

Suffolk Coastal Disability Forum

Minutes of the Meeting held via Zoom on Tuesday, 18th April, 2023,
at 2 pm

Present:

Linda Hoggarth	Disability Forum for Suffolk (Chair)
Peter Coleman	Member, North Suffolk and NE Essex Foundation Trust
Deborah Darby	Melton Parish Council
Simon Daws	Resident / Suffolk Guide Dog Forum
Wendy Johns	Communications and Engagement Officer, Suffolk Sight
Paul Kelly	Resident (Vice Chair)
Margaret Morris	Resident (Secretary)
Joss Mullett	Communities Officer – Framlingham, Wickham Market & Surrounding Villages, East Suffolk Council
Kerry Overton	Community Development Officer, Healthwatch Suffolk
Cllr Edward Thompson	East Suffolk Council / Woodbridge Town Council
Graham Walker	Chair, Disability Advice Service – East Suffolk

Guests:

Elise Martin-De-La-Torre	Project Co-ordinator, Tackling Poverty Together, Healthwatch Suffolk
Sarah Garbutt	Resorts Manager, East Suffolk Council

Apologies:

Bryan Frost	Resident / Trimley St Mary Parish Council
Steve Hodgkiss	Disability Forum for Suffolk / Suffolk Sight
Trevor Garrod	East Suffolk Travellers Association (ESTA)
Sylvia Izzard	Resident
Linda Layton	Resident

1. Welcome & Introductions

Linda welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made.

2. Apologies

The above apologies were received and noted.

3. Update – Seashore Village, Felixstowe

3.1 Sarah Garbutt, Resorts Manager, East Suffolk Council was welcomed and asked to update members on the development of the Seashore Village in Felixstowe.

3.2 Sarah explained how the Seashore Village would consist of 27 timber beach huts. They are sited at the western end of Felixstowe Seafront, near the Leisure Centre, and can be accessed from the Promenade. She showed a slide illustrating the development. There will also be a block of public toilets including a Changing Places facility.

3.3 Five of these beach huts are designed to be fully wheelchair accessible. These will not be sold and will be available to hire from East Suffolk Council. The other 22 beach huts will be offered for sale through an agent. The beach huts are due to be completed by the summer of this year, probably by July, 2023.

3.4 The booking process for the accessible beach huts will probably be online, though the rates for hire have not yet been decided. They will be available to hire by the day and the maximum length of time for hiring will be one week.

3.5 The availability of the accessible beach huts will be publicised widely via a marketing strategy and this will involve Felixstowe Town Council as well as other organisations. These beach huts will be available to any group, organisation or individual to hire. It will be taken on trust that those using them will include a person or people with a disability.

3.6 There are accessible beach huts available for hire at Lowestoft though the design is different.

3.7 In response to a question, Sarah said that there is a small step to each of the 22 beach huts for sale. These huts could easily be made fully accessible by the eventual owners if required.

3.8 The 5 accessible beach huts can be hired together in a group to enable use by larger groups. It was not clear whether these beach huts would only be available to East Suffolk residents.

3.9 Sarah recently held a meeting to discuss the hiring arrangements and internal fittings which was attended by Linda, Margaret and Elise. As a result, there is to be a check on the route from the car park to the

accessible beach huts to identify any possible problems. Margaret and Elise will be attending.

3.9 Members asked the following questions:

- Will the accessible beach huts be marketed specifically for people with disabilities as that is who they have actually been built for?

Response: These will be the only beach huts for hire in Felixstowe – the rest are privately owned.

- Will the booking system ask potential hirers whether their booking will include people with disabilities?
- Will potential hirers which include people with disabilities take priority?

Response: This has not been clarified. The Council will review how the beach huts are used, probably on a monthly basis.

3.10 It was noted that the decision to offer the 22 beach huts for sale has already been taken by the Council.

3.11 Members noted that it would be good if the access to the beach could be improved so that wheelchair users could get closer to the sea. Sarah noted this request and advised that the use of beach wheelchairs was being considered. The beach at Felixstowe does not easily lend itself to the installation of a board walk. Margaret will investigate the possibility of there being improved access to the beach during the upcoming site meeting.

Action: Margaret Morris

3.12 Sarah was thanked for attending the meeting and providing a very interesting and helpful update. She will keep the Forum advised of developments.

Action: Sarah Garbutt

4. Tackling Poverty Together

4.1 Elise Martin-De-La-Torre, Project Co-ordinator for Tackling Poverty Together, Healthwatch Suffolk was welcomed to the meeting and invited to talk about the Tackling Poverty Together Project.

4.2 Elise said that the current cost of living crisis is impacting on everyone. Using presentation slides, Elise explained that the Tackling

Together Project is working towards getting answers from the real experiences of people. The slides will be distributed with the minutes.

4.3 The Project is aiming to explore and analyse an understanding of poverty. Those involved will be coming together to share their experiences of poverty. They will have a mixture of experiences and come from different backgrounds.

4.4 It is based on the 'Poverty Truth Commission' approach. Further information can be found at <https://povertytruthnetwork.org/>

4.5 The Project is looking for 10 people from different backgrounds and with different experiences to be a part of it. 8 have already been identified. Those taking part will receive expenses and an iPad to enable them to work together and be supported throughout.

4.6 Further details can be found at:
<https://healthwatchesuffolk.co.uk/news/povertyinsuffolk>

Elise can be contacted at:
Elise.martin-de-la-torre@healthwatchesuffolk.co.uk

4.7 This project is important as poverty is increasing in Suffolk. Currently, 1 in 5 people are affected, and disability makes people more likely to be needing support. Poverty is a lack of money, and could result in a lack of food, impact on living conditions and on health. It is measured against a median disposable income of £29,699 per year in the UK. Poverty begins with a threshold of £17,760 per year.

4.8 In addition to 10 people with experience of poverty, the Project will seek partners from voluntary and community organisations, a total of 30 partners altogether.

4.9 The Project has a strap line of 'Nothing about us without us – if we want to go far we have to go together'.

4.10 Once the main group is established, it will be split into five sub groups covering: Debt, Child and Family, Exploitation, Caring and Disability and More Lived Experiences. These sub groups will develop possible outcomes from their discussions such as debt advice, reducing the cost of school uniforms, improving continence services and understanding the power of lived experiences.

4.11 Elise responded to the following questions:

- Are there organisations that have agreed to be involved?

Response: Further information is available on the presentation slides. It was thought that members who were not present at the meeting would also find the Project interesting.

Comment: It was recognised that getting a certain number of people and organisations is crucial to this project. Groups that could be interested include the Disability Advice Service – East Suffolk and Suffolk Sight.

Simon thought that the Suffolk Guide Dog Forum would be interested in learning about the Project and pointed out that only 75% of people with visual impairment are employed.

- Is this a county –wide initiative?

Response: It is and Elise would welcome contact with other Forums in the county.

4.11 Linda thanked Elise for her presentation and for explaining the project. Elise will keep the Forum in touch as the Project progresses.

5. Services provided by Members

5.1 Suffolk Sight

5.1.1 Wendy was welcomed to the meeting and invited to update members on the services provided by Suffolk Sight.

5.1.2 Wendy explained that she is the Communications and Engagement Officer for Suffolk Sight. Suffolk Sight is established to improve the lives of people with sight loss in Suffolk. It was formed in 2020 through the amalgamation of the East Suffolk Association for the Blind, Ipswich Blind Society and the West Suffolk Association for the Blind.

5.1.3 The organisation receives referrals from Eye Clinics in Hospitals, Sensing Change, through self-referral and via the Website.

5.1.4 Their community workers assist people in a wide variety of ways including:

- Ensuring people understand their diagnosis
- Spending time with people to discuss their options
- Ensuring people are safe at home

- Information about community transport
- Ensuring people can access their televisions
- Befriending / counselling
- Using equipment in their homes
- Digital advice and information such as using screen readers
- Impartial advice

5.1.5 The organisation has Resource Centres which enable people to try pieces of equipment. A number of Social Clubs are run across the county which help those who are feeling isolated. These include Clubs offering: yoga; wine tasting; befriending (volunteers are needed); and counselling (it can help to chat to someone over the phone.) Regular newsletters are sent out to about 2,200 people which helps people to keep in touch.

5.1.6 Wendy was asked specifically about Social Clubs in the Suffolk Coastal area and she will provide information which will be distributed with the minutes.

5.1.7 Attention was drawn to the Suffolk Sight Equipment and Information Day taking place on Thursday, 8th June, 2023, in the Council Chamber, Ipswich Town Hall, from 10am to 2pm.

5.1.8 Further information on the work of Suffolk Sight can be found at: <https://www.suffolksight.org.uk/>

5.1.9 Wendy was thanked for her update and invited to keep in touch with the Forum.

6. Minutes from the Meeting held on the 10th January, 2023

The Minutes of the meeting of the Suffolk Coastal Disability Forum held on 10th January, 2023, were agreed as a correct record.

7. Matters Arising

7.1 Item 5 Patient Experiences at Ipswich Hospital:

7.1.1 Further to updates received from Steve Bruce and noted in the previous minutes, Steve had provided further information as follows:

- There are 72 accessible spaces at the Ipswich Hospital but it is not clear where these are. Members felt a map would be helpful.

- The suggestion of having wheelchairs available in the car parks to assist people with limited mobility was not thought to be feasible.
- Maps to locate specific clinics were not available but members still felt that this would be useful.
- Complaints about the overgrown tree opposite the Heath Road entrance should be directed to Suffolk County Council.
- Signage has been reviewed and the Hospital will pick up on the comments made at our meeting. Members would take note of the current signage when visiting the Hospital.

7.1.2 Linda would respond to Steve with further comments from members. It was noted that concerns regarding facilities at the Hospital can be taken forward at any time.

7.1.3 Paul said that the Patient Portal at the Ipswich Hospital was under review again and enquiries would be made as to why this was.

Action: Linda Hoggarth

7.2 Item 6.1 Ease the Squeeze: Information continues to be available at <https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/community/squeeze/>

7.3 Item 6.2 Parking for Blue Badge Holders:

7.3.1 Joss had raised the issue of updating the webpage with Lewis Boudville, Transport Infrastructure and Parking Services Manager. He reported that the interactive map that was previously available on the Parking Services page ([Car Parks » East Suffolk Council](#)) has had to be removed due to circumstances out of the Council's control. The alternative on RingGo ([RingGo Cashless Parking Solution \(myringgo.co.uk\)](#)) is available but does not note how many spaces and accessible spaces for blue badge holders are available at each car park. The Council's planning team were going to look at this and send any feedback about accessibility to Lewis.

7.3.2 Members raised their concerns regarding paying for parking. It was clarified that blue badge holders do have to pay for parking in East Suffolk. Joss confirmed that the East Suffolk Council will continue to provide a Pay and Display machine in each of their car parks so that people can pay by cash if they are unable to use RingGo. Members considered this essential as not everyone has access to a smart phone. It was pointed out that there is no charge for parking when using RingGo for less than one hour.

7.4 Item 6.3 Changes to Landlines: Linda had forwarded further information from BT to Margaret for distribution to members.

Action: Margaret Morris

7.5 Item 6.4 Handy Person Service: The 'Handy Person' service is not yet up and running. The Council aims to find out how many people would make use of this.

7.6 Item 6.5 Pedestrian Crossing – Martlesham Village: Edward said that this was very high on the agenda for the Parish Council and that there was public support for a crossing to be installed.

7.7 Item 7.2 East Suffolk Travel Association: The Forum has asked Simon Barnett for his views on some of the issues identified relating to bus stops/stations but has not received a response.

8. Issues, Concerns and News from Members

No additional items were raised.

9. Views on Health and Social Care with Healthwatch Suffolk

9.1 Kerry reported as follows:

- It was difficult to know the progress of organisations in meeting the 'Accessible Information Standard' as no feedback is received on this from the Care Quality Commission. However, members should still insist on receiving information in ways which meet their communication needs.
- Healthwatch is undertaking a survey to investigate whether people who are deaf or hard of hearing and who communicate via British Sign Language have their needs met when accessing health or social care services. For more information, go to <https://healthwatchesuffolk.co.uk/aissurvey/>
- An issue was identified at Haven Health in Felixstowe when a patient registered with the receptionist and then sat in the waiting room. When the patient's turn came, he did not know where to go. The Practice Manager was alerted to the difficulty, took note of the comments and, in future, support will be provided.
- Members were urged to give examples to Kerry of where better service could be provided for Healthwatch to action.
- For information on current projects being undertaken by Healthwatch, go to <https://healthwatchesuffolk.co.uk/>

10. Format and Topics for the next Meeting

10.1 The Planning Group will continue to consider the feasibility of holding Hybrid Meetings.

10.2 Topics for discussion were suggested as follows;

- Update on the Felixstowe Seashore Village – East Suffolk Council
- Audiology Services for people who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- Ear wax removal services.

11. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Suffolk Coastal Disability Forum will take place on Tuesday, 11th July, 2023, at 2pm. The arrangements for this meeting will be advised to members.