metrics are available from Active Luton Systems.

Discussion around Metime and it dropping numbers, and how the facilities don't compare to Inspire, so maybe a rebrand on the sessions.

High Town Athletics have booked the hall for winter training sessions.

Again asked the Churches to take the lead on Christmas Activities. We informed HT Methodist Church had discussions on Christmas Tree Festival, but these have stopped in August, and would now need to be reinvigorated. Re-iterated that we were looking to the Churches in HT to co-ordinate and lead the plans for Christmas period.

YSYW Bid award for £250 towards Stage Lights, and lights for the Hall.

Since the meeting, I have been notified that Fashion Show Live Academy have book facilities to run a series of workshops in the New Year.

A question around markings for five a side football within the centre was raised, Kevin agreed to enquire if they existed, and if not the costings. **(Action KP)**

c) High Town Team

HighTownRoad.com has been transferred to a platform that reduces ongoing costs and allows for better search engine optimisation (make it appear higher in search engine results).

Funding for a yearlong "Artists in residence" programme was being explored.

Costing for Christmas lights / Christmas tree being researched for this year, before the longer-term solution was put into place.

Business Association (online only at this stage) that looks to promote business within High Town ward, whilst allowing them a voice within projects has been launched and is currently recruiting members. David indicated that at the time the opinions of this group may diverge with that of FoHT, but he felt that was healthy for High Town growth.

Noticeboard should be installed by Christmas

6.)Clean up

27 Volunteers collected 41 Bags of litter on Saturday 7th October from the Old Bedford Road and surrounding streets. It was pleasing to see 2 volunteers from the door knock. Thanks went to



everyone involved in organising the event, taking part in the promotion including the door knock on Monday and then who helped clean on the day.

KP called for the group to agree to purchase and send a Thank You card to Signposts for both helping to clean up but also for their hospitality and provision of hot food after the event. The group agreed.
(Action KP)

It was also noted that the profile of High Town was raised with the Radio interview of David & Kevin on Inspire FM and that this had opened up a channel for co-operation and promotion on future events.

7. AOB

Pleased to announce awarded £1250 from YSYW, so thanks to everyone that voted for the “Fix It Day”, provisional date of April 7th has been set.

Sam Willis has been appointed to the role of Community Worker to start at the end of October / start of November. Initially for 2 days a week and 4 Months, but hope to expand beyond this.

8. Notices & information exchange

14th October Community Gardening (Planting of Fruit trees, Vegetables and Herb) 10 am - 1 pm
(followed by a meal in Majories, which would require a small contribution)

NOAH & Salvation Army were both looking for volunteers for their Night Shelters, see respective websites.

Date of next meeting

Tuesday, November 14th 7 pm.