



Soham Town Forum, P.O. Box 21, The Pavilion,
Fountain Lane, Soham, Cambridgeshire, CB7 5PL

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Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 24th April 2008

Present: R Aitchison, M Anker, L Bassenger, J Bates, P Beer, J Bull, L Bull, K Bussingham, S Bussingham, M Castling, T Cornell, M Duckworth, M Dwyer, K Felstead, C Fordham, P Gibbon, J Gipp, J Hibbert, E Johnston, S Jugg, E Jugg, D Martin, P Martin, P Nash, J Neville, A Pallet, J Palmer, C Palmer, T Parramint, R Peacock, J Powley, S Rayner, J Reader, K Richardson, J Richardson, C Scurrah, C Warner, T. Webb, J. Webb

Apologies: G Ginn, Colin Palmer

Welcome from the Chair Donna Martin

Minutes of the last meeting were agreed and signed

Matters Arising

Disappointment was expressed that no heating will be installed in the refurbished toilets in the Pavilion. Suggested that there may be a health and safety issue with condensation on wet floors. Also query about the lack of railings in the disabled toilet.

Rosemary Aitchison to check with TC

It was suggested that the Church Hall had not been sold because it is subject to the agreement of the Charity Commissioners. C Palmer confirmed that 10% deposit has been paid.

Neighbourhood Panel

Anne Pallett reported that PCSO's will no longer be attending Soham Town Council meetings. Any police issues should be referred to neighbourhood Panel. The police gave a demonstration of the new camera system which will be used by trained local people to try and reduce speeding in the locality. Any motorists caught on camera will be reported to police who will then write warning letters to them.

There is a hope to do something for 11-16 years olds in the area e.g. cafe. Linda Homan has purchased a Youth Bus which is being refurbished by the youngsters and will be used on a rotary basis around the outlying villages.

Next Panel meeting 2nd July 2008.

Soham Town Council representatives reported that the Council had been pleased to receive the report of the Forum meeting.

Finances

Pat Nash reported that we have received a cheque for £388 from East Cambridgeshire District Council. She has paid out £6.25 for photocopying leaving £382.42 in the bank.

Chairman's Report

Donna suggested that because the constitution is such a dry and detailed subject a small subcommittee would be set up to discuss this item. Julie, Robert, Charles, Donna and Rosemary will meet and then present their deliberations to full Forum.

Correspondence

Soham Town Council have invited a representative of the Forum to attend the Annual Town Meeting on 28th April 2008. Donna will attend.

Doug Perkins of East Cambridgeshire District Council has written asking for confirmation of the location of 5 notice boards for the town. They will go in an open space on the new estate off The Shade, in front of the Co-Op/Post Office, in Budgens Car Park, on Fordham Road near the bus stop close to the Cherry Tree pub and near Staples Lane opposite Webbs Stores. Anne Pallett to meet with Doug on 8th May 2008 to confirm.

Letter from East Cambridgeshire District Council asking for comments on Ely Masterplan. Charles, Chris S and Donna will meet to put forward comments.

Soham Vision

Mark Duckworth first acknowledged the failure of East Cambridgeshire District Council to support Soham in recent years. He appreciates that Soham has some catching up to do and he has pledged that there will be a different emphasis in future.

Work started on May 2007 to get together enough support to provide money to help Soham to put together a Masterplan for the town for the next 10-20 years. Discussions have brought forward the opportunity of a new employment site across the bypass from East Fen Common. Soham now needs to start marking itself but first it needs to identify its strengths and weaknesses.

Strengths - schools, road network, geographical position within East Cambridgeshire, commons, sports hall, key local businesses and major employers, consensus for significant change

Weaknesses - small business base, poor retail, depressed culture, run down appearance of High St, no technology businesses, reliance on car transport.

Mark and his team have established stakeholder support, connections with Cambridgeshire Horizons and the East of England Development Agency to support the process of regeneration.

BUT the impetus will falter without the support of the people of Soham.

Next Steps

Appoint consultants to develop a vision with the community, focus on jobs, retail, transport and local links enabling us to build a sustainable community.

Mark fielded a number of questions and finished by suggesting a public meeting, jointly hosted by Soham Town Council and Soham Town Forum to enable the public to start to put forward their ideas. Ely has started to market itself and it is just beginning to bear fruit. Soham must do the same and has benefits which Ely does not.

Residents Survey

Charles Warner presented this survey which asked questions about where people go to work, shop for leisure activities. What sort of transport they use. This survey demonstrated a very high rate of car ownership, little interest in cycle ways, very few people do their main shopping in Soham, more need for car parking in main street and interest in train use if a station opened in Soham.

60% of the respondents were against the proposed residential development close to the old station because of congestion and flood risk. Concerns also about the extra school places which would be needed and the lack of space at the surgery. There was some criticism about Soham Town Council's apparent endorsement of the Spencer Drove development. It was pointed out that as the area was designated as residential in the Local Development Framework endorsed by East Cambridgeshire District Council there is not much that the Town Council can do to prevent houses being built. We have to rely on the advice of the District council planners who are professionals. Support of East Cambridgeshire District Council councillors was called on.

Railway Station

The train operators have been contacted to ask what statistics need to be collected to support a new station - on-going. The cost of a station halt will be approx £250,000.

Community Hall

John Palmer reported that the fight goes on. They have consulted solicitors and undertaken a survey. 100% of those asked wanted to preserve the Church Hall 18% would not use it, 82% would like a car park there. Some would donate money to help. Problems were identified with the site of the Church hall being used for housing because of the access so close to pedestrian crossing and the problems with the large lorries turning into Co-op. Some annoyance that the Church Hall was not included in the Community Facilities Audit carried out for Soham Town Council.

Car Parking

Closure of the 4-6 spaces in front of hall has been an issue and has caused problems for Co-Op parking too. Fountain Lane car park is not open to 10.30pm yet. Town Council asked to write again to ask for this.

Heated discussion arose and East Cambridgeshire District Council councillors were asked for their support when planning application comes to Planning Committee at East Cambridgeshire District Council.

Christmas Lights

Mark reported that Ely had had funding for their lights from Section 106 and from Community Grant Fund. Mark and Robert will collaborate to submit applications for grants. If this fails this year Liz, acting on behalf of SACT tabled a contingency plan to string lights between the trees in the churchyard and the existing poles – the Vicar has been consulted and given his consent. It is also proposed that sponsored Christmas trees with LED lighting could be sited at various points from Cross Green to Red Lion Square.

Christmas Street Fair

A sub committee has met and come up with ideas on this event as agreed at the last meeting. They would like to close the street for longer – up to 10pm. And get every single business (not just shops) to open with lots of other stalls, such as craftspeople, community projects, clubs and school stalls. It is proposed that street performers be invited to attend and that Father Christmas will walk along the main the street to a grotto by the Christmas tree (outside Blue Donkey) with elves with buckets of sweets. An idea to promote a separate seasonal church event was tabled whereby an 'open' choir could be paid for singing requested carols with dedications which can be piped into the street. There will be a number of fun activities aimed at children and young people, including archery – it is hoped that with sponsorship these attractions can be put on for free thus attracting more families to the event. We want to make it a real community event!

Soham Magazine

Awaiting for information from Androulla French

Project Updates

Carnival

This is to be on 26 May and planning is going well. Series of fantastic events and the horse show will be put on as before.

History Museum

Quiz Night - 2nd May 2008

Old Carnival Footage - 8th May 2008

Neil Lanham - 12th June 2008

Festival

Theatre Royal Bury players present 'Art' – a very funny play 15th May 2008 at Comrades Club

SACT

AGM 20th May 2008 7.00pm at Viva Centre. Anyone welcome, free refreshments

Twinning

15 pupils and five teachers from Soham Village College visited Andrézieux-Bouthéon and this week the French students will be in Soham

Any Other Business

There was a suggestion that the Local Development Framework needs amendments.

The land between The Cherry Tree pub and Downfields has been left out of the plan again despite the years that the Town Council has tried to get it joined to the centre of the town. There are also problems with Brook Street and Station Road.

It was pointed out that this document is out for public consultation at the present time and anyone wishing to comment should complete the form on the East Cambridgeshire District Council website.

Question – how many people know about Soham Forum and how do we inform more people? Suggestions needed.

Next Meeting

Thursday 5th June 2008, 7.30pm The Pavilion

Notice of Meeting

Date: Thursday 5th June 2008, Time 7.30pm

Venue: Hall 1, The Walter Gidney Pavilion. Fountain Lane, Soham
PLEASE ENSURE THAT YOU HAVE SIGNED YOURSELF IN – THANK YOU

Agenda

Present & Apologies:

Minutes of the Meeting Thursday 24th April 2008

Matters Arising:

Chairman's Report:

Annual Town Meeting
Update Soham Town Forum Constitution
Correspondence

Community Noticeboards Presentation

Report on Ely Masterplan

Railway Station

Community Hall

Car Parking

SACT

Christmas Lights

Late Night Christmas Shopping

Soham Magazine

Anne Pallett / Donna Martin

Charles Warner / Chris Scurrah

Charles Warner

John Palmer

Soham Town Council Rep

SACT Rep

Mark Duckworth / Robert Peacock

Liz Johnston

Donna Martin

Community Project Updates:

Soham Vision

Residents Survey

Soham Festival

Soham Twinning

Soham Community History Museum

Mark Duckworth

Charles Warner

Peter Beer

Twining Association Rep

Donna Martin

Any Other Business

Soham Town Forum Meetings 2008

17th July 2008

4th September 2008

16th October 2008

20th November 2008