

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 Tuesday 3rd October, 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
Sylvia Izzard	Resident
Brenda Jeffery	Resident
Liz Mark	Resident and Bawdsey Parish Council
Damian McCarthy	Leading Lives
Margaret Morris	Resident (Secretary)
Cllr Caroline Page	Suffolk County Council
Mike Titchener	Felixstowe Town Centre Resident's Association
Graham Walker	Avenues East

Guests:

Robert Scrimgeour	Principal Design and Conservation Officer, Suffolk Coastal District Council
Darren Knight	Head of Customer Services, Suffolk Coastal & Waveney District Councils

Apologies:

Nigel Crisp	Staff Manager, Ipswich Depot, First Group
Simon Dawes	Resident
Stephen Fountain	Operations Manager, Ipswich Depot, First Group
Michael Friend	Resident & Hollesley Parish Council
Steve Hodgkiss	East Suffolk Association for the Blind
Leigh Horton	Disability Advice Service East Suffolk
Paul Kelly	Resident
Linda Layton	Resident and Carer
Kathleen May	Resident
Maureen Mee	Resident
Kerry Overton	Community Development Officer, Healthwatch Suffolk

1. Welcome & Introductions

Linda welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made. She expressed concerns about the Council's arrangements for evacuating the building in the event of an emergency with the responsibility for meetings held in the Deben Room being passed to those organising the meeting.

2. Apologies

The above apologies were received and noted.

3. Access Issues in Woodbridge

3.1 Further to our report following the Action Day in Woodbridge on the 28th June, Robert Scrimgeour, the Principal Design and Conservation Officer, Suffolk Coastal District Council, had been invited to the meeting to discuss issues concerning listed buildings. Linda welcomed him to the meeting and invited him to explain his role.

3.2 Robert explained that listed buildings are governed by Government legislation. A listed building is one where that has been judged to be of national importance in terms of architectural or historic interest. It is then included on a special register. Listing provides protection to all aspects of a building, inside and out. Whereas Conservation Areas are areas designated by local planning authorities that are of special architectural or historic interest, the character of which it is desirable to preserve.

3.3 There are some 2,500 listed buildings in Suffolk Coastal; many of those are in Woodbridge. Grade 1 listing relates to buildings such as castles, churches and country houses and Grade 2 relates to buildings such as shops and businesses. The shops and businesses in Woodbridge make a significant contribution to the town, but changes can be made to a building to make it more accessible. Owners must seek permission from the council to change the external features of a listed building. These would include windows, doors and entrances. Robert considered that a flexible approach can be adopted to change doorways and thresholds to make them more accessible to disabled people. However, the interior layout is the shop owner's responsibility.

3.4 Robert said he would welcome working on creative solutions to make buildings more accessible. He is happy to offer guidance to owners of businesses in Suffolk Coastal. He thought owners should not get away with saying that because a building is listed then no

alterations can be made to improve accessibility. It is his role to determine this, not the owner's.

3.5 He noted that as the Conservation Officer, he would have to deal directly with the shop owner, not with a user group.

3.6 With regard to A boards, Cllr Page suggested that a group of shops could have a banner listing all, instead of individual A-boards. Robert pointed out that if businesses wanted to go down this route then each owner would have to apply. It would be unlikely that senior council officers would agree to ban all A-boards from pavements and footpaths.

3.7 Robert would be willing to attend a meeting arranged with the Mayor and Choose Woodbridge to discuss possible changes that could easily be made to listed buildings.

3.8 The following issues identified in our report were discussed in more detail:

- There were concerns about the width of the pavement in Quay Street and the 'hump' at the crossroads. The balance was in the drivers' favour, not the pedestrian.
- Robert commented that there seems to be more traffic nowadays in the Thoroughfare. Access to the Thoroughfare is highly restricted during the daytime but it appears that people take little notice of the current traffic regulations. It was noted that traffic wardens were replaced some years ago and there is now little action on dealing with traffic offences by the police. This may change when parking is decriminalised and becomes the responsibility of the council.
- Many of the footpaths are not in good condition, but repairs cost money.
- The Crown is a listed building but approaches to improve the accessibility and to publicise the arrangements for access have met with indifference. Alterations a few years ago to the Crown resulted in access becoming more difficult.
- It was noted that people have hidden needs. The Co-op Store in the Turban Centre was complimented on providing a chair for customers but most shops do not.
- Cllr Page may be able to fund more benches in the Thoroughfare if appropriate locations can be identified.
- The osteopath's entrance is difficult, as is the entrance to the café in Gobbitts Yard. Robert noted that the addition of grab handles or door bells to summon assistance could be added to listed buildings without causing any difficulties.

- There are many bollards in Woodbridge, the majority of which are painted black. These should be highlighted with a brightly coloured contrasting band to improve visibility for people with visual impairments. The Turban Centre is privately owned so the bollards there are the responsibility of its owners. The purpose of many of the bollards was unclear.
- The flooding of the blue badge parking spaces in the Station Road Car Park after heavy rain was noted.
- Sylvia explained about the problems with part of the public footpath between The Avenue and the Riverside. She has been very persistent in her communications with Suffolk County Council and the last letter from the Rights of Way Officer stated that a quotation for improving this section of the footpath is being obtained.

3.9 The Forum agreed the content of the report and noted that it had been distributed to a number of organisations and individuals in Woodbridge.

3.10 The following actions were agreed:

- **Cllr Page will be asked to pursue highlighting the plain black bollards in the Thoroughfare.**
- **Cllr Page will consider placing more benches in the Thoroughfare, using her Locality Budget, provided appropriate locations can be identified. Members will assist by advising where a bench could be placed.**
- **The Mayor will be invited to a joint meeting with Choose Woodbridge and Robert Scrimgeour to pursue the issues identified in the Report.**
- **A joint letter from the Forum and Robert Scrimgeour will be sent to businesses to advise them of improvements that could easily be made to listed buildings and to encourage them to be more proactive. Robert would help the Forum with this.**
- **The actions will be progressed by the Planning Group, Robert Scrimgeour, and Cllr Page.**

3.11 Robert was warmly thanked for his very helpful contributions and explanations.

4. Suffolk Coastal District Council's Telephone System

4.1 Darren Knight, Head of Customer Services, Suffolk Coastal and Waveney District Councils, was welcomed. He explained that both

Suffolk Coastal and Waveney District Councils are at present considering changes to their telephone systems as they are different.

4.2 At the last Disability Focus event, disabled people had asked that all statutory organisations in Suffolk consider whether their telephone systems are easy for people to use and whether they are confusing to people with a range of disabilities.

4.3 As a result, Darren was intending to consult with both the Suffolk Coastal and Waveney Disability Forums and present the proposed changes to their system.

4.4 He explained that he will be preparing an information pack and this will include options on ways to contact the councils.

4.5 The contacts made by Mystery Shoppers had resulted in 300 calls to council departments. There had been one instance where a visually impaired person had asked for a telephone call to respond to an issue and he had then received a letter. Upon asking again for a telephone call, his wife received an e-mail.

4.6 Darren said that the council currently has no guidance for staff on how to respond to customers with different communication issues.

4.7 Members noted that it was confusing to have to listen to a number of options and then key in the number required. It would be good to talk a member of staff.

4.8 Liz commented that she does not like 'music' being played whilst she is waiting to be connected.

4.9 Darren said that getting the call routine is one of the most difficult things for councils to get right.

Action: Darren Knight will prepare the information pack in order to consult with Forum members and attend the next meeting to discuss this.

4.10 Darren said that there are now extra staff based at the service points in Woodbridge and Felixstowe Libraries to help customers. Margaret commented that when she was standing at the Enquiry Desk at Felixstowe Library she could hear someone providing personal information on the other side of the desk area. Darren will investigate.

Action: Darren Knight

5. Minutes from the meeting held on 4th July, 2017.

The Minutes of the meeting held on 4th July, 2017 were agreed as correct.

6. Matters Arising

6.1 Item 3 Bin Collections - Suffolk Coastal Norse: Linda reported that, after our July meeting, she had sent our comments to Stuart Mortimer, Operations Manager for Suffolk Coastal Norse. However, she had not received a satisfactory response and did not know if the offer from Action for Blind People to provide a Toolbox Talk had been taken up. In the meantime, Simon had reported bins are still left obstructing gates and pavements in Martlesham. Margaret commented that bins had been left partly over the pavement in Felixstowe. It was agreed to contact Stuart Mortimer again and to advise him that these problems persist.

Action: Linda Hoggarth

6.2 Item 6.2 East Suffolk House:

6.2.1 Mark Speller, Building Manager, had provided some updates regarding the access concerns, as noted in the minutes of the April meeting.

6.2.2 The General Housekeeping Notes do not appear to have been improved.

6.2.3 The signage to locate the blue badge parking has been improved by additional clear blue badge signs. There is now a bell by the rear doors to request assistance in order to gain access to the building. These doors are closest to the blue badge parking spaces. These doors are normally opened promptly. Therefore it has been decided that a shelter is not needed.

6.2.4 The response to the concerns regarding evacuating the building in the event of an emergency is inadequate as it places the responsibility of getting people with mobility impairments from the first floor on the chair of the meeting they are at. The solution offered by Mark is to relocate our meetings to the ground floor but there is no suitable room for our purposes.

6.2.5 It was agreed that the Planning Group would canvas members as to whether it was practical to hold our meetings in different towns in Suffolk Coastal and prepare a report on potential venues and their costs.

Action: Planning Group

6.2.6 A press button door opener has been installed for the entrance to the Deben Room.

6.2.7 An additional evac chair has been placed in the Deben Room. These can be doubled to act as chairs to assist people to get to the Assembly Point.

6.2.8 There is a hearing loop in the Deben Room in addition to the microphone system.

6.2.9 Signs have been added at the front of the lifts to advise wheelchair users to reverse in.

7. Updates on Specific Issues

7.1 Disability Focus 2017: Information has been widely circulated about this event and it will be held at One, Scrivener Drive, Ipswich on 24th October. Some members of the Suffolk Coastal Disability Forum will be attending.

7.2 East Suffolk House: See Item 6.2.

7.3 Felixstowe Action Day:

7.3.1 Helen Greengrass had responded to say that there had been no progress on the preparation of an information guide to assist disabled visitors and residents. There was no funding available to produce anything other than a basic guide. She was hoping to work on this last month. Mike offered to follow this up.

Action: Mike Titchener

7.3.2 David Chenery, Highways, Suffolk County Council, had been in touch to ask if the Forum would be happy for there to be one A Board per shop provided these are placed on the road side of the slot drain. A reply had been sent to advise David of our continuing concerns that, whilst the Forum would take a view that one A Board per shop placed on the road side would be reasonable, traders do place A Boards on

the footway section and do not keep to the arrangements made with Suffolk County Council. The concern regarding the introduction of banners that move in the wind and hit people was also raised and a question was asked as to whether the council regards these as A Boards. No response to our reply was received. It was agreed that Margaret will check on the current positioning of A Boards to ensure that these do not encroach on to the footpath section. Members also commented that goods displayed outside shops also obstruct the footpath.

Action: Margaret Morris

7.4 Bus Services to Ipswich Hospital:

7.4.1 Unfortunately, representatives from First Group were unable to attend this meeting. Stephen Fountain, Operations Manager, Ipswich Depot, had responded to say that the new service operating from Kesgrave to Ipswich Hospital is the No 68. The reason behind the introduction of this is that the No 63 service to Melton was partly replaced with the No 800 Park and Ride service which operates a more direct service from Ipswich Town Centre via Woodbridge to Rendlesham and this is an hourly service.

7.4.2 Therefore the No 68 service is part of the original No 63 service and this does operate to the Garrett Anderson bus stop at the Ipswich Hospital. The No 800 service does stop along Woodbridge Road East but due to lack of space in the hospital grounds, First cannot send any more services into the hospital grounds.

7.4.3 It was hoped that Stephen will be able to attend the next meeting to explain further.

7.5 Report from the Planning Group

7.5.1 Members of the Planning Group continue to work on outstanding issues including the provision of information on accessible taxis. Comments had been made regarding the design of a Council leaflet regarding Front Facing Council Services at Woodbridge Library. As a result the leaflet has been improved and is much clearer.

7.5.2 Members had met with Tim Snook, Leisure Contracts Manager, Suffolk Coastal District Council regarding the redevelopment of the Deben Swimming Pool at Woodbridge. Unfortunately Tim had not known of the existence of the Forum in advance of the plans being

drawn up. However, he took on board a number of our comments. Work has now commenced on the redevelopment.

7.5.3 Tim has agreed to attend the next meeting of the Forum to explain what is happening in Woodbridge as well as the proposed redevelopments at Leiston and Felixstowe Leisure Centres.

8. Views on Health and Social Care with Healthwatch Suffolk

8.1 In her absence Kerry had sent the following update.

8.2 Healthwatch Suffolk will be embarking on a large piece of work (excluding Waveney) concerning Domiciliary Care. There is a scoping survey that people in receipt of domiciliary care can complete to share their experience of receiving home care in Suffolk. This can be completed on line <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/homecareinsuffolk> or by telephoning 01449 703949 to speak to a member of the research team.

8.3 The Annual General Meeting will be taking place on 10th October, 2017, at Kesgrave Conference Centre. Bookings can be made on line at <https://healthwatchsuffolkagm2017.eventbrite.co.uk> or by telephoning 01449 703949.

9. Information Round

9.1 Enforcement of Parking Spaces in Off Street Car Parks/ Disabled Parking Accreditation:

9.1.1 Linda had attended a meeting of the Waveney Disability Forum where Kerry Blair, Head of Operations, Suffolk Coastal & Waveney District Councils, and Sue Keeble, Operations Manager, Suffolk Coastal & Waveney Norse, had attended to discuss car parking issues particularly the enforcement of parking spaces for blue badge holders. As previously mentioned, the enforcement will pass to local authorities from the police in April, 2019.

9.1.2 However, it was also reported that the Disabled Parking Accreditation Scheme has been adopted by both Waveney and Suffolk Coastal District Councils. This is a scheme that has been introduced by Disabled Motoring UK and is managed by the British Parking Association. To be eligible a car park must have the recommended number of accessible bays, be linked to accessible routes, enforce the proper use of accessible bays and have at least one payment machine

of the right height. Sue explained that this includes 16 in Suffolk Coastal and Linda has requested a list of those.

10. Dates of Meetings in 2018

It was agreed that meetings would continue to be quarterly.

The next meeting will be on Tuesday, 9th January, 2018, at 1pm, at East Suffolk House, Riduna Park, Station Road, Melton, Woodbridge IP12 1RT.

Future meeting dates in 2018 will be agreed once members have been consulted regarding venues and locations.

Action: Planning Group

Post Meeting Note: Due to concerns raised about the suitability of East Suffolk House and possible traffic problems in January, it has been decided to relocate the next meeting to the Richards Room, Martlesham Community Hall, Felixstowe Road, Martlesham, Woodbridge, IP12 4PB, from 2pm to 4pm.