



Soham Town Forum, P.O. Box 21, The Pavilion,  
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## **Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 25th January 2007**

### **Present**

Robert Peacock (Soham Town Forum Chairman)  
Colin Fordham (East Cambs District Council)  
Peggy Gibbon (Soham Town Council)  
Peter Beer (Soham Town Council)  
Donna Martin (Soham Museum Project)  
Androulla French (East Fens Directory/Markets)  
Geoff Griggs (Soham Staploe Rotary Club)  
Robert Barnes (SACT)  
Howard & Dawn Laver (St Andrews Church)  
Maureen Hardingham (Resident)

Alison Callaby (East Cambs District Council)  
John Palmer (East Cambs District Council)  
George Ginn (Soham Town Council)  
Chris Palmer (Soham Town Council)  
Chris Scurrah (Soham On-Line)  
Pat Dutton (Health for Life)  
Glen Woodbridge (Soham Action 4 Youth)  
Jo Fitzpatrick (Cambridgeshire Acre)  
Alison Evans (St Andrews Church)  
Jill Neville (Resident)

### **Apologies**

Fiona Ross (Soham Town Council Chairman)  
John Powley (Cambridgeshire County Councillor)  
Rosemary Aitchison (Soham Town Council)  
Dan Schunmann (Viva Arts & Community Group)  
Anne Tuite (Soham Town Council / Ely Soham Dial A Ride)  
Linda Homan (Soham Village College Youth Development)  
Louise Sarll (Soham Village College Youth Development)  
Sylvia Riley (Resident)

John Kirkham (Soham Town Council)  
Anne Pallett (Soham Twinning Association)  
Maureen Dwyer (Soham Town Council)  
Sheila Rayner (Resident)  
Debbie Bailey (Resident)  
Colin Palmer (Resident)  
Lesley Bassenger (Resident)

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## **1. Notes of Forum meeting on 25th January 2007/Matters Arising**

Amendments to Item 6

Point 4, should read will be the 2nd part of, Covering newspapers up to 1910 Lottery planned to begin at late night shopping ending in May 2007, Artist is Anthony Day

Wrong minutes date - 14th December 2006

Viva Youth Theatre sold out for next show 'Thoroughly Modern Millie'

Open meeting booked at Community Lounge, Lodeside, Soham Village College - Event planning - on next meeting agenda

## **2. Community Hall**

Jo Fitzpatrick from Cambridgeshire Acre attending for this item to introduce herself and her role, she has also been contacted about the community hall - although there is a specialist at Acre who deals with Village Halls who has been in contact with Peggy Gibbon. Jo is the Community Development Worker for East Cambridgeshire District and works for the rural social and community programme - contract to March 2008. One part of her role is parish planning. This is a community project which surveys people in a parish to find out what they like and dislike, from these details an action plan is developed for 2-3 years. Action plans are taken to local strategic partnership, run by East Cambridgeshire District Council and consisting of representatives from health,

police, business and community. The LSP are responsible for developing a Community Strategy, which contains targets for the council to attain, and links to central government policies. The LSP can offer advice, money and guidance to achieve results. Jo keen to develop this approach for the market towns as well, opening up the links between market towns and the LSP's. Community development also includes helping to set up groups, access funding, Jo is currently working on projects to develop a sports pavilion, and regenerate a pond.

The Forum were keen to discuss the Community Hall proposals and Robert Peacock has spoken to the newspapers identifying that the Traders Association is supportive of the hall for the car parking benefits for both the town and the rural hinterland. He felt that facilities were needed to support growth and to support the area car parking space is essential, the hall could be upgraded or demolished and moved to the bottom of the site. Key issue would be raising the money to buy the facility and then plan the future of the site.

It was identified that an offer of around £500,000 has been made, and the site will be sold subject to planning permission. It was queried how could the planning department allow the site to go for housing when the town can not support extra provision. Church representatives identified that commercial uses were investigated but no interest was forthcoming. It was identified that this was an important location in the town centre, and allowing a housing development would create more problems and break up the town.

Donna Martin identified that the hall was offered to community museum for £350,000 before Christmas but they declined as it was felt that the site should be used for a community hall for the greater benefit of the town. It was felt that the existing halls are not suitable for the range of uses required and the town would appreciate a new space. Donna Martin also flagged up the Archaeological implications of the site.

It was also flagged up that monies for a scout and guide but had been allocated by town council, and it was felt if the new hall had built in storage incorporated it could be in use all week long. Access and facilities for existing scout hall not appropriate. Lots of support for a hall rather than the space being used for housing - added parking spaces could only be of benefit. George Ginn queried the planning situation, Councillor Fordham personally feels that it would not be allowed for housing. Does not understand why the church is against the site for a community hall.

Local support 42 people attended the parish meeting. Church requires work of £600,000. Whilst £80,000 secured in grant for the roof works, which are £300,000, further development to provide a new kitchen, work on organ etc is required, again this has been costed at £300,000. It was also that if the Church sells they have to sell it at market value and have to take the highest bid.

Cllr Palmer says that the prices are increasing - both the costs of the work and the value of the site. In regard to the hall and the site, the community do not want to deprive the church of the funding although it was noted that ten years ago the site was leased to an auction.

The Church representative highlighted that during the same period the sale of the hall was highlighted to fund an extension. Permission to sell though was agreed, by a public 'court' but heritage constraints meant that the plans did not progress. The issue of a three month extension was highlighted and the Church Representatives identified that the church council has not met since the town council meeting. Although at the last meeting it was said that the time could not be extended past the 31st January 2007, East Cambridgeshire District Council meeting.

Cllr Palmer just wants to achieve time to purchase the hall and is looking to the Church to provide them with the time to develop their bid. It was suggested that the site could be developed as a town hall on the high street which could consist of meeting rooms etc with village hall and the idea was flagged up to sell the pavilion site and build a custom made building in the centre.

The question of why there was such an urgency to sell was put to the PCC representatives and they identified that they may lose the existing bid on the table, past experiences had show this can happen and in addition building costs are going up all the time, impacting on the Church repairs.

Peter Beer was surprised that the site is being offered without planning permission, he suggested that the proposed bidder obtains planning permission, as this is the only way you will be sure of a sale. He asked that the Church consider the best bid once planning is in place, Cllr Palmer identified that this was at least an 8-week process. But he could not predict the planning outcome. When it goes to planning they will consider the proposal not what the church needs the money for. He also identified that £16,000 has been offered by the Jessica & Holly Fund for the hall, if it can be secured and if the PPC will permit the town to have it.

Alison read out the latest report to East Cambridgeshire District Council which outlined the existing position and flagged up the need for public consultation, and that the Town Council had agreed to lead on this element. Te PPC felt that whilst the views of some town are known a wider consultation of the populace has not been undertaken, Peter Beer highlighted this was the aim of the council recommendation.

There was some discussion as to how the church hall was financed, the church hall committee set up by the PPC raised the money for the Church Hall, there would have been people who did not contribute, originally funded from local subscriptions by those who wanted to pay

Androulla French asked whether they would be prepared to wait three months as the community magazine she published could be used as a consultation tool. Representatives of the PPC felt that they would push ahead with the deal but recognised that it would take time, but it would take considerably longer to raise the monies publicly.

Cllr Fordham cannot understand why the Church will not let the local people have the hall. It is derelict building that needs something doing with, there is no parking, more housing in a congested High Street again is not a good idea and shops again are not considered a suitable use. MH: Who owns the land and hall - the Church, access to the pavilion is dark and the high street is well lit and accessible. Howard Laver was surprised that the site forms part of the conservation area. New flats were highlighted as a precedent for housing in the town centre and it was identified that this was related to an existing building.

Alison again asked the Forum to return to the Council recommendation which identified that the Town Council had agreed to lead the public consultation, she suggested that the Forum 'Offer their assistance in writing to the Town Council in respect of their desire to secure the hall site for the community, subject to a favourable public consultation outcome and to assist with the public consultation activity should the extension of time be agreed.'

This was agreed as the most appropriate way forward.

### 3. Market Update

Androulla French still requires information from Cllr Palmer, i.e the details of the market and public liability insurance. Androulla French has some personal issues and would need to start shortly if the market was to get off the ground. It was also flagged up that a market stall has started traded outside Poppies - a barrow within the archway of the premises. Alison Callaby to follow up with Highways and Planning. It was agreed that Markets be moved down to project updates section not a regular agenda item.

### 4. Project/Group Updates (Brief Updates)

**i) Festival** - A series of film evenings hosted but not well supported in numbers to make it sustainable in the longer term. The Committee have secured the services of three thespians to perform live professional performances in The Pavilion on 12<sup>th</sup> April 2007. Folk evenings continue and are an unabated success.

**ii) Community Transport** - New tender agreed, tendering for two more contracts to sustain dial-a-ride service. ESDAR offices have now been relocated and there are plans to increase the number of office staff.

**iii) Soham On Line** - No Update

**iv) Community History Museum** - AGM held although bad weather, Soham on the home front going well, application for second part of funding about to be submitted for interpretive artwork and the book. Lots of information donated and lots of people want to get involved.

Lottery underway 1st prize a Tony Day painting up to the value of £750 which can be chosen from his studio. Raffle tickets on sale to the 31st May. Tickets are available £1.00 each. Disappointed that the book Soham on the Home Front was not available in time for Christmas but thanks to George for 'his research.

Interpretive art Update Royal visit booked 2nd June 2007 (Duke of Gloucester) Permission from land owner but they do have a plan B if site does not obtain planning permission. Guy Bentley-Cooke from Fordham to undertake stone engraving at cost with bronze insert. Concern re implications of piece on lowering of flag on poppy day - but these resolved as it will be slightly offset. JK Memorials will help restore Frank Bridges grave, project closes on 30th June 2007.

They are now working in partnership on a heritage project with the college a £37,000 application has been approved by the LHI, focussed on Olaudah Equiano. It was through him that people got involved in the abolition movement. The project includes rewriting a modern version of Equiano's book with illustrations, this will be aimed at both children and adults and 4000 will be given free to Soham residents, Mac Dowdy to host workshops to recreate Soham's historic layout, this will be printed and distributed in the same way. Angelina Osbourne and Professor Carey will give talks and there will be a dramatic re-enactment of Equiano's wedding and a dance music workshop. Research material will also be displayed in Soham. Dates of all the project elements will be circulated when available

Group has ongoing storage issues for collection - outgrown existing facilities, would welcome the availability of a secure space. Friends of the Museum now grown - £10 individuals and £15 for families - free meetings and free members outings. History group also has a quiz night planned £2.50 per person with light refreshments Berrycroft 7.30pm on 7th February 2007.

On the back burner the Soham pub book for 2008 and Soham People Book - local character suggestions please - living and dead. Glen Woodbridge identified that a Soham scout had produced a research document of 20 or 30 Soham pubs - Glenn will contact.

**v) SACT** - AGM 27th March 2007 and business event on the same night - public will be invited to attend from 7:30 AGM at 7.00pm in The Pavilion. Good late night shopping event - lights were good this year and they had more volunteers. Would like to build on that this year. Four large stalls did not turn up that had booked. Donna Martin identified that some of the trade stalls on setting up was selfish as they set up in front of information and local stalls, Robert Peacock identified that some did set up outside the plan that was circulated.

**vi) Viva Arts & Community Group** – Alison Callaby reported on behalf of Dan Schunmann that the Quality of Place application has been successful. This will provide new cultural and communication facilities for the town, i.e. portable cinema, noticeboards, information booklet for all Soham Households. £17,250 had been secured from the EEDA Quality of Place Fund, but there is a requirement for match funding, Alison Callaby proposed that up to £2000 be used of the STF monies towards the overall project and this was agreed. Robert Barnes reported that the Viva Charity Shop has now been running for 18 months and is so successful with a good volunteers that they are increasing the hours from 17 hours to 35 hours starting from the end of March 2007. A new manager has been taken on - Barbara Warner has done a fantastic job but she would like to retire and become a volunteer.

**vii) Town Twinning** - Lots of projects a dozen visitors from France came for a long weekend they visited Ely, Cambridge, Wisbech - Christmas Market. A starting point for the visits to happen. Running team to participate in international fun run. Big event at the end of 30th June 2007 in France where people from all 4 twin towns will gather. Visitors to pay their own fares and if possible offer reciprocal visits.

**viii) Youth Update** - Hopefully funding bids secured for youth bus and youth worker to run. Detached youth workers application to precept funding of £2,000 from the town council but this has been unsuccessful. They are currently talking to the Police and undertaking questionnaires - to assess need and facilities that the young people would use. Peter Beer concerned that The Lode Centre at Soham Village College has closed through lack of funding, and enquired about the possibility of it reopening and suggested that the research being undertaken should be used to make a case to the town council as part of the precept. Robert Barnes flagged up the success of the Church Army representative David Walters who had made a real difference in the town - talking in the early hours to the young people. Glen Woodbridge also highlighted that they would like to progress the skate park project and queried whether planning permission would be required - yes - it was suggested that a letter to the town council would be the best way forward to pursue this idea. It was identified that there would be some grant funding available through the town council for a new skate board area. Glen Woodbridge identified that they would like to benefit from 'youth bank' money which has to be accessed by the youth of the area and other local funding sources were also flagged up as available.

Next meeting - 8th March

## **5. Dates of Next Meeting**

8th March 2007

# Notice of Meeting

**Date: Thursday 8th March 2007, Time 7.30pm**

**Venue: The Walter Gidney Pavilion, Fountain Lane, Soham**

## *Agenda*

	<u>Item Lead</u>
1. Present and apologies	All
2. Notes of Forum meeting on 25 <sup>th</sup> January 2007 together with any matters arising	All
3. Plan for Open Meeting on 19 <sup>th</sup> April 2007	All
4. Project/Group Updates (Brief Updates)	
• Quality of Place	Dan Schumman
• Market Update	Androulla French
• Festival Society	Peter Beer
• Community Transport	Anne Tuite
• Soham On Line	Chris Scurrah
• Community History Museum	Donna Martin
• SACT	Robert Peacock
• VIVA	Dan Schumman
• Twinning Association	John Kirkham
• Youth Update	Glen Woodbridge

## **Meeting Dates for 2007**

19th April 2007- Open Meeting  
31st May 2007  
12th July 2007  
23rd August 2007  
4th October 2007  
15th November 2007

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