



KEEPING OUR TOWN SPECIAL

# Annual Report 2017



# THE FRIENDS OF LEWES - THE LEWES CIVIC SOCIETY

Lewes Town Council Offices, Town Hall, High Street, Lewes,  
East Sussex BN7 2QS (Registered Charity No 258756)

Web site : [www.friends-of-lewes.org.uk](http://www.friends-of-lewes.org.uk) E-mail address: [enquiries@friends-of-lewes.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@friends-of-lewes.org.uk)

## Personnel at 31st December 2017

President Baroness Kay Andrews of Southover OBE  
Vice-Presidents Jim Franks & Peter Mettyear  
Honorary Life Member John Davey

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Officers	Chairman	Robert Cheesman	(12/12)	
	Vice-Chairman	vacant		
	Secretary	Marcus Taylor	(11/12)	
	Treasurer	Mike Stepney	(7/12)	
Elected members	<u>At March 2016 AGM</u>		<u>At March 2017 AGM</u>	
	David Hutchinson	(11/12)	Roger Beasley	(10/12)
	Chris Kneale	(9/12)	Anthony Dicks	(7/12)
	Neil Merchant	(9/12)	Audrey Jarvis	(11/12)
	Ruth O'Keeffe	(6/12)	Phil Green	(12/12)
	Janet Kennedy	(10/12)	Roger Maskew	(10/12)

(The figures after each name above indicate the number of actual and possible attendances at Executive Committee meetings in 2017.)

The Mayor of Lewes has the right to attend Executive Committee meetings.

## PLANNING SUB-COMMITTEE

\* indicates member of Executive Committee

Chris Kneale (Chairman) \*  
John Kennett  
Bronagh Liddicoat  
Roger Maskew\*  
Frances Tufnell (Vice Chairman)  
Nick Wiseman  
Carolyn Beckingham (minute-taker)

## HERITAGE OPEN DAYS GROUP

David Attwood  
*Paul Benjamin*  
Judith Davies  
David Hutchinson\*  
Peter Mettyear  
Mike Swift  
[Advisory non-members in italics]

Membership Secretary  
Website Manager

## MEMBERSHIP SERVICES SUB-COMMITTEE

Marcus Taylor (Chairman) \*  
Audrey Jarvis \*  
Neil Merchant \*  
Marietta van Dyck

## TREES SUB-COMMITTEE

Audrey Jarvis (Chair) \*  
Dean Bell  
Phil Green\*  
*Nick Jones*  
*James Newmarch*  
*Keith Sacre*  
David Saunders  
*Peter Thurman*

Marietta Van Dyck  
Barbara Merchant

## **STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT**

The Friends of Lewes - the Lewes Civic Society - is an unincorporated association founded in 1952, the constitution of which was reviewed at the March 2017 AGM, to bring it in line with contemporary requirements and good practice. It is a registered charity (No 258756) usually known as the Friends of Lewes, and referred to throughout this report for the sake of brevity as FoL.

Communications to it should be addressed to [enquiries@friends-of-lewes.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@friends-of-lewes.org.uk). The postal address is: c/o Lewes Town Council Offices, High Street, Lewes. BN7 2QS

Membership is open to all, on payment of the relevant subscription.

Members of FoL's Executive Committee are the charity trustees. Officers are elected at an Annual General Meeting for one year whilst half of the ten elected members retire each year, but are eligible for re-election. In addition members can be co-opted to the Executive Committee during the year. The trustees in office on 31st December 2017, all of whom are FoL members, are listed above.

The Executive Committee, which meets monthly, manages FoL's affairs but annually appoints a sub-committee to examine all planning applications affecting Lewes and the surrounding area, another to provide services and events for members, and one to manage its tree interests. It also has a group that organises Heritage Open Days.

FoL had a membership of 417 at 31st December 2017. This figure was 411 at the end of 2016 and though the increase is not large, it is encouraging to note that 27 new members joined over the course of the year. An increase in membership is most likely to be achieved by word-of-mouth contacts and by presentations to groups where likely members are to be found. If you can tell others why you are a member that would help; if you know of a group that might like to hear of our work and plans, do let Robert Cheesman or Marcus Taylor know.

The Charities Aid Foundation holds FoL's liquid assets.

Its accounts are examined by Ian Clifton, 21 Seabright, West Parade, Worthing, West Sussex. BN11 3QR

FoL employs no staff and has not incurred fees from professional advisers during the year.

On 31st December 2017 FoL's representatives on external bodies were: -

Lewes Conservation Area Advisory Group	Nick Wiseman
Lewes District Council's Planning Service Users Group	Robert Cheesman
South Downs Network	Robert Cheesman

## **OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES**

Having revised the Society's Constitution at the AGM in March, 2017, it is worth stating our objectives afresh:

*The Charity is established for the public benefit to pursue the following Objects in the area of benefit which is the area comprising the Town of Lewes and its immediate surrounding area:*

*(1) To promote:*

- (a) high standards of planning and design in or affecting the area of benefit and ensure that new development is sensitively sited in relation to the surrounding environment.*
- (b) the conservation, protection, development and improvement of features of historic or public interest, and the physical and natural environment in the area of benefit.*
- (c) enhancement of the built environment in, and the social, cultural and economic well-being of, the area of benefit.*
- (d) free access to the public realm in the area of benefit.*

*(2) To stimulate public interest in and care for the beauty, history and character of the area of benefit.*

*(3) To co-operate with public authorities and other bodies in fulfilling these objectives in the area of benefit.*

This is achieved by arranging meetings for members on conservation and heritage issues; lobbying relevant bodies to protect the historic environment of Lewes, whilst recognising that the town needs to remain an economically vibrant place, and by supporting projects that fall within its objectives. The main risks FoL faces are a failure to find sufficient volunteers to undertake activities, a decline in income through lower membership, and a lack of legacies which would limit the projects FoL is able to fund. The Executive Committee is very aware of the need to plan for the smooth replacement of the Society's officers when necessary.

## ***PERFORMANCE***

The Executive Committee considers that during the year the activities, projects and services to members, details of which follow, fulfil our declared objectives and that they are beneficial to the town and its inhabitants. The Committee therefore considers that FoL has complied with the public benefit test that applies to all charities.

## ***PLANNING POLICY ISSUES***

Work continues towards the town having an adopted Neighbourhood Plan and a watching brief on it has been kept through FoL's membership of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group. In the summer FoL responded to the public consultation on the draft plan by supporting the broad concept but commenting that some of its aspirations are unrealistic. It also suggested that the policies put forward needed to be supported by reasoned justification and a greater emphasis given to the conservation areas in the town and cross referenced with the Management Plans that have already been adopted for them by the National Park Authority. It welcomed the fact that the proposed myriad of mainly small sites available for new housing did not include any green-field sites but met the target figure of at least 200 set by the National Park Authority. Other specific comments made included suggesting the decking of low lying car parks to provide housing above and making reference to the planning advice notes produced by FoL. At the end of the year we wait to see the draft of the Neighbourhood Plan which the Steering Group will recommend to the Town Council for submission to the National Park Authority. Further public consultation, consideration by a Planning Inspector and ultimately a town referendum will take place before the Neighbourhood Plan is adopted.

Associated with the Neighbourhood Plan was a request by the Town Council for suggestions of possible infrastructure projects that could benefit from funding raised through the Community Infrastructure Levy and FoL provided a comprehensive list, of which completing a riverside path from Bear Yard to Timberyard Lane had a high priority.

Meanwhile the National Park Authority has consulted on its draft Local Plan, which will replace all existing Local Plans in its area and provide the policies against which future developments will be considered. FoL welcomed the landscape approach taken in this plan and was generally very content with it. However it did question whether in a landscape-led plan it remained appropriate to zone the fields at Old Malling Farm for housing when any development there will be a blot on the landscape. The National Park Authority are currently considering all comments received and will, in due course, submit the Plan and these comments to the Planning Inspectorate which is likely to convene a public inquiry to consider them. Appropriate amendments will then be made in light of the Inspector's comments before the Plan is adopted.

## ***MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS***

Demolition of the former ironworks buildings on the North Street Quarter site has been delayed by the need to comply with pre-commencement planning conditions and first re-house Gosnell's factory on the Malling Brooks site, which is under construction. When demolition takes place it will involve the area east of North Street plus the Springman House site on which a new fire station is scheduled to be built. Demolition vehicles will need to access the sites from North Street until it is possible to provide an entrance from Phoenix Causeway. It is understood that the first building to be constructed will be a health centre adjacent to Phoenix Causeway into which the three existing medical practices in the town will move, as well as the North Street dental practice.





During the year it has been good to note that work has now started on providing dwellings on the site behind Lewes House and the conversion of the Canon O'Donnell centre into housing. Although the planning permission for the South Downs Road site was revised in the year to provide 101 dwellings, work on this has only just started. Whilst Waitrose have made some improvements in their store they are still considering the possibility of either extending it or providing a new store on the land beside the river which they own. Tesco have sold the land beside their store and the Society opposed a planning application to develop housing including live/work units there as they did not consider it a suitable area to live in and the site would be better used as a coach park to replace the one in North Street which will be lost to development. However the National Park Authority's Planning Committee have deferred a decision on it pending the developer providing more affordable housing and having formal arrangements with Tesco regarding pedestrian entrances at both the north and south ends of the site. In December a public exhibition of the draft proposals for the Old Malling Farm site was held and these will be considered early in 2018.

### ***PLANNING COMMITTEE REPORT***

The Planning Committee met each month to review every new planning application submitted to the National Park Authority which falls within or close to the Town Council boundary. Details of all applications are now only published on line and the Committee remains concerned at the time taken to validate some planning applications and make all of the information relevant to them publicly available. The National Park Authority has clarified that the date of validation, which sets the start date of the statutory consultation process, is determined by the date on which all of the required information has been received by them, not the date on which it appears on the web site. Any delay between receiving the information and publishing it on the website therefore reduces the consultation period available for submitting comments.

In 2017 the Committee examined 302 planning applications and submitted formal objections to 50, made comments on 13 and wrote in support of 10. All representations were submitted directly to the National Park Authority via its online planning portal to ensure representations were recorded without delay.

The Committee continues to object to applications that seek to install uPVC windows in the Conservation Area as replacements for original traditional timber windows with glazing bars. Some of its objections have been successful and resulted in alternative more appropriate traditional materials being used. It was

also pleased that the outcome of a planning appeal during the year determined that stick-on glazing bars in double glazed timber windows are unacceptable in the Conservation Area and traditional glazing bars should be used that are integrated into the frame's construction. However, it was disappointed that permission was granted for the existing timber windows in Greyfriars Court, a dominant building on the boundary of the Conservation Area, to be replaced by uPVC windows.

Following a query by a FoL member the Enforcement Officer was contacted with respect to the smoking shelter that had been constructed without planning consent at the Volunteer public house in Eastgate Street. An objection was made to the retrospective planning application, which was refused and further representations made to the Planning Inspector who dismissed a subsequent appeal against the refusal.

The Design of Garden Rooms Planning Advice Note was published in March to provide guidance on the key aspects of their design. The Design of Dormer Windows Planning Advice Note was also published and included drawings by Nick Wiseman to illustrate the key points. The Committee applies the nine guiding principles in the advice note when considering planning applications for roof dormers and submits objections to those applications that do not meet the criteria. The Committee is concerned about the number of oversized box roof dormers that were granted permission this year, despite objections made that they are out of proportion and destroy the symmetry of the existing buildings and surrounding street scene. Although neighbouring properties may have existing large box dormers that were constructed under historic permitted development rights, they should not set a precedent for granting permission for new developments, now that Lewes is within the National Park and such rights have been withdrawn.

As part of its aim for continuous improvement the Committee undertook a post construction review of the planning application relating to the external alterations to 11a Prince Edwards Road. The Committee concluded that the development had been successful and its original decision not to object was correct. Additional post construction reviews of other sites are planned.

It has been good to see the old Lloyds bank building at 82 High Street, previously disused for years and on our 'Buildings at Risk' list, be restored and open as a branch of the Côte restaurant chain.

An objection was made to various works, including the erection of new fences and the construction of a hard surface roadway in the vicinity of the former racecourse. This followed the County Council's decision to refuse an application to divert the bridleway there.

The Committee was pleased that its proposal to the National Park Authority that site section details for sloping sites should be included in support of planning applications was adopted in their updated planning application validation requirements.

The monthly Planning Committee reports detailing the representations made on planning applications continue to be published on the website. The reports received 474 views this year and were also sent automatically by email to 56 people each month. In addition, the planning pages were reached by nearly 800 Facebook users and details of representations made were quoted in articles by the Sussex Express.

There have been no changes in membership of the Committee during the year and it would welcome anyone who is interested in the planning system and would be willing to join it.

### ***CONSERVATION AREAS – your views:***

2017 has marked 50 years since the creation of the first Conservation Area: FoL arranged for a window display in the Tourist Information Office in July to raise awareness of this anniversary.

Lewes has two Conservation Areas – one covering most of the central part of the town, created in 1970 and one covering Malling Deanery, created in 1974.

Civic Voice, the national organisation for Civic Societies to which FoL is affiliated, has created a survey of members' opinions on where the greatest threats lie to these areas. A copy, slightly modified to suit Lewes, is enclosed with this report and can also be found on FoL's website. You are invited to complete the survey sheet and return it.

## ***TRANSPORT ISSUES***

FoL officers have continued to meet with County Council officials and contribute to consultations.

FoL robustly questioned the decision of County Highways to replace setts with Bitmac (black-top) in Market Street without consultation: though the change is not reversible as we had hoped, the exchange has secured a promise of greater sensitivity and consultation in future, especially in the Conservation Areas, the status of which is not always well-remembered.

FoL has supported pressure from residents for pedestrian crossings near South Malling School, completed this year, and on the Brighton Road, where work is due in the coming months.



It has been pleasing to see that our persistent pressure about pavement parking has resulted in a two-phase consultation about a ban on all stopping on the north side of the High Street between Westgate and Eastgate. Two more 'Deliveries Only' bays will be created on the south side. This should be implemented in 2018.

## ***TREES COMMITTEE REPORT***

At the request of some of the residents, we are exploring the verges of Houndean Rise and Southdown Avenue to find appropriate sites for planting new street trees. Once surveys are completed we will consult with the people who live near the proposed plots: so we can favour their choices of tree varieties from a 'menu' of trees which would thrive in the local conditions.

We are continuing to visit all the trees which we have planted over the past seasons: in Valence Road, Abergavenny Road, at the top of Middle Way, and in South Downs Road. We are clearing any weeds from the base of each tree and then mulching around it, both to promote tree growth and to prevent any accidental strimmer damage.



FoL has campaigned for and contributed to the replacement of three diseased elms on St Anne's Hill and hopes that this work can be extended in 2018.

Read more about the plans for Trees in the town by visiting the Facebook page of the Lewes Urban Arboretum.

## ***OTHER ISSUES***

Officers from FoL have met regularly with the CEO Rob Cottrill and other officers of the District Council. We discussed housing policy, on-going developments, the future use of the Turkish baths building in Friars Walk and planned changes to planning and other services as a result of reorganisations, as the closer links with Eastbourne Borough affect more aspects of the Council's work. We also discussed the planned changes to recycling arrangements, due in Lewes in April, and the introduction of the Neighbourhood First scheme, providing named contacts for problems in each area. In particular we have expressed concern at the reduction in staffing in relation to Conservation Areas. FoL Committee members attended a Garden Party hosted by the District Council at Lewes House in June.

Liaison meetings between FoL committee members and Town Councillors occur roughly twice a year, where matters of mutual interest are raised and updated. The support and advice of the Town Council in several FoL projects is much appreciated.



In addition to the long-running collaboration on historic plaques, the past year has finally seen the implementation of a jointly-funded scheme to bring the lighting in Pipe Passage up to Conservation Area standard.

Respect for FoL's knowledge and experience of the town continues to be evident in all our relations with these and with other authorities and agencies.

Coverage of FoL activities in the Sussex Express and in regular articles in Viva Lewes has continued throughout 2017.

In May FoL hosted a mini-conference for planning professionals on design issues, particularly in the Conservation Areas, and heard from the National Park Authority's Design Officer on the subject.

## ***PROJECTS***

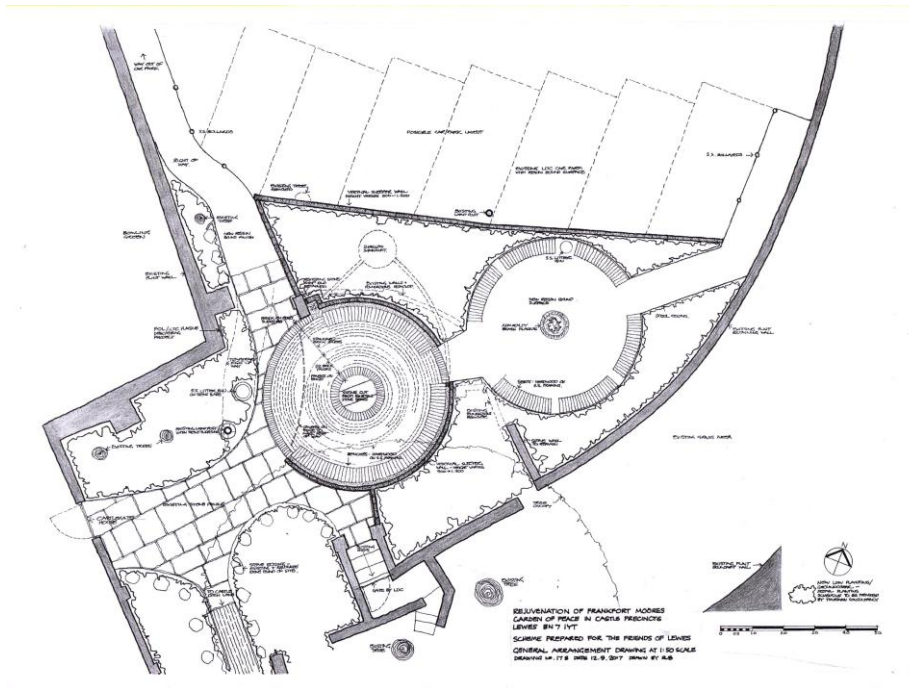
**Historic Plaques:** This collaboration with the Town Council has identified two more sites for the current financial year, though it will be a while before installation can happen. These are on the Old Maltings in the Castle Precincts and on the successful conversion of the old Post Office Depot near the station to a community cinema. This also features on the cover of this report.

If you have not done so recently, why not check out the list of 78 plaques at:

[https://friendsoflewes.files.wordpress.com/2012/03/lewes\\_plaques\\_and\\_photos\\_asj\\_160120.pdf](https://friendsoflewes.files.wordpress.com/2012/03/lewes_plaques_and_photos_asj_160120.pdf)

**A Peace Garden for Lewes:** Recent newsletters have outlined progress towards the significant improvement of the area once known as the 'Magic Circle', the plans for which were unveiled at a meeting in September and can be found on the next page.





An archaeological report has been received and an investigation will follow, once approval is received from Historic England. All being well, a planning application will come next and the clarification of the total envisaged cost.

Although both the District and the Town Councils have indicated that they will contribute to the project, a fund-raising campaign will be necessary to secure the balance before a contract can be let on the project. Completion is now being planned by the centenary of the Peace after World War I in June, 1919.

## HERITAGE OPEN DAYS

Over 2,500 visits took place in September to the various venues and events organised by FoL's Heritage Open Days team for this annual weekend. As well as a popular local event, it is widely advertised and visitors come from all over the country, and also from overseas.



This year, local people were especially pleased that Fitzroy House opened its doors, as well as the Police Headquarters at Malling House and Trinity House on School Hill.

All the pre-booked events, including the guided walks, filled up quickly, with the online booking system, making a *début* for us this year, working effectively.

All our costs were covered by the District Council, Town Council, Adams & Remers, and Mackellar Schwerdt and the Society is very grateful to them for their sponsorship.

The weekend needs around 50 volunteers, including building owners, stewards and guides, to run: the small team that plans the whole thing starts meeting in February. If you would like to be involved, either in the planning progress, as a building owner, or by stewarding over the weekend, then we would be pleased to hear from you. You can contact us on [leweshod@gmail.com](mailto:leweshod@gmail.com)

Please note: The Heritage Open Days dates for 2018 are 13-16 September.

## ***SERVICES FOR MEMBERS***

Four talks took place in 2017:

In January two engineering project managers from BAM Nuttall came to describe the complexities of their recently-completed restoration work on Lewes Station: a listed Victorian structure in constant use throughout. In February, the local author and broadcaster David Arscott shared his personal thoughts about the town, enriched with his fund of anecdotes. In October, two speakers talked about the issues involved in river management: Peter King of OART (Ouse & Adur River Trust) and Kim Smith from the Environment Agency. The November talk featured slides of Lewes taken between 1969 & 1999 by Jim Franks and given to FoL recently. Marcus Taylor commented on these images, at the best-attended talk of the year.

At the AGM in March, Rob Cottrill spoke about his role as CEO of Lewes District Council and Eastbourne Borough Council and described on-going changes and challenges in their work and at the autumn meeting in September plans for the creation of a Peace Garden were shared.

Participation in the town's annual Societies Fair in the Town Hall in September provided another opportunity for FoL to explain to the public what it does. Accurate awareness of this has to be where the path to interest and membership begins.

Three illustrated newsletters were sent out during the year. FoL's Facebook page now has over 250 'likes'. The FoL website is well-used and is worth exploring. Work by Barbara Merchant to improve its layout and scope has been continuing and a new version has recently been launched.

Sincere thanks are due to all who serve on FoL committees, give their time organising and staffing events, provide services for members or carry out other work. Additional offers of help to ensure that all our activities and work continues would be appreciated.

## ***FINANCIAL REVIEW***

### **Receipts and Payments**

#### **General Funds**

On FoL's unrestricted funds, receipts in 2017 amounted to £8,426 (*£7,922 in 2016*) and total payments £7,112 (*£5,606*) which resulted in a surplus of £1,314 (*surplus of £2,316*).

After allowing for a £600 contribution from Lewes Town Council towards the initial costs incurred on the Peace Garden project, the aggregate of receipts from voluntary sources has remained fairly stable. It is especially pleasing to note that the decline in membership numbers experienced in 2016 has not re-occurred this year despite there being an expectation that it would (especially when bearing in mind the membership's age profile). As buoyant membership levels underpin FoL's financial well-being, a watchful eye is being kept on this and focus maintained on attracting new members.

On trading activities, sales income has, overall, remained fairly stable at some £1,200. This does though mask variances on individual items which themselves are inevitably prone to volatility being dependent on the timing of when the larger orders are received from retailers. A robust sales drive has continued throughout 2017 but, as observed last year, it appears that a saturation point has probably been reached on our existing books in the local market. A new book was published during the year; Marietta Van Dyck's "Lewes in Detail" on which there has been a steady sales flow.

With no remuneration being paid to, nor any benefit obtained from a related entity by, any trustee and with only minimal travel expenses incurred in the course of the FoL's business being reimbursed, the cost of running FoL in 2017 was £1,184 (£670 on Governance plus £514 on Other) against £1,002 in 2016. While, currently, the recurring costs of running FoL remain below the 2017 ordinary membership subscription income of £3,049 it is nevertheless hoped that those who can afford to pay more than the minimum subscription will continue to do so in order that we are able to continue to support small enhancements to the town.

FoL remains active in reviewing opportunities for delivering and supporting Projects, Grants and Donations with expenditure in 2017 of £2,917 (£1,678). This includes nearly £1,800 on the Peace Garden project which was launched during the year. This scheme will need careful management as provisional estimates show that even with the Executive Committee having agreed to contribute up to £20,000 from FoL's own resources, and with local Councils having agreed contributions totalling some £44,000, a potential funding shortfall of some £20,000 remains. Fund-raising will be needed to bridge this gap. The Executive Committee has consequently put in place periodic reviews of progress, costs and fund-raising at which continuation (or not) of the project will be determined.

## **Balance Sheet**

### **General Funds**

At the end of the financial year, FoL's total assets on the unrestricted funds account amounted to £42,923 of which £41,277 was cash (held in FoL's Charities Aid Foundation bank accounts) and £1,646 stocks of books, tea towels and cards.

In its annual review of the reserves policy the Executive Committee re-confirmed that a cash reserve of +/- £40,000 is appropriate. This comprises continuation of a £10,000 operating reserve, the (above) potential £20,000 contribution towards the Peace Garden project, and some £10,000 being held so that funding can be provided for unforeseen small projects, specialist advice and representation on significant development proposals.

### **Restricted Funds**

Following net expenditures of £1,180 on tree planting and £713 on a contribution (gross £1,213) from the Tree Maintenance fund towards replacement of two Elm trees on St. Anne's Hill, £7,629 of cash is held in restricted funds. Of this £3,586 has to be spent on tree planting (Tree Planting Fund) and £4,043 on the maintenance of trees.

## ***PLANS FOR THE FUTURE***

FoL will continue to seek opportunities to present its aims and activities to the public and will maintain a professional approach on all issues that arise. However, what it can do is and will be constrained by the resources, human and financial, that are available. It would like to assist in advancing and funding more projects which enhance the townscape of Lewes and believes that its support could help lever funds from bodies such as the National Park Authority.

Members are also encouraged to check out our website [www.friends-of-lewes.org.uk](http://www.friends-of-lewes.org.uk) for updates on many of the issues mentioned here and for copies of FoL's contributions to consultations and press releases.

Approved by the Executive Committee on 24th January, 2018 and signed on their behalf by

Robert Cheesman      Chairman