



Soham Town Forum, P.O. Box 21, The Pavilion,  
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### **Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 13th March 2008**

**Present:** L Bassenger, P Beer, T Cornell, M Duckworth, C Fordham, A French, P Gibbon, M Hardingham, J Hibbert, S Jugg, E Jugg, D Martin, A Pallet, J Palmer, C Palmer, Colin Palmer, R Peacock, S Rayner, P Webb, N Smith, J Gipp, D Warner, P Nash, R Aitchison, S Harlock, G Harlock, Mr Bussingham, E Johnston, C Atkinson (Ely Standard), Graham (Nkt Journal), T. Webb, J. Webb

**Apologies:** J Powley, C Scurrah and J Reader

**Welcome** from the Chair Donna Martin

#### **Matters Arising**

Pat Nash has kindly agreed to be our treasurer and a bank account has been set up at Barclays bank. An invoice for £6.25 will be paid as soon as the remaining funds arrive from East Cambridgeshire District Council.

#### **Chairman's Report**

Donna reported on her meeting with Chris Palmer chairman of Town Council. Two Town Council representatives have been appointed and will attend Forum meetings to report back to the Town Council. Donna welcomed Chris Palmer and Jenny Gipp. The Town Council and Forum acknowledge a reciprocal relationship and will work together when ever possible. The Town Council are fully supportive of the Forum.

#### **Correspondence**

The Forum have been notified of the refurbishment of the toilets and kitchen at the Pavilion which will commence on 14 April.

Alison Callaby has now left East Cambridgeshire District Council and moved to Fenland District Council as Principal Planning Officer. The Chair has sent her a good luck card thanking her for her work with the Forum.

#### **Forum Constitution**

A Constitution for the Forum has never been properly completed, adopted and signed. Donna has produced an adapted version which sets out the aims and intentions and the way in which officers are elected etc. A properly adopted constitution is needed if we want to apply for funding for any of our projects. A number of people have taken copies of the constitution and have been asked to come back to the next meeting with their comments.

Letters were sent to the Community groups explaining the way we have changed the reporting system at the meetings in order to maximise the time for discussions on ongoing projects.

## **SACT**

John Palmer was not able to attend the SACT meeting. Robert Peacock reported that SACT has decided to stay as it is and would appreciate any help the Forum can provide. Their AGM will be on 20 May at the Viva Centre when they will have two speakers – one about transport provided by employers and another. They hope to increase membership and help to promote more business interaction. They now have Liz Johnston who is acting as their marketing and PR person.

They are looking for support for the upgrading of the Christmas lights and support for Late Night Shopping. Upgrading the Xmas lights will cost an estimated £20,000. This involves putting up new higher poles for the lights and the holes have to be dug by Highways Agency. Robert explained that we need to keep the insurance going (currently paid by the Town Council) because once it lapses, a new policy will be much more expensive.

Find out how the lights in Ely are funded      **Action Mark Duckworth**

SACT hope to get some support for this one-off project from County Council and or District Council. They would welcome any other ideas for support or suggestions for funding sources. Suggested that SACT have a stall at the carnival to raise some money. Donna suggested an event in conjunction with the Forum to give businesses the opportunity to talk to each other and Forum members. Perhaps later in the year.

It was noted that the businesses in the town need more motivation. Website [www.sohamsact.co.uk](http://www.sohamsact.co.uk).

## **Late Night Shopping**

There is a general feeling that the 'sparkle' has gone out of the event. Not enough shops are open now. Perhaps we need to use some of the side roads? more traditional fairground stands? A Late night shopping sub committee has been formed. If you have any ideas contact Robert Peacock, Donna Martin, Anne Pallet, Liz Johnston. They have been masked to report back to the next meeting.

## **Carparking**

A report was received from Jeremy Reader about parking in the High Street. He has done a survey - 80 questionnaires returned. According to these a lot of people park in the High Street, Clay St car park, Fountain Lane carpark and Budgens. Many people said that we need more parking in High Street and at the Church Hall site.

Many discussions ensued. There has been a problem with people visiting events in town getting shut in the Fountain lane car park late at night. Unfortunately the key holder is ECDC and the emergency telephone no. calls someone from Little Downham. TC to ask if the car park can remain open until 10.30pm and a clearer sign be erected showing the time when the car park is closed..

## **Community Hall**

John Palmer reported that a Trust has been set up to obtain the site of the Church Hall and erect a community hall with a public car park. Soham does not have a community hall. The Trust has approached East Cambridgeshire District Council's John Hill (Planning) for support. He had explained that he is unable to support this.

The site remains a topic of ongoing argument. We all accept that the Parochial Parish Council needs the money to pay for essential repairs to the Church. The site has been sold and 10% of the selling price has been paid. The rest will be paid subject to planning permission being granted. If given building to start in October 2008.

The meeting was asked to vote on whether housing was seen to be a preferred use of the Church Hall site. The response was 100% against residential development in the centre of the town – this being regarded as detrimental to the commercial future of the High Street.

Rosemary Aitchison explained the amount of input the Town Council have into planning applications. The Town Council are asked to comment on planning applications but can only object to applications citing valid planning or building regulations reasons. If an application fulfils all the planning rules and regulations the Town Council cannot raise an objection. They can only make a comment.

### **Railway Station**

Peter Beer reported that the project is still being pursued and support is being sought from the Town Council and District Council and that there appeared to be more interest, with the announcement that Chettisham station is to be redeveloped. When the new bridge near Ely was put up, provision was made for a double track to cross the bridge. It is likely that we would only get a rail halt with a ticket machine in Soham. It was pointed out that in that case plenty of car parking will be needed at the station.

This led on to discussions of the development of land close to the station and Spencer Drove. A great number of people attended the presentation by the developers of this land. Many people expressed severe reservations about the development principally the problems with flooding and back up of water from the Lode, loss of land for station car parking and access.

A vote showed that support against the proposed development at the site was unanimous. In view of this, District Councillor Tony Cornell was asked to enquire whether East Cambridgeshire District Council could intervene to halt the prospective development and follow up residents concerns regarding existing traffic problems in the local area, specifically Clay Street. **Action Tony Cornell**

Concerns were raised with regard to JP Planning Ltd. promotion of a railway station as part of the development site at the public presentation. Despite a denial that this had taken place, several of those present who had attended the presentation said that they had observed representatives of JB Planning Ltd. speaking about the station as if it was a significant part of the development. JB Planning Ltd. were notified that this was improper representation of their intentions. It was felt that some residents attending the presentation may have been given the wrong impression.

### **Soham Vision**

Mark Duckworth explained that Soham is now languishing in the doldrums and needs to articulate new ideas for its future. If facilities are lost we will probably never get them back.

We need to develop a big picture – a comprehensive and coherent plan for the next 25 years. The people of Soham have a key role in this plan. With the support of Cambridge Horizons and EEDA, Soham has been given the opportunity to prepare a Masterplan, setting out what Soham wants for its future and influencing housing, transport, employment, retail and leisure in a very direct way. What are Soham's strengths? We need to create a climate which will attract big employers and ensure housing, parking, transport etc are here where they are needed. He indicated that there may be some movement on the train station and that we need to press for the development of the Ely Southern bypass. Everyone can contribute. Please bring any positive ideas to the next meeting.

### **Residents Survey**

Charles Warner gave a very brief presentation of a survey carried out recently. He believes that we must make ourselves heard about the development at Spencer Drove. He will present a fuller report about the survey at the next meeting.

### **Neighbourhood Panel**

A reminder that the next meeting will be held on 2nd April 2008 at 7.00pm at Soham Village College. These meetings are open to all and if you have any issues to do with the community you wish to raise this is your opportunity. Issues cover not just policing but environmental health, parking, traffic and many other topics which affect our community. All present were asked to attend the next meeting if at all possible.

If you cannot attend the meeting but wish to raise a point please contact Rosemary Aitchison, Anne Tuite or Nigel Driver (all Town Councillors)

### **Soham Magazine**

Donna has undertaken to get some prices but as time was pressing this item has been postponed until the next meeting.

### **Next Meeting**

24 April 7.30pm at the Pavilion

### **Provisional Meeting Dates for 2008**

5th June 2008  
17th July 2008  
4th September 2008  
16th October 2008  
4th December 2008

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