

Suffolk Coastal Disability Forum

Minutes of the Meeting held via Zoom on Tuesday, 9th April, 2024,
at 2 pm

Present:

Linda Hoggarth	Disability Forum for Suffolk (Chair)
Paul Kelly	Resident (Vice Chair)
Sue Abel	Day Services Manager, Leading Lives
Simon Barnett	Integrated Transport & Enhanced Partnership Manager, Suffolk County Council
Peter Coleman	Resident/ Member, Norfolk & Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust
Nigel Crisp	Staff Manager – Ipswich Depot, First Group
Simon Daws	Resident / Suffolk Guide Dog Forum
Corrine Franklin	Felixstowe Town Council
Bryan Frost	Resident / Trimley St Mary Parish Council
Margaret Morris	Felixstowe Town Council (Secretary)
Joss Mullett	Communities Officer – Framlingham, Wickham Market & Surrounding Villages, East Suffolk Council
Alan Neville	Customer & Community Engagement Manager, Greater Anglia
Steve Race	Manager, Disability Advice Service East Suffolk
Cllr Edward Thompson	East Suffolk Council / Woodbridge Town Council
Graham Walker	Chair, Disability Advice Service – East Suffolk
Sally Watson	Community & Engagement Manager, Healthwatch Suffolk

Guest:

Rebecca Foster	Financial Inclusion Officer, East Suffolk Council
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Apologies:

Michael Bellward	Disability Employment Adviser, Jobcentre Plus, Department for Work & Pensions
Deborah Darby	Melton Parish Council
Trevor Garrod	East Suffolk Travellers Association (ESTA)
Steve Hodgkiss	Suffolk Sight / Disability Forum for Suffolk
Sylvia Izzard	Resident
Linda Layton	Resident
Yvonne Smart	Trimley St Martin Parish Council

1. Welcome & Introductions

Linda welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made.

2. Apologies

The above apologies were received and noted.

3. Cost of Living

3.1 Rebecca Foster, Financial Inclusion Officer, East Suffolk Council, was welcomed to the meeting and invited to update members.

3.2 Rebecca explained that she was part of the Financial Inclusion Team at East Suffolk Council. There are 4 members of the Team which covers all of East Suffolk and is part of the 'Ease the Squeeze' programme. An Intern will be joining the Team in the summer.

3.3 Referrals to the Financial Inclusion Team can be made by organisations and also by residents themselves. Referrals received are triaged so that emergencies or urgent issues are dealt with more speedily.

3.4 People can receive information on a range of topics, such as blue badges, bus passes, grants on help with energy costs, pension credit, dealing with debts, redundancy, bereavement and discounts on council tax. The Team will ensure people are passed to the appropriate organisation or service that can assist them. For example, people who need help with benefits can be referred to the Disability Advice Service or the Citizens Advice Bureau.

3.5 Outreach services are available in Bungay, Southwold, Felixstowe and at groups such as Chinwags.

3.6 Support can be provided to people over the phone, in their home, or meeting at a place such as a library. Members of the Team also attend Community Events to chat to those attending.

3.7 Members asked the following questions:

- Are the budgets for grants ring fenced?

Response: The Team has no funding to make grants but offers assistance to find sources of support.

- Can the Disability Advice Service and the Financial Inclusion Team work to see how they can learn from each other in terms of providing outreach services and home visits?

Response: Yes, that is a good suggestion.

- Are the Team less busy now?

Response: It varies but the Team has the impression that there is a need for more help.

- Once a person has been referred on to another agency, does the Financial Inclusion Team check back with that person as a follow up?

Response: Yes, of course, some referrals work out better than others.

3.8 Details of the service can be found on the East Suffolk Council website: [Ease the Squeeze on cost of living » East Suffolk Council](#) with other useful information.

3.9 The Customer flyer outlining the service, and the Cost of Living leaflet will be attached to the minutes.

3.10 Referrals can be made to the team by these methods:

Online: [Community Help Hub referral - My East Suffolk](#)

E-mail: helpwithmoney@eastsuffolk.gov.uk

Telephone: 0333 016 2000 (and ask for help with money)

3.11 Rebecca was thanked for attending the meeting and for updating members.

4. Jobcentre Plus

4.1 Unfortunately, Michael Bellward, Disability Employment Adviser, had been called away urgently and was unable to attend the meeting.

5. East Suffolk Disability Information Day

5.1 Members were reminded that the East Suffolk Disability Information Day is planned for Wednesday, 8th May, 2024, from 10am to 2pm, at Ropes Hall, Kesgrave War Memorial Community Centre, Twelve Acre Approach, Kesgrave.

5.2 At the beginning of the day, there will be keynote speakers from the Suffolk Coastal Disability Forum. the Disability Advice Service East Suffolk, Nicole Rickard, Head of Communities, East Suffolk Council and Cllr Sarah Whitelock.

5.3 There will be a range of stalls offering information, advice and assistance to those attending. Stall holders will be arriving at 9/9.30am.

5.4 The 'Be Well Bus' offering health and well-being support will be parked in the car park.

5.5 The event is open to everyone and there is no need to book to visit. Light refreshments will be available free of charge.

5.6 Publicity for the event is being included on a range of social media and posters will be circulated widely. East Suffolk Council will include the event on their social media. Members are asked to assist wherever they can to publicise the event to their members/friends or family.

5.7 Members were asked to make every effort to attend on the day both to support the event and to help where required.

Action: All

5.8 It was suggested that the event could be publicised on local radio including BBC Radio Suffolk, Suffolk Sound and Felixstowe Radio.

6. Minutes from the Meeting held on 23rd January, 2024

The Minutes of the meeting of the Suffolk Coastal Disability Forum, held on the 23rd January, 2024 were agreed as a correct record.

7. Matters Arising

7.1 Item 5 Felixstowe Seashore Village: Margaret had enjoyed a 'trial run' of the five new accessible beach huts that are now available for hire. She recommended these as being well equipped, close to the beach, the promenade and the pier. Members have requested further details on the hire charges and policy and an update on the progress of obtaining a new beach wheelchair.

7.2 Item 7.1 Swimming Sessions for People with Disabilities: The information about the availability of swimming sessions for people with disabilities is not yet available.

Post Meeting Note: Swimming sessions for people with disabilities take place at the following swimming pools run by Places Leisure:

Leiston Leisure Centre: Wednesdays: 3.15pm to 4.14pm

Deben Leisure Centre, Woodbridge: Thursdays 10am to 11am

Felixstowe Leisure Centre: Mondays 4pm to 5.30pm &
Thursdays 10am to 11am

7.3 Item 10.1 East Suffolk Planning Applications: It was felt that the system to view planning applications was better except for people with visual impairments seeking to use this on the screen reader of their mobile phones. Joss will raise this specific issue with the Council's IT Department.

Action: Joss Mullett

7.4 Item 10.2 Starship Robots: The Open Day had taken place as planned and was interesting. However it was reported that the partnership between Starship Robots and the East of England Co-operative Society would be running this operation in Ipswich. More information can be found at <https://www.starship.xyz/the-starship-robot/>

8. Issues, Concerns and News from Members

8.1 Greater Anglia:

8.1.1 Alan reported that Greater Anglia services continue to perform well. Passenger numbers have increased by 20% in the last year. The results from the latest round of Access for All applications are not yet known. However, work to improve the access and install lifts at Stowmarket Railway Station will commence in the autumn of 2024.

8.1.2 Greater Anglia is still affected by strike action, this being the 42nd day of strikes but there is no news as to when the situation will be resolved.

8.1.3 Members commented that the trains are more accessible and also easier for taking cycles. It was noted that 'Private Eye' has praised the Stadler trains.

8.1.4 Rail will be used to transport construction equipment for the developments at Sizewell and this will be undertaken to cause the least disruption to people living in the area.

8.1.5 A member asked if visually impaired passengers could use their disabled rail card on the trains and this was confirmed as correct.

8.1.5 In response to a question, Alan said that replacement bus services, used when engineering works cause trains to be cancelled, will continue to operate from Newbury Park for the present.

8.2 Bus Services:

8.2.1 Members raised a number of issues and received updates as follows:

- It is understood that buses from Felixstowe may be able to go into the Ipswich Hospital site. This development was under discussion.
- With regard to rerouting the No 64 Service through Martlesham village, discussions are in progress.
- Given that there is not a proven need, it was not possible to reroute the No 64 bus into the Ipswich Hospital site.
- With regard to the trees obstructing the view of the bus stop outside the Ipswich Hospital, First Bus had taken this up and also Felixstowe Travel Watch.

8.2.2 A member asked whether more buses could operate via the Grove in Felixstowe. However, the No 73 contract could not be extended at present.

8.3 Ipswich Hospital:

8.3.1 A member commented that the new checking in machines in the Outpatients Department do not appear to be working well.

8.3.2 A member was pleased to note that he had received notification of an appointment in audio email format for which he was most grateful.

8.4 Martlesham Pedestrian Crossing: Members noted with cautious optimism that Suffolk County Council may be in a position to progress the installation of a pedestrian crossing.

9. Healthwatch Suffolk

9.1 Sally reported the following staff changes:

- Simon King, Suffolk VASP Co-ordinator, is retiring from Healthwatch Suffolk. He will be replaced by Julia Carr, and she will be in post from the 3rd June, 2024. Unfortunately, this means that the Suffolk Bulletin will not be produced until then.
- Kerry Overton has left Healthwatch Suffolk. As a result the team will operate as a county wide resource.

9.2 The following trends were noted:

- Mental health of young people, taking into account the stress of exams.
- Waiting lists for treatment/appointments.
- Dental services. The University of Suffolk now has capacity to train new dentists.
- Accessing primary care. More surgeries are going completely digital. Members noted the difficulties of those patients for whom English is not their first language and for those without access to the internet. On the day appointments are often not available.
- Surveys of on-going work, for example Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, Maternity Services and Improving the Health of Women can be found on the Healthwatch Suffolk website.

9.3 Work has begun with the West Suffolk Hospital regarding surgery for some orthopaedic operations being carried out at the new centre at the Colchester Hospital given the travel difficulties. It was noted that this also affected people in Suffolk requiring some orthopaedic operations which would also be carried out at the new centre in Colchester.

9.4 In response to a question as to whether Healthwatch had received complaints from patients unable to obtain their usual medication from local pharmacies due to the unavailability of some drugs, Sally said she was aware of this issue. It was often caused by delays in the availability of drugs being brought in from abroad in order to keep costs down. However it was difficult for patients unable to get their usual medication and who were often passed from GP to pharmacist and back again before their situation was resolved.

10. Information Round / Any Other Business

There were no further items raised.

11. Topics for Next Meeting

11.1 Members were asked if there were any particular items they would like to suggest for future meetings. As there were none save for the update on the Felixstowe Seashore Village and the work of Jobcentre Plus, it was agreed to leave this with the Planning Group.

12. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, 16th July, 2024, from 2pm to 4pm, via Zoom. The link for the meeting will be sent out in due course