

Suffolk Coastal Disability Forum

Minutes of the Meeting held via Zoom on Tuesday, 4th October, 2022,
at 2 pm.

Present:

Linda Hoggarth	Disability Forum for Suffolk (Chair)
Simon Barnett	Transport Development Manager, Passenger Transport, Suffolk County Council
Deborah Darby	Melton Parish Council
Simon Daws	Resident / Suffolk Guide Dog Forum
Bryan Frost	Resident / Trimley St Mary Parish Council
Paul Horne	Senior Transport Planner, Suffolk County Council
Paul Kelly	Resident (Vice Chair)
Margaret Morris	Resident (Secretary)
Joss Mullett	Communities Officer – Framlingham, Wickham Market & Surrounding Villages, East Suffolk Council
Jack Raven	Project Analyst, Sizewell C
Cllr Edward Thompson	East Suffolk Council / Woodbridge Town Council

Guests:

Megan Clifford	Senior Financial Inclusion Officer, East Suffolk Council
Gary Crockett	Health and Independence Manager, East Suffolk Council
Amy Anderson	Project Officer, Growth, Highways & Infrastructure Directorate, Suffolk Council

Apologies:

Julie Ewart	Kelsale cum Carlton Parish Council
Trevor Garrod	East Suffolk Travellers Association (ESTA)
Steve Hodgkiss	Disability Forum for Suffolk / Suffolk Sight
Sylvia Izzard	Resident
Linda Layton	Resident
Kerry Overton	Community Development Officer, Healthwatch Suffolk
Graham Walker	Kirton 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. Love Woodbridge & Melton

3.1 Amy Anderson, Project Officer, Transport Strategy, Growth, Highways and Infrastructure Directorate, Suffolk County Council was welcomed and invited to tell members about the Love Woodbridge & Melton project.

3.2 Amy explained that Suffolk County Council has been awarded £80,000 from the Department for Transport to complete a detailed feasibility study on introducing a 'Mini-Holland' system to improve the walking and cycling infrastructure and public spaces in Woodbridge and Melton. The Love Woodbridge & Melton project has been set up in partnership with East Suffolk Council, Woodbridge Town Council and Melton Parish Council.

3.3 The project aims to create people friendly streets in Woodbridge and Melton for everyone to enjoy. Whether people are walking, cycling or sitting down, the councils want to give everyone the opportunity to love the outside more with cleaner, prettier and better-connected streets in Woodbridge and Melton.

3.4 Similar projects throughout the country have seen local communities and businesses thrive because it has made areas much more accessible and inviting for people.

3.5 Local people are being consulted and surveys undertaken. The outcome of the feasibility study should be known by mid- December.

3.6 Amy was keen to ensure that the views of disabled people were fully included. Members made comments as follows:

- Cycling and walking initiatives are taking a long time to be implemented. Some roads are very busy and not suited to cycling.
- Footpaths are often too narrow for people with guide dogs, and wheelchair users. There can be an issue with overhanging shrubs and trees obstructing footpaths.
- Sometimes there are no footpaths at all.
- There is an absence of dropped kerbs to assist people with mobility difficulties when crossing roads or to access shops.
- Many of the pavements in Woodbridge are too narrow, such as the one by the Crown.

- Dropped kerbs in car parks such as the Station Car Park in Woodbridge need to be clear and easily accessible.
- The proportion of parking spaces for blue badge holders in car parks in Woodbridge needs to be increased to recognise the higher number of blue badge holders in the area.
- The surface of the footpath from the car park to the river down The Avenue and over the railway line needs improvement. The Forum has highlighted the state of this footpath for many years and it would be good to see this improved given the number of people using it.
- The Thoroughfare has improved following the latest traffic restrictions but there are still not enough benches for people to sit on. Street furniture on the pavement causes obstructions. There are still many shops, with small steps to their entrances, which are a hazard to people with mobility difficulties.
- The surface of the footpath from Melton to Woodbridge is poor.
- The No 64 bus service needs to be re-routed to go through Martlesham making it easier to travel to Woodbridge. It would be quicker and pick up more passengers.
- Access to the Thoroughfare for cars is still confusing and better signage is required.
- The access through the Turban Centre remains difficult for people with mobility problems.

3.7 Amy noted the comments made and will include our discussion in the feasibility study. Members can make any further comments direct to Amy at Amy.Anderson@suffolk.gov.uk.

3.8 Members indicated their willingness to be involved in any future discussions and offered to meet with Amy in Woodbridge to demonstrate some of the difficulties faced by disabled people. Amy noted this offer and would keep in touch with the Forum.

3.9 Amy was thanked for attending the meeting and listening to the concerns of members.

4. Ease the Squeeze

4.1 Megan Clifford, Senior Financial Inclusion Officer, East Suffolk Council was welcomed to the meeting.

4.2 Megan explained that the aim of 'Ease the Squeeze' was to increase income and reduce expenditure to help people with the increases in the cost of living. Information can be accessed at <https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/community/squeeze/>.

4.3 The kinds of issues raised so far include:

- Cost of Child Care
- Prioritising spending and paying bills
- Water Meters
- How to check that Council Tax is correct
- Rent for housing
- Affordable access to broadband
- Assistance with debt – this may include referral to Citizens Advice
- Applying for grants, for example to replace a washing machine
- Breakdown in relationships
- Energy costs – there is a lot of support now, particularly for people with disabilities and older people. The costs of oil-fired central heating was noted as it is used in rural areas.
- Assistance in applying for bus passes.

4.4 Assistance from 'Ease the Squeeze' can be via self-referral which can be by e-mail or via the website (link above). Staff can undertake home visits which may be easier for some people with disabilities. The Council's Customer Services staff can also help.

4.5 Currently a number of financial road shows are taking place across East Suffolk. Details were e-mailed to members on the 29th September.

4.6 Members noted the following:

- The Council does not provide help with obtaining passports. However, The Post Office provides a Passcard that is accepted as a Citizen Card for ID purposes – it is useful when people do not hold a driving licence. It can also help when making benefit applications.
- An 'Ease the Squeeze' outreach session is being held in Felixstowe Library on Wednesday, 12th October.
- A PDF/word version of 'Ease the Squeeze' information would be helpful. Megan would provide versions to be circulated with the minutes.

4.7 Megan was thanked for her very helpful explanation of 'Ease the Squeeze' and the support and assistance that can be provided.

5. Minutes of the Meeting held on the 5th July, 2022

The Minutes of the meeting of the Suffolk Coastal Disability Forum held on 5th July, 2022 were agreed as a correct record.

6. Matters Arising

6.1 Item 3 Community Intervention Team: Joss will ask Sue Medley for her presentation slides.

Action: Joss Mullett

6.2 Item 4 Disability Advice Service – East Suffolk: Margaret will check that the information leaflets have been circulated.

6.3 Item 7.4 High Street Car Park, Leiston: Photographs show 4 spaces for blue badge holders in this car park, reduced from 6. Jack offered to check this and also the number of spaces for blue badge holders elsewhere in Leiston.

Post Meeting Note: Jack reported that there are 4 spaces for blue badge holders in the High Street Car Park; 6 spaces for blue badge holders in the Co-op Car Park; and 3 spaces for blue badge holders in the Sizewell Road Car Park; making a total of 13 spaces for blue badge holders across the Car Parks in the Town Centre.

6.4 Item 7.5 Station Car Park, Woodbridge: There has been insufficient rain to check whether relocating the spaces for blue badge holders has solved the issue of flooding. It was noted that there does not appear to be a drop-off zone to access the station though people are allowed to park free of charge for 30 minutes in any space in the area closest to the station.

6.5 Changes to Landlines: The Planning Group continues to seek a relevant speaker to discuss the future of landline services.

6.6 Traffic Lights, Felixstowe: Margaret had checked that the crossing in question has a revolving conical fixture to indicate when it is safe to cross.

7. Handy Person Service – East Suffolk

7.1 Gary Crockett, Health and Independence Manager, East Suffolk Council was welcomed and invited to talk about East Suffolk's Handy Person Service.

7.2 Gary explained that this is a new service currently in the process of being set up. This service will have the potential to install small, low cost, energy efficient items for people on low incomes. Items such as low energy light bulbs, draught proofing, fireplace balloons are supplied

free of charge but not everyone is able to install these and this is where the service can assist by providing a Handy Person to do the fitting.

7.3 Winter warm packs can also be supplied to people on low incomes, which would include items such as hats, gloves and fleeces.

7.4 Referrals to this service can only be made by organisations. It is not possible to self-refer.

7.5 Gary will ensure that information on the Handy Person Service is sent to the Forum for distribution to members.

Action: Gary Crockett

7.6 He went on to say that where people's houses have an Energy Performance Certificate of D, E, F, or G then referrals should be made to Warm Homes Healthy People as discussed at the previous Forum meeting.

7.7 The Independent Living Service assists people needing adaptations to their homes. Ideally, the Service is seeking a disabled person with experience of having adaptations installed in their home to join their team and attend a small number of meetings. Expenses would be paid. This is intended to improve the service provided by the Independent Living Service.

7.8 Gary was thanked for his contribution to the meeting.

8. Issues, Concerns and News from Members

8.1 Sizewell C: Jack said that he is a Project Analyst (Sustainability), Regional External Affairs & Development with Sizewell C. An event is being planned which is about building better links with organisations in Suffolk. He also drew attention to their Disability & Carers Network.

8.2 Bus Services into Ipswich Hospital: Bryan commented that the Felixstowe to Ipswich bus services do not go into the hospital grounds to drop off or collect passengers. This is apparently because First Bus is unable to access the hospital grounds due to the lack of bus stands within the grounds. It is understood that more stands for buses to pick up and drop off passengers are to be provided.

8.3 Pedestrian Crossing - Martlesham Village: Simon had met with Cllr Patti Mulcahy, Suffolk County Council. As a result, he said that a zebra crossing has been refused for Martlesham. All that could be

provided is a crossing island in the middle of the road. This is despite it being listed as a Cycle and Walking route. He felt that the authorities are not listening to residents. It was suggested that he contacts East Suffolk Council's Communities Officer for Martlesham. Cllr Thompson said he would start a petition for a crossing.

Action: Simon Daws / Cllr Thompson

8.4 Suffolk County Council Budget: Members noted that there would be an opportunity to comment on the County Council's Budget shortly.

8.4 Parking at Ipswich Hospital: Parking at Ipswich Hospital is becoming increasingly difficult. Currently there is a lot of building work in progress and it appears builders are parking in the car parks resulting in fewer spaces for people attending the hospital for appointments. It was noted that provision had been made for the builders but that they did not appear to use it. It was also noted that there were fewer spaces for blue badge holders.

8.5 Landguard Fort, Felixstowe: Margaret has not yet been able to establish what improvements are going to be made.

9. Views on Health and Social Care with Healthwatch Suffolk

9.1 In Kerry's absence, she had provided a detailed update and this will be distributed with the minutes. Members were advised of the main points from the update.

10. Information Round / Any Other Business

10.1 Forum Meetings

- Members were asked if they had suggestions for topics or speakers for future meetings. Suggestions can be sent to Margaret or Linda for the Planning Group to take forward.
- Joss suggested that representatives of organisations attending meetings could be invited to talk about their organisation and its activities.
- It was felt that it would be helpful to encourage more people to attend meetings and this required better publicity for meetings.
- The mailing list is under continual review and information about meetings is distributed to some sixty recipients.

- Members were unsure about resuming face-to-face meetings and were happy to continue to meet via Zoom particularly for the next meeting, which will be in January.

10.2 Planning Group: All points raised will be discussed by the Planning Group at their next meeting.

11. Meetings in 2023

11.1 Meeting dates for 2023 are planned as follows:

10th January

18th April

11th July

10th October

11.2 All meetings take place on Tuesdays and will begin at 2pm for approximately two hours.

11.3 Meeting formats and venues remain under review. However, the January meeting will take place via Zoom.

12. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Suffolk Coastal Disability Forum will therefore take place on Tuesday, 10th January, 2023, at 2pm, via Zoom.

Action: All to note