



Soham Town Forum, P.O. Box 21, The Pavilion,
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Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 10th March 2005

Present

Robert Peacock (Soham Town Forum Chairman)	Alison Callaby (East Cambs District Council)
Peter Beer (Soham Town Council)	Peggy Gibbon (Soham Town Council)
Rosemary Aitchinson (Soham Town Council)	Lawrie Budd (Resident)
Pat Dutton (Health for Life Project in Burwell)	Colin W Fordham (District Councillor)
Deborah Hughes (Resident)	Annette Grove (Resident)
Maureen Hardingham (Resident)	George Ginn (Soham Town Council)
John Palmer (East Cambs District Councillor)	Laura Taylor (Resident)
John Kirkham (Soham Town Council)	Anne Tuite (Soham Town Council)
Geoff Griggs	Sheila Rayner (Resident)
John Powley (Cambridgeshire County Councillor)	Gerald Coteman (The Focus Group)

Apologies

Robert Barnes (SACT)	Donna Martin (Soham Museum Project)
Dan Schumann (Viva Youth Theatre)	Colin Palmer (Resident)
Louise Sarll & Linda Homan (Soham Village College Youth Development)	

Notes of Forum Meeting 20th January 2005 and matters arising

Minutes agreed – no matters arising.

AC clarified that the works currently underway in the car park were part of the Soham revival scheme as previously updated and that Notice Boards were to be provided along with a pedestrian refuge and additional hard-standing to enable larger vehicles to manoeuvre more effectively. It was also confirmed that the new bus shelters for the town centre were on order and that their installation was imminent.

Additional Item: Viva Consultation

Gerald Coteman of the Focus Group attended for this item

GC advised that he was currently scoping the project, looking at available literature, together with the recent history of the premises in terms of usage etc. Essentially however the Focus Group brief is to look at the centre with a blank sheet of paper. A key aspect of these considerations is ascertaining what local peoples needs and aspirations are. Once info and ideas are gathered the Focus Group will report back possible options. Three keys areas are being considered, Local needs and aspirations, future funding and strategic fit (with the town, district and region).

GC posed the question - what should the centre have inside it? and the following suggestions/points were made –

- Exhibition space for local artist like Babylon facility
- Centre needs to be viewed separately from the communities larger aspirations for a community hall (it was felt that the Viva Centre would not offer sufficient space for this type of function hall). It was noted that the Church hall is considered beyond economical repair for a public space and that any plans for a facility on this site would involve demolition. The Forum felt that the Viva centre was best suited to mixed use.
- It was noted that the centre was a historic building and that it would be desirable if the frontage could be restored, it was queried whether there was any potential to extend the centre to the rear i.e. could the area currently occupied by sheds be included

within the curtilage – this is something the trustees should consider in the future. It was highlighted that the building was within the conservation area.

- GC also asked whether there were any other accommodation issues outstanding locally.
- Linking with AdeC was considered very important and the potential to provide exhibition space for the community museum.
- It was suggested that ideas from new residents should be sought, especially those employed at the salad plant.
- Providing rooms of different sizes for different types of activity, which were affordable, versatile and well publicised, was felt to be a key requirement.

GC to be scheduled to attend the next meeting – subject to stage of report.

A Soham Newsletter, Ely Weekly News Proposals

The Forum discussed this matter following its last meeting, and at the meeting heard that the Ely Standard had also expressed an interest to run a similar feature. AC noted that the editor had asked the Forum to go back to him with what style of insert they would like to see and the paper would consider its feasibility. The Forum felt that the advertisement/ editorial balance should not overly favour adverts and that it should provide opportunities for a diary of town events and a list of town contacts. Much discussion took place but the key messages were that the newsletter should be the Soham News not the Soham Snooze, and should not be published any more than bi-monthly. Geoff Griggs and Lawrie Bunn offered to co-ordinate the text/features and Geoff agreed to contact the Editor at the Ely Standard to discuss the format in greater detail. It was decided not to pursue the Weekly News Initiative at this time. It was noted that the Town Council hoped to produce its own newsletter.

Recommendations of the Focus Groups – Future Action Planning

AC reported back on the progress of the Focus Groups in selecting projects to form the basis of the Forums action plan.

Community:

Unfortunately only 5 people attended the follow on community focus group, however much was discussed.

- Welcome Pack – the wider forum felt that this should include an up to date street map, it was noted that the plan distributed in the TIC was out of date, and should be promoted heavily to the new residents. It was noted that STC had collated a lot of info that could inform such an initiative as they were working on the Town Guide/Information pack for residents it would seem prudent to link with them to ensure that the Forum does not duplicate on this project. AC, PB and JK to schedule a meeting.
- Newsletter
- Notice Board
- Proud of Soham Campaign
- Form a community hall working committee – to be discussed at next meeting.

It was also suggested that reference to the Forum continuing to support the Viva facility is also included within the action points as these town centre premises are thought to have great potential for a range of community services/activities.

Town:

Again the follow on session for this topic was not over subscribed however potential projects were highlighted as follows:

- New Town Guide

- Shop Window Scheme
- Newsletter
- French Market or similar event
- Notice Board

Under this item a general discussion was held which identified that we need to find out why businesses are leaving Soham. It was highlighted that there is no vacant office space and that the area needs investment in premises. AT highlighted that when ECDC were considering a 3rd 'e-space' development Soham lobbied hard for its location to be Soham. The Forum felt that more should be done at District level to promote business opportunities and land. The potential to link with the other town regeneration partnerships was also highlighted, for example to develop employers packs – AC to ascertain whether the other partnerships would like to hold a joint activity to discuss district wide working.

Transport:

The follow on Transport meeting identified that some of the general items raised in the Healthcheck consultation could be addressed as immediate actions in the following way

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- Propose 3 month trial in respect of Fountain Lane, noting that the gates were installed prior to CCTV, in addition potential for further signage at Clay Street to be explored
- Forum to request that the Town Council raise the issue of illegal parking at Brook Dam Lane and White Hart Lane with the Police
- General road maintenance issues to be forwarded to CCC Highways for attention
- Request that improvements to entrance to college at Clay Street be put forward to the Town Council as a recommendation for 'Joint Minor Highway Improvement' support.

The group were also happy to report that since they met bus timetable information was now provided in the local bus shelters and that there had been some service improvements in respect of higher quality vehicles. Projects that they felt the Forum should promote were as follows:

- Access to low floor buses, implementation of disabled access provision - Raise with CCC
- Promote Dial-a-ride service - Article in Town Guide
- Additional Bus Services at peak times/Separate Ely to Newmarket service
- Provide Bus Shelters at Hall Street, Downfields and at Townsend opposite Holmes Lane
- Set up Rail Link Working Group - A core group of volunteers to champion this scheme

AC reported that several of the more general projects could be taken forward under the auspices of the Forum, working in consultation with both the District and Town Council and other partners e.g. Community Pride activities, notice boards, newsletter and town guide. These projects could be driven forward from within the existing forum meeting schedule– however some of the more 'long-haul' projects i.e. Rail link and community hall will require work outside the main forum meetings, and it is suggested that in the main these will have to be self supporting in terms of scheduling meetings and administration. The following members volunteered to take this forward PG, AG, CS, GGi, LT and PB.

It was also proposed at this stage that the Business Plan be updated to cover a larger time frame i.e. 5 years and that a yearly action plan – to include a schedule of projects, funding and partners - be produced as a working document. Agreed in principle, to be scheduled as an agenda item for the April meeting.

The Forum also considered when it should hold its Annual Open Meeting. Given the stage we were at with the healthcheck last year we did not hold the traditional open meeting during 2004 – The Forum proposed that the next Open Meeting be held on 1st September at the Viva Centre.

Project Updates

Soham Revival

Work ongoing

Community Transport

New bus to be introduced at the end of May. Now over 380 members, at the AGM over 50 users were represented and there were 80 attendees. They are working on a promotions campaign that will include radio coverage, presentations and a stall at the Ely Market; this will focus on how to register. Service can be used for excursions, dentist, doctors and social activities and a key benefit of the service is that it is door-to-door. There are not as many Soham members as they had hoped, but lots of feedback and ideas are received regularly and they developing the service on an ongoing basis.

Soham On-Line

CS reported that key activities for the coming year would be the promotion of local businesses, this was a key area for the website. CS also noted that he had now linked to the local news providers i.e. the Standard and Journal, which will free up some more time for developmental work.

Soham Community History Museum

No formal update, however it was noted that premises are still required

Soham Association of Commerce & Trade (SACT)

Have not met since the last STF, however RP reported that he had attended a District Meeting re Anglia in Bloom. Although RP felt there was much to champion in Soham i.e. Commons, Recreation Ground, Millennium Walks etc, he felt that the timing was slightly premature for Soham this year - with one of the key entrances to Soham currently being redeveloped. Although he noted that Ely would be entering the 2005 competition. He proposed that if the Forum were minded to take this forward a small committee should be set up to move the project forward. The group highlighted that there may be opportunities for local sponsorship.

A general discussion prompted re the current economic climate in Soham and it was noted that Budgens had now introduced a home delivery service, as a way of capturing Soham business.

Viva Community Centre

AC circulated a report from Dan Schumann which summarised the latest position of the Viva Centre, it was noted that a consultant was currently formulating a business case for the centre (earlier item); funding had been secured for the centre to be part of a new Rural Touring Cinema Network – survey re films recently launched and a new information leaflet produced

Other Items Discussed

The Town Council are to have a stall at the Soham Carnival at which they will promote the idea of forming a twinning association and developing a town plan, could also gauge interest on Anglia in Bloom. It was noted that the Forum may wish to be represented again.

AC reported on behalf of Donna Martin that in light of the new housing developments in Soham it may be beneficial to the Forums understanding of current issues to invite a representative of ECDC planning to come and talk to the group about how these new developments fit overall into service and facility development. It was also requested that an overview of how Section 106 monies would be allocated be given.

JK presented a brief summary of the Town Councils discussions in respect of Town Twinning, STC were approached in November by a group in France with a request that Soham consider twinning. STC recently hosted a visit from their representative and she went away with lots of information on Soham and its surroundings. Recently they have been in contact and are keen to move forward. One of the current initiatives planned is that 4 Soham athletes attend an international competition; Linda Homan has identified 4 potential students to take part. JK felt that it was important for everyone to start thinking about 'twinning' and create a buzz of anticipation locally.

Date of Next Meeting

Commencing at 7.30pm on Thursday 21st April 2005 at The Walter Gidney Pavilion, Fountain Lane, Soham

Notice of Meeting

Date: Thursday 21st April 2005, Time 7.30pm

Venue: The Pavilion, Soham

Agenda

1. Present and apologies
2. Notes of Forum meeting on 20th January 2005 together with any matters arising.
3. Viva Centre Update from the Focus Group (provisional item)
4. Soham In Bloom
5. Community Hall Working Group
6. Action Plan and Business Plan
7. Project/Group Updates
 - Community Transport
 - Soham On Line
 - Community History Museum
 - SACT
 - Viva Centre
 - Soham Revival

Date of next meeting: 2nd June 2005

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