

## Suffolk Coastal Disability Forum

Minutes of the Meeting held via Zoom on Tuesday, 10<sup>th</sup> October, 2023,  
at 2 pm

### Present:

Linda Hoggarth	Disability Forum for Suffolk (Chair)
Paul Kelly	Resident (Vice Chair)
Peter Coleman	Member, Norfolk & Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust
Nigel Crisp	Staff Manager – Ipswich Depot, First Group
Deborah Darby	Melton Parish Council
Simon Daws	Resident / Suffolk Guide Dog Forum
Rob Dunger	Felixstowe Community Radio
Bryan Frost	Resident / Trimley St Mary Parish Council
Steve Hodgkiss	Disability Forum for Suffolk / Suffolk Sight
Paul Horne	Senior Transport Planner, Suffolk County 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
Cllr Edward Thompson	East Suffolk Council / Woodbridge Town Council
Graham Walker	Chair, Disability Advice Service – East Suffolk
Sally Watson	Community & Engagement Manager, Healthwatch Suffolk

### Guests:

Michael Bardell	Lead for the Disability Sports Partnership
Ritchie Downing	Community Intervention Officer, East Suffolk Council
Sarah Shinnie	Corporate Events & Commercial Projects Officer, East Suffolk Council

### Apologies:

Trevor Garrod	East Suffolk Travellers Association (ESTA)
Sylvia Izzard	Resident
Linda Layton	Resident
Kerry Overton	Community Development Officer, Healthwatch Suffolk

## **1. Welcome & Introductions**

Linda welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made.

## **2. Apologies**

The above apologies were received and noted.

## **3. Disability Sports Partnership**

3.1 Michael Bardell, Lead for the Disability Sports Partnership, was welcomed to the meeting and invited to talk about the Disability Sports Partnership.

3.2 Michael explained that this is a county wide initiative involving a number of organisations including Active Suffolk and Sports Centres in Suffolk. He leads the Disability Working Group.

3.3 The work is carried out in a number of different settings mainly with children who are supported up to the age of 19. Current work involves children accessing activities in gyms with instructors, physios and support. Staff are being trained to work with disabled children. Obviously, children have different levels and types of disability and can make use of different equipment.

3.4 Children are supported up to age 19. However, once a child reaches the age of 19, support seems to disappear. There is hope that professionals such as Community Matrons will support young people beyond the age of 19 as well as those with complex needs and that there will be services put in place.

3.5 It would help if there was a database where it would be possible to find out what was available for children, young people and adults across the county. The Covid pandemic resulted in many clubs and groups being closed and these have not all restarted.

3.6 Members noted the following:

- There needs to be a signposting database showing the availability of sporting activities.
- Some venues do not have appropriate changing facilities and it would help if this information is available for opportunities on offer.
- Many swimming pools do not have adequate equipment to enable disabled people to get in and out of the pool.

- Gyms do not always have suitable equipment or fully accessible changing facilities.
- Horse riding can also be a problem once a disabled rider becomes too heavy to lift into the saddle, for example, elderly parents were trying to lift their 30 year old.
- Community Action Suffolk has a Community Sport Restart Programme to help support the sport and physical activity sector to operate in a Covid-safe way. Grants are available.
- Concerns were raised regarding the transition of children to adult services.

3.6 The lack of specific sessions in swimming pools for people with disabilities was highlighted. Deben Swimming Pool run by Places Leisure was given as an example where there is one session per week. Margaret will check the availability of specific swimming sessions for people with disabilities in the Forum's area.

**Action: Margaret Morris**

3.7 Michael was thanked for explaining his work with the Disability Sports Partnership and discussing this with members.

#### **4. Community Infrastructure Levy Funding for Playgrounds**

4.1 Sarah Shinnie, Corporate Events & Commercial Projects Officer, East Suffolk Council was welcomed to the meeting and invited to explain her role.

4.2 She explained that East Suffolk Council owns over 60 play areas throughout the district. At present, all of them are in need of improvement but it is a question of prioritising these as the budget is limited.

4.3 The Community Infrastructure Levy is paid to the Council by developers on commencement of a development and usually in instalments. It is then used for two funds, the Neighbourhood CIL and the District CIL. For play areas to be funded from these, applications have to be made to these funds.

4.4 A five year plan is being prepared for consultation which should involve the accessibility of play areas, input from inspectors and consultation with children and young people. It is anticipated that the Forum will respond to this.

4.5 Sarah confirmed that all play areas should be accessible. This means that equipment should be able to be accessed from a seated position. Inclusive equipment is very expensive and therefore restricts the number of refurbishments that can be done in any financial year.

4.6 When a play area is being improved, the children and young people in the area should be asked what equipment they would like. Additionally, local councillors should also be asked for their views.

4.7 Sarah asked if the Forum would like to see the drawings of any planned redesigning of a local play area prior to it being installed. It was agreed that this would be a good plan. Forum members would look at the type and accessibility of the play equipment, the surfaces of the playground, and that all children would be able to experience five different activities.

4.8 In response to a specific question about the progress of the play area at Trimley St Mary, Sarah said that the play area here was making progress and was at the top of the priorities.

4.9 Regarding advice on funding for provision of equipment, it was noted that the choices of the children and young people were taken into account.

4.10 Play equipment when it is to be provided in new housing developments of more than 50 dwellings should always be accessible. These should have 8 pieces of play equipment. Current top priorities for equipment are Falconer's Way and Walton Recreation Ground in Felixstowe.

4.11 Play areas should be considered at the start of the planning process for a development, not added as a reserved matter towards the end of it. That way there would be more emphasis on designing it well.

4.12 Sarah would revisit the plans for Adastral Park to look at what was to be provided.

4.13 Deborah said that Melton Parish Council had received funding for the renovation of the Playground in Melton.

4.14 Sarah was thanked for attending the meeting. It was hoped that the Forum could be more involved when play areas in East Suffolk are to be refurbished.

4.15 Sarah reminded the Forum that Tim Snook, Leisure Development Partnership Manager, would be pleased to update the Forum on the progress of a new Leisure Centre in Felixstowe.

## **5. Ease the Squeeze Programme**

5.1 Ritchie Downing, Community Intervention Officer, East Suffolk Council was welcomed to the meeting and invited to update members on the Ease the Squeeze Programme.

5.2 Ritchie provided an overview of recent initiatives which included a number of summer schemes such as:

- The Holiday Activity & Food Programme enabling children and young people to enjoy fun activities.
- The Wellness on Wheels (WoW) bus providing free advice, support and signposting on health issues.

5.3 East Suffolk Council's Ease the Squeeze programme continues to be available to support residents of East Suffolk. It can be accessed via <https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/community/squeeze/> where it is possible to self-refer for assistance and support. A range of topics are able to be accessed such as food and health, money advice and support, fuel, energy and utilities, and household costs and advice.

5.4 Ritchie was thanked for joining the meeting.

## **6. Minutes of the Meeting held on the 11<sup>th</sup> July, 2023**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Suffolk Coastal Disability Forum, held on the 11<sup>th</sup> July, 2023, were agreed as a correct record.

## **7. Matters Arising**

### **7.1 Item 3 Closure of Ticket Offices at Railway Stations:**

7.1.1 Alan Neville, Customer & Community Engagement Officer, Greater Anglia provided an update on the proposals to close some ticket offices at Railway Stations with the aim of making staff much more visible and accessible to passengers. The proposed changes should result in more staff being available to help passengers on platforms.

7.1.2 The proposals have been out for consultation but this has now ended with some 500,000 people commenting across the country. It will take some time to analyse the results.

7.1.3 Alan said that staff would have multi skilled roles to help passengers with access needs. It was important to note that the proposals did not mean the wholesale closure of ticket offices, Stations such as Ipswich would continue to have one.

7.1.4 Members made a number of comments as follows:

- While some passengers can press a button on the ticket machine for assistance, not everyone can see where the button is.

**Response:** The design of ticket machines must take account of any difficulties in locating the help button. Trains will also continue to have conductors on board who will assist passengers if they need it.

- Not everyone can use a mobile phone or the internet to purchase a ticket despite Greater Anglia's insistence that the majority of people purchase their tickets using this technology. It was felt that ticket machines need an upgrade in design to ensure they are easy to use and understand.

- Will ticket machines always be working? It is not uncommon for them to be out of order.

- It was noted that the staff at the Ticket Office on Ipswich Station are very helpful.

- Announcements at Railway Stations can be much too loud and therefore can be difficult to hear.

**Response:** The need to ensure all announcements are audible was noted.

- A concern was raised regarding trains going to Sizewell C and whether they will be noisy at night.

**Response:** This is a Network Rail issue, however, trains should not sound their horns at night.

7.1.5 Alan will provide an update on the outcome of the consultation in due course.

**7.2 Item 6 Update – Seashore Village, Felixstowe:** It was understood that there is a slight delay in the project but the construction is nearing its end. However, the constructor is still on site.

**7.3 Item 8.1 Patient experience at Ipswich Hospital:**

7.3.1 A site visit is to be arranged with Steve Bruce, Patient Experience

& Carer Manager.

7.3.2 Members made the following comments:

- The considerable impact of all the new housing developments will mean an increase in the numbers of patients attending the Hospital.
- The difficulties caused for bus passengers by the tree obscuring the bus stop opposite to the Hospital have not been resolved and need to be followed up again.
- Parking for Blue Badge holders remains difficult. However, parking is an issue for all patients and visitors to the Hospital.
- Ipswich Hospital has not resolved the issues relating to communication with patients with disabilities, such as letters for appointments.

**7.4 Item 8.3 Parking for Blue Badge Holders:** Joss explained that Lewis Boudville has left his post of Transport Infrastructure and Parking Services Manager with East Suffolk Council. The work is currently being picked up by Ann Parker. Concerns remain regarding the use of RingGo and signage across all car parks.

## **8. Issues, Concerns and News from Members**

No additional items were raised.

## **9. Views on Health and Social Care with Healthwatch Suffolk**

9.1 Sally Watson, Community & Engagement Manager, Healthwatch Suffolk, was welcomed to the meeting. She said that she was there in place of our usual representative, Kerry Overton, who had sent her apologies.

9.2 Sally explained that Healthwatch Suffolk champions the views of local people to achieve excellent health and social care services in Suffolk. Healthwatch does this by gathering feedback, conducting surveys and speaking to people face-to-face at GP surgeries, hospitals, events, clubs and groups.

9.3 Healthwatch Suffolk aims to be inclusive – by making sure that people can give feedback in ways that suit their needs and preferences. This could be by using Reach Deck - a tool that makes our website accessible by enabling translated pages, text-to-speech, translated feedback forms in Polish, Portuguese and Romanian and how to feed back in British Sign Language.

9.4 This year Healthwatch worked with one of their Co-production Ambassadors to create a BSL format for their feedback centre. BSL signers will be present at the Annual General Meeting.

9.5 So how does Healthwatch influence? People's experiences are shared locally with Integrated Care Boards (ICBs), with Healthwatch England and national enquiries, to influence debate and challenge on Government and NHS policy.

9.6 Healthwatch works with the Health and Wellbeing Board who are responsible for improving and protecting the health and wellbeing of all people in Suffolk. The independent Chair has a place on the Board and the Chief Executive attends the Programme Office that supports it to ensure that feedback shapes the agenda and influences change.

9.7 Healthwatch also works closely with the Suffolk Health and Oversight Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) made up of local County, District and Borough Councils, that has responsibility for scrutinizing health and care services across the county.

9.8 Earlier this month Healthwatch published a briefing (which included people's lived experience) to shape and inform debate by the Suffolk HOSC which will focus on pharmaceutical services in Suffolk. Data is shared with key local partners like the Local Pharmaceutical Committee and Public Health Suffolk which has responsibility for the development of the Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment (PNAO) in Suffolk.

9.9 Sally's Team comprises 7 officers with mixed roles and responsibilities. Four of them are Community Development & Engagement Officers; these are the staff people meet face-to-face in the community gathering feedback about services.

9.10 One of the team coordinates the Suffolk VASPs (Voluntary and Statutory Partnerships). A weekly newsletter gets sent out every Monday advertising all kinds of events, meetings, opportunities and training available to all, across the county. Another member of the Team coordinates Youthwatch Suffolk which has just been awarded another 3 years' funding to really get things off the ground and enable Healthwatch to work really hard with young people in the county. The remaining Officer is the Operations Officer, who keeps things running smoothly and has been busy over the past 6 months trying to find Healthwatch a new office. The most difficult thing has been finding somewhere that can accommodate a member of staff who is a wheelchair user.



9.11 Healthwatch has a very successful Co-Production Team which has a team of Ambassadors (people who are representative of the community as a whole), and who helps organisations co-produce services, processes and procedures. Currently the Team have been commissioned by Suffolk County Council to develop a Poverty Project, 'Tackling Poverty Together'. They have recruited 15 people from Suffolk who have faced poverty at some stage of their life, and are recruiting 15 Civic partners (people who can influence decisions) to meet with them regularly for the next year, to hear their stories and bring about change (in such things as housing, barriers to getting benefits, and language barriers).

9.12 Lastly, Healthwatch has a Research Team. Most of their work is commissioned (by the ICB, any of the health foundations or Suffolk County Council), but they do have a couple of core projects every year. They work hard on developing surveys, getting them out to people, analysing them and producing them in a report.

9.13 Recent projects include:

- Dementia Support – Used to inform SCC's Dementia Strategy.
- Maternal Mental Health – Very poor results have been received from new mums not getting the right 6 week check-up (normally just about the baby, needs to focus on the Mum). Several surgeries have changed the way they do things.
- Deaf Project as part of the 'Your Care-Your Way' project. They asked how well people's accessible communication has been met by local services. A massive response to this which sadly showed that this was not being met in most cases. Meeting people's needs is not optional, it is the law.

9.14 Healthwatch produced a Top Tips for Surgeries which included things they could install like hearing loops, pagers and alert devices, accessible online conferencing for on-line consultations, audible and visual alert systems, and training staff in deaf-awareness sessions.

9.15 There is an ongoing 'Developing Skills in Health and Social Care' Project. This is being led by Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils to provide fully funded training for staff working in Health and Social Care across Norfolk and Suffolk

9.16 Home Care in Suffolk is a project that focusses on standards of Home Care Services in Suffolk.

9.17 Two of the team have worked with the Integrated Care System (ICS) on engagement projects around the Bladder and Bowel Service, Dermatology Services in Suffolk and Minor Eye Care.

9.18 Healthwatch is now working with Staff and the Board to decide the next Core project.

9.19 A couple of months ago Healthwatch produced the Annual Report which focused on the last 10 years of change – Healthwatch has been running for 10 years. This will be discussed at the Annual General Meeting on Wednesday, 8th November, at Blackbourne Community Centre in Elmswell from 1.30pm (all welcome). Guest speakers will be Susannah Howard and Karen Barker, leads for each Integrated Care System on participation and engagement. Everyone is welcome.

9.20 Sally ended by saying that all this information can be found on the website, as well as how to feedback experiences, via this link.

<https://healthwatchesuffolk.co.uk/>

9.21 Linda thanked Sally for her very comprehensive explanation of the work of Healthwatch Suffolk.

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

There were no additional items.

## **11. Dates of Meetings in 2024**

11.1 The Planning Group has set the dates for meetings in 2024 as follows:

Tuesday, 23<sup>rd</sup> January, 2024

Tuesday, 9<sup>th</sup> April, 2024

Tuesday, 16<sup>th</sup> July, 2024

Tuesday, 22<sup>nd</sup> October, 2024

11.2 Meetings will take place from 2pm to 4pm, usually via Zoom.

## **12. Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, 23<sup>rd</sup> January, 2024, from 2pm to 4pm, via Zoom. The link for the meeting will be sent out in due course.