

As many of you may know, HIT, at least in its present form, is coming to an end. This is principally due to Council funding cuts and the end of Chris Sewart's post as *Town Development Officer*.

HIT has been through a time of uncertainty about its future over the past year or so, with a change of Chair twice and questions about its role.

The news is not all bad. A new *Town Centre Coordinator*, Helen Nichols, has been appointed in a part time role, (4 days). A number of the main events formerly associated with HIT will continue such as Sand Pits and Late Night Shopping.

Furthermore, discussions are underway about what Market Harborough needs to 'replace' HIT. As we are aware, we are in the slightly odd position of having no town council and therefore, beyond individual Ward Councillors, have no body that has a specific remit of care for the town. To my mind (and I have made the point at meetings) we also have to be careful that anything put in is not solely 'town centre' focussed (which tends to be almost exclusively business orientated) when we need a body that serves the whole town.

The latest suggestion is forming something along the lines of a 'Town Forum', a community forum. Part of the practical reason for such a group would be to form a body that could hold the insurance for groups such as the Environmental Group. In wider terms such a forum could be the meeting place of voluntary, statutory, church and business interests: i.e. for all in the town who have a care for the town; to ensure a better coordination of mutual interests, events and ideas.

Chris Sewart's post was developmental and HIT was about improvement. Whilst both are helpful, they brought with them the expectation of change and measurable results. A forum would not be Council funded, so would have greater independence. It would be less driven for outcomes and more about our common life and care for the town.

These are early days in this progression but there seems to be positive interest in what a forum might bring.

Richard Brand