

## **Suffolk Coastal Disability Forum**

**Minutes of the Meeting held in the Conference Room, East Suffolk House (Suffolk Coastal District Council Offices), Riduna Park, Melton, Woodbridge, IP12 1RT, on Monday, 9<sup>th</sup> January, 2017, at 1pm**

**SCDC: Suffolk Coastal District Council, WDC: Waveney District Council  
SCC: Suffolk County Council**

### **Present:**

Linda Hoggarth	Disability Forum for Suffolk (Chair)
Gillian Benjamin	Active Communities Officer, Suffolk Coastal & Waveney District Councils
Moyra Bevilacqua	Resident
Simon Dawes	Resident
Steve Hodgkiss	East Suffolk Association for the Blind
Paul Kelly	Resident
Damian McCarthy	Leading Lives
Liz Mark	Resident and Bawdsey Parish Council
Maureen Mee	Resident
Margaret Morris	Resident (Secretary)
Tim Pryke	Resident
Graham Walker	Avenues East

### **Guests:**

Nicola Corbett	SZC Communications Officer, EDF Energy – Sizewell C
Darren Knight	Head of Customer Services, Suffolk Coastal & Waveney District Councils
Cllr Carol Poulter	SCDC Councillor with responsibility for the Environment

### **Apologies:**

Stuart Ellis	Resident
Michael Friend	Resident and Hollesley Parish Council
Linda Layton	Resident and Carer
Anita Moxley	Action for Blind People / RNIB
Kerry Overton	Community Development Officer, Healthwatch Suffolk

### **1. Welcome**

Linda welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made.

## **2. Apologies**

The above apologies were received and noted.

## **3. East Suffolk House, Riduna Park**

3.1 As this was the Forum's first meeting at East Suffolk House, members noted the following concerns:

- The General Housekeeping Notes provided little relevant information for people with disabilities;
- There needs to be a sign at the entrance to Riduna Park stating where SCDC Offices are as otherwise the entrance is not clear;
- Parking spaces for Blue Badge holders – there is no signage to indicate where these are. The number of spaces appears to be inadequate;
- When accessing the building from the rear/ parking spaces for blue badge holders, there is no way of indicating to Reception that visitors are waiting to gain entry. Blue Badge holders should not be expected to walk to the front of the building;
- Whilst noting the need for Personal Evacuation Plans for disabled visitors to the building, a more simplified form needs to be drawn up. Clarification is required on staff members available to use the Evac chairs in an emergency;
- Wheelchair users need to be advised to reverse into the lift as otherwise the buttons are difficult to reach;
- A 'Press button' entrance is needed for the Conference Room as otherwise people with mobility difficulties will not be able to open the door unaided;
- The locations of Refuge Points were not clear and these did not appear to give any protection to disabled people waiting at these points in an emergency;
- There is only one Evac chair at the top of each flight of stairs. In the event of the need to evacuate the Conference Room, more may need to be available for Forum meetings. Additionally, the provision of a wheelchair on the ground floor would assist people who have had to leave their own wheelchair on the first floor to get to the meeting point outside the building;
- The meeting point is on the grass which is not an easy surface for wheelchair users.

3.2 An accessible toilet is available on the first floor near to the lift;

3.3 The ability to use the microphone system was of great assistance in enabling all members to hear and take part in the meeting.

3.4 Linda thanked Gillian for her support in getting the meeting organised for SCDF at East Suffolk House, including having to change the date.

3.5 It was agreed to invite Peter Revell to the next Forum meeting to discuss the concerns which are raised in the spirit of ensuring the building is as accessible as possible to all disabled people attending meetings at East Suffolk House.

**Action: Linda Hoggarth**

#### **4. Sizewell C Consultation, EDF Energy**

4.1 Linda welcomed Nicola Corbett, SZC Communications Officer, to the meeting.

4.2 Nicola introduced her presentation, which was noted as not being accessible for people with visual impairments. She said that there is an audio tape available as well as a larger print version of the Consultation Summary Document which she will make available to those members who require these formats. The standard version of the Document was distributed to members.

4.3 It has been 4 years since the last consultation. Nuclear is a low carbon technology and when completed Sizewell C will power 6 million homes.

4.4 A number of points were made, including the following:

- The construction site will be very large.
- There will be a permanent road to link with the B1122;
- It has been decided that the freight management facility is no longer required;
- An Environmental Impact Assessment will be developed and it is recognised that the area is important for tourism;
- It will take 10 years to build and will have a wide-ranging impact;
- There are 4 options for mitigating the traffic impact at Farnham, including a 2-village or 4 village bypass round Stratford St Andrew / Farnham.

4.5 The Campus location has been identified and will have 2,400 bed spaces. The housing will not be allowed to remain on site once Sizewell C is completed. It is hoped that these will be modular buildings that can be reused.

4.6 This Stage 2 consultation closes on 3 February, 2017. Members were reminded that, as individuals, they could complete and return the Questionnaires (at the back of each Document). Alternatively, comments could be made by telephone.

4.7 The Planning Group will consider making a collective response on behalf of the Forum.

### **Action: Planning Group**

4.8 Linda thanked Nicola for her interesting and useful update on the progress with Sizewell C and invited her to keep us up to date as the work progresses.

## **5. Universal Credit**

5.1 Linda welcomed Darren Knight, Head of Customer Services, Suffolk Coastal & Waveney District Councils, to the meeting and invited him to update members on the roll out of Universal Credit.

5.2 Darren explained that a full service of Universal Credit would be operational in Suffolk Coastal in June, 2018. It is already a full service in Waveney. He would make his presentation slides available so that these could be distributed with the minutes.

### **Action: Darren Knight**

5.3 Universal Credit replaces six means tested benefits (Job Seeker's Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance, Income Support, Child Tax Credit, Working Tax Credit and Housing Benefit). The system is designed by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), and supported by local authorities via Delivery Partnership Agreements. SCDC has a duty to help applicants and to provide personal budgeting support where needed.

5.4 In Lowestoft, where there is already a full service, the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) has a small contract to support people, including those with disabilities, with budgeting advice.

5.5 A question was asked as to why this contract was only with the Citizens Advice Bureau. It was felt that disabled people would prefer to go to a specialist Disability Advice Service such as DIAL Lowestoft & Waveney or the East Suffolk Disability Advice Service. Darren would investigate this suggestion.

**Action: Darren Knight**

5.6 Applications may only be made on line, and applicants must have an e-mail address and a mobile phone. There is not enough publicity about Universal Credit and there should be a stronger focus on ensuring that people understand that these benefits will only be able to be claimed in this way.

5.7 Members expressed concern that applications must be made online and that they must have a bank account, e-mail and a mobile number. Darren explained that the regulations are set by the Department for Work and Pensions but SCDC is required to help applicants claim. He will arrange for a representative from DWP to attend a meeting later this year.

**Action: Darren Knight**

5.8 Housing Benefit is included in Universal Credit – if a tenant gets into arrears they can request the rent element be paid direct to their landlord until they are back in credit again.

5.9 Darren reported that SCDC has less contact with private landlords than WDC. With regard to homelessness, a member of SCDC staff will be looking at the impact of Universal Credit to see if it has an impact, for example, on evictions.

5.10 In respect of temporary accommodation, it was not clear what would happen if someone is in temporary accommodation for just one week. From 2018, any existing benefit claimants will be transferred to Universal Credit. Universal Credit does not apply to pensioners, as yet.

5.11 There are a number of current concerns:

- The length of time taken to process Universal Credit claims;
- Job Centres will need to be fully resourced and staffed;
- There is a need to raise awareness of Universal Credit;
- The effect on claimants in temporary accommodation;
- The digital only service;

- Adequate staffing at the customer service points in Felixstowe and Woodbridge Libraries;
- The lack of privacy at Woodbridge Library (A screen is to be provided).

5.12 In response to questions regarding access to Universal Credit for people with visual impairments and people with learning disabilities, it was noted that home visits could be provided and that staff would be available to help those people who needed support. It was noted that specialist software would be required on computers used for Universal Credit in Libraries.

5.13 Linda thanked Darren for his presentation on Universal Credit and said that she anticipated further information would be available nearer the date of the roll out in Suffolk Coastal.

## **6. Environmental Issues**

6.1 Linda welcomed Cllr Carol Poulter , SCDL Cabinet Member for the Environment, to the meeting. Her brief includes refuse collection. She had been invited after a number of members had noted that wheelie bins were left on the pavements blocking access after they had been emptied.

6.2 Simon explained the difficulties he has when the wheelie bins are emptied and then left by the refuse collectors anywhere on the pavement causing an obstruction. He noted that it is unlawful for pavements to be obstructed. He has complained to Suffolk Coastal Norse but no action has been taken. Cllr Poulter said that she had not heard complaints of this type before but she would discuss this with Simon outside the meeting to see what could be done.

### **Action: Cllr Poulter**

6.3 Margaret said that her gate is often left blocked by an emptied wheelie bin which makes it difficult to get out of the gate and onto the pavement.

6.4 Liz said that the wheelie bins were never replaced correctly in Bawdsey.

6.5 This seems to be a problem throughout Suffolk Coastal. Residents should complain to Suffolk Coastal Norse. However, it was noted that Simon's experience demonstrates that Suffolk Coastal Norse

do not appear to take any action following complaints of this nature. Cllr Poulter will take this up with Suffolk Coastal Norse.

**Action: Cllr Poulter**

6.6 Concerns are often raised regarding the state of some of the pavements. Footpaths are the responsibility of SCC and complaints should be raised there.

6.7 The car park next to Woodbridge Railway Station is leased to SCDC from Network Rail. There is always a large puddle in the Blue Badge parking spaces when it rains. This is the responsibility of SCDC.

6.8 Members reminded Cllr Poulter of their concerns regarding the parking facilities at Woodbridge Library including having to pay for parking to use SCDC's Customer Service Desk.

6.9 A member raised the issue of the difficulties in crossing the road from Melton Car Park to Riduna Park. The provision of a pedestrian crossing was suggested particularly if the Melton Car Park is to be overflow parking from Riduna Park. Cllr Poulter responded that the Melton Car Park is not going to be overflow parking and said that SCDC considers there is enough car parking at Riduna Park. However, she would raise the issue of the provision of a pedestrian crossing.

**Action: Cllr Poulter**

6.10 Linda thanked Cllr Poulter for her responses and urged members to get in touch with Cllr Poulter if they encounter any problems with environmental issues.

**7. Minutes of the Meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> October, 2016**

The Minutes of the meeting held on the 4<sup>th</sup> October were agreed as a correct record.

**8. Matters Arising**

**8.1 Item 8.4 Footpath in Woodbridge:** In the absence of Sylvia Izzard, no update was available.

## **9. Updates on Specific Issues**

### **9.1 Disability Focus 2016:**

9.1.1 A number of members of the Forum had attended this event and the feedback was good.

9.1.2 The report of the event has been distributed by e-mail and hard copies were available for those members without access to e-mail.

9.1.3 The action points will be followed up in due course by the Disability Focus Planning Group.

**9.2 Felixstowe Action Day:** Linda and Margaret had met Helen Greengrass from Felixstowe Forward to go through the recommendations in the report. It was a very constructive meeting and the notes will be attached to these Minutes.

**9.3 Meeting with Councillor Goldson:** Cllr Goldson has not yet responded to requests for updates on the issues raised with him. The Planning Group will invite him to a future meeting.

### **Action: Planning Group**

**9.4 Planning Group:** The Planning Group continues to meet approximately two weeks after Forum meetings to take forward Action Points and to plan future meetings.

## **10. Health and Social Care**

10.1 In her absence, Kerry Overton, Healthwatch Suffolk, asked if members had any concerns regarding the changes in Felixstowe where Haven Health, Howard House and Walton GP surgeries are working in closer collaboration. In brief, resources are being shared between the three surgeries. An 'on the day' team based at Felixstowe Hospital will be answering calls from 3.30pm for all patients from these surgeries and they will be triaged. If the patient needs to see a health professional, they will be allocated an appointment at the Felixstowe Hospital. Members were not aware of any concerns.

10.2 Kerry also said that GP+ had started in Felixstowe in December. This service provides appointments at weekends and in the evenings at the Felixstowe Hospital for patients who cannot see their GP on weekdays or who need an urgent appointment. Surgeries have issued



a newsletter but the publicity for this service could be better. Patients who are unsure how this affects them should ring their surgery.

10.3 Any issues can be fed into Healthwatch Suffolk by using the feedback forms or calling the office on 01449 703949.

10.4 The Healthwatch report on Diabetic Foot Care has been delayed. Further information will be made available in due course.

10.5 Enquiries have been made regarding the relocation of the Prosthetic Clinic from Ipswich Hospital to Hartismere, Eye, noting the difficulties of travelling much longer distances for patients. A response is awaited.

## **11. Information Round / Any Other Business**

**11.1 Housing:** It was noted that the proposed item on Housing has been put back to the April Meeting since there was a full agenda for this meeting.

### **11.2 Advice for Disabled People:**

11.2.1 It was suggested that a speaker be found who could advise disabled people and their family carers on all the things they needed to know in order to cope with their situation.

11.2.2 It was noted that the East Suffolk Disability Advice Service would be a useful contact for people experiencing problems. The contact details are as follows:

E-mail contact form via [www.daseastsuffolk.org.uk](http://www.daseastsuffolk.org.uk)

Telephone: 01394 387070

Post or visit: 14 The Square, Martlesham Heath, Ipswich, IP5 3 SL.

**11.3 Hidden Needs Report:** Steve advised that 'Hidden Needs in Suffolk Five Years On (2011-2016)' is a very useful document which looks at trends. It is produced by the Suffolk Community Foundation. To obtain a copy telephone 01473 602602 or e-mail [info@suffolkcf.org.uk](mailto:info@suffolkcf.org.uk)

**11.4 Cold Calling:** Gillian distributed window stickers that state 'No Cold Callers' on one side and provide advice for the householder on the other. They are provided by Trading Standards, SCC, and are free of charge. Contact Trading Standards on 03454 040506 to obtain more of these.

## **11.5 Action Day at Woodbridge:**

11.5.1 Members indicated their support for an Action Day in Woodbridge to look at the access to shops and businesses.

11.5.2 It was agreed to refer this to the Planning Group to be organised when the weather is warmer.

### **Action: Planning Group**

**11.6 Beach Buggy:** Margaret has yet to track down the organisation that provided the funds for this.

## **12. Dates of Future Meetings in 2017**

These are now confirmed as 4<sup>th</sup> April, 4<sup>th</sup> July, and 3<sup>rd</sup> October, all Tuesdays, from 1pm to 3pm, at East Suffolk House.

## **13. Date of the Next Meeting**

This will take place on Tuesday, 4<sup>th</sup> April, 2017, at 1pm, at East Suffolk House, Riduna Park, Station Road, Melton, Woodbridge, IP12 1RT.

Members who need Personal Evacuation Plans were asked to arrive 10 minutes early so that these can be completed.