

## Suffolk Coastal Disability Forum

Minutes of the Meeting held via Zoom on Tuesday, 5<sup>th</sup> July 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
Julia Ewart	Kelsale Parish Council
Ivor French	Chair, Wickham Market Parish Council
Bryan Frost	Trimley St Mary Parish Council
Paul Horne	Senior Transport Planner, Suffolk County Council
John Horsnell	Wickham Market Parish Council
Paul Kelly	Resident (Vice Chair)
Elise Martin de la Torre	Resident
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
Julie	Wellbeing Suffolk

### Guests:

Jo Bowen	Manager, Disability Advice Service - East Suffolk
Gary Crockett	Housing Team, East Suffolk Council
Sue Medley	Senior Interventions Officer, Suffolk County Council

### Apologies:

Lorna Bellamy	Walton Parish Nurse, Felixstowe
Celia Bonwick	Dementia Together, Sue Ryder
Jane Drummond	Resident
Tracey Evans	Later Life Community ENGAGE Co-ordinator, BSEVC
John Fitzpatrick	Resident
Stella Frangleton	Diverse Communities Advisor, Suffolk Police
Trevor Garrod	East Suffolk Travellers Association (ESTA)
Steve Hodgkiss	Disability Forum for Suffolk / Suffolk Sight
Sylvia Izzard	Resident
Linda Layton	Resident

Vicki Lee	Suffolk Carers Matter & Economic Development, BSEVC
Gill Manning	Resident - she is soon moving from Felixstowe
Cllr Caroline Page	Suffolk County Council / Woodbridge Town Council
Della Rayner	Green Light Trust
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. **Services provided by the Community Intervention Team, East Suffolk Council**

3.1 Linda welcomed Sue Medley, Senior Interventions Officer, Community Intervention Team, Suffolk County Council.

3.2 Sue explained that Suffolk County Council hosts the Community Intervention Team within its Locality and Partnerships Team. This is funded until March, 2023. She is part of the East Suffolk Team.

3.3 Her work has shown that people are struggling for all sorts of reasons, not just coping with the pandemic and Covid-19.

3.4 The work of the Community Intervention Team in East Suffolk covers a wide range of services including:

- Being used as a skill resource by East Suffolk Council
- Listening to communities that do not have a voice
- Providing information about vaccinations
- Supporting the vaccination programme
- Developing neighbourhood schemes following on from Covid neighbours
- Providing a café in Lowestoft
- Providing accessible information using pictures and simple wording as well as providing it in the top 12 languages used locally
- Signposting people to where they can get help.

3.5 Sue noted the current spike in infections has not yet resulted in an increase of hospital admissions. 'Herd immunity' is increasing.

3.6 She is there to give a voice to people whose voices are not being heard and to ensure they are signposted to the right services. She also works at improving people's self-confidence to enable them to connect with the wide range of organisations that can help.

3.7 Members remain concerned as to how they can protect themselves against Covid-19. Sue said that the use of masks is a personal preference. The most important means of protection is regular handwashing, particularly after being in a public area, and the use of hand gel. The vaccines are working well. Most people recover fairly well after having Covid 19.

3.8 It was noted that reporting the outcomes of tests is no longer happening to the same extent and that there is less testing taking place. This makes the accuracy of the statistics difficult.

3.9 Sue will forward her presentation slides to Joss for inclusion with the minutes.

3.10 She was thanked for her very informative presentation and for responding to members' concerns.

#### **4. Supporting Disabled People, the work of the Disability Advice Service - East Suffolk**

4.1 Jo Bowen, Manager, Disability Advice Service - East Suffolk, was welcomed to the meeting and invited to explain the work of the service.

4.2 Jo explained that the Disability Advice Service has been in existence for 40 years. The service is located at The Square in Martlesham Heath and provides advice to people with disabilities, their family members and carers.

4.3 The service is contacted by people throughout Suffolk. 60% of those people have physical disabilities though there is a growing case load of people with mental health problems.

4.4 She noted that, whilst people refer to being registered disabled, there is no register of disabled people and what is usually meant is that people are in receipt of disability benefits.

4.5 The benefit system is not straightforward for making applications or obtaining support and the Disability Advice Service spends a considerable amount of time on supporting people in obtaining disability and carers' benefits. The service has 10 paid staff and 13 volunteers. By far the largest number of enquiries relate to benefits.

4.6 Usually, people contact the service, rather than the reverse, particularly for help with filling in forms. The service has been open throughout the pandemic lockdowns apart from four weeks. The usual means of contact is via the telephone though they can do face to face interviews. Referrals are also received from other agencies.

4.7 Staff assist people to complete benefit application forms. One form can take 4 to 6 hours to complete. Their success rate is very good and they also provide a very good appeals service – they aim to win an appeal without having to go through a Tribunal as that can be a traumatic experience. Jo joined the service at the beginning of lockdown and has had a 100% success rate at appeal. There are 7 Appeals Officers within the staff team. This is a huge part of the work – but it is very beneficial to the clients. Overall, the success rate is approximately 68%.

4.8 Queries by email or telephone are responded to within 24 hours. The Crisis Service they provide shows that there are many more people in critical situations.

4.9 They have an Energy Support Worker for 2 days each week. Support can be provided through an emergency cash fund for those in desperate need of immediate assistance, or help with phone and hearing costs. It is better to stop people getting into a crisis situation.

4.10 A Listening Service was set up during the lockdown and this involved contacting clients to listen to any concerns and offer help. People were very grateful for this contact and the service continues to touch base with them.

4.11 In response to a query about the installation of handrails to assist people using steps, Jo asked for the details to be sent to her.

4.12 A member asked if GPs work with the Disability Advice Service. Jo explained that they work with GP surgeries and receive referrals from other staff within surgeries.

4.13 Kerry from Healthwatch expressed an interest in working with the Service with regard to support for people with dementia and their carers

and also hearing about people who are discharged from hospital without necessary equipment. Jo said that she would be happy to work with Healthwatch.

4.14 With regard to young people, a member asked who would refer students with disabilities to the service as she works with students at the University of Suffolk. Jo responded that they have informal links with the university and are invited to induction events. They are hoping to have a 'named' contact at the university who could make referrals. It was noted that there must also be students with disabilities at Suffolk New College and within education. This may be an area of future work.

4.15 Jo will send information about the Disability Advice Service and the Listening Service for circulation with the minutes.

**Action: Jo Bowen**

4.16 Linda thanked Jo for her presentation and stressed the importance of the Disability Advice Service and it's work to help people get the benefits to which they are entitled and help people avoid getting into crisis. She hoped that the Disability Advice Service would continue to take part in Forum meetings.

**5. Suffolk's Warm Homes Healthy People**

5.1 Gary Crockett was welcomed to the meeting to talk about 'Warm Homes Healthy People' in Suffolk.

5.2 Gary is an Officer with the East Suffolk Council Housing Team. He explained that Suffolk's 'Warm Homes Healthy People' is a county wide multi-agency partnership funded by local councils. East Suffolk Council manages its delivery.

5.3 The aim of 'Warm Homes Healthy People' is to keep vulnerable people warm. This includes older people, children age 0 to 5, and disabled people. There are 300 to 700 deaths due to cold in Suffolk each year. That is more deaths than occur through accidents.

5.4 The aim is met by offering grants to help people live in homes that cost less to heat, so they can reduce their energy use and enjoy lower bills.

5.5 Currently, they are inundated by requests for assistance whether this is by telephone or on line. People are eligible if they live in their

own homes or in privately rented homes. People are not eligible if they live in social housing.

5.6 'Warm Homes Healthy People' can provide a maximum grant of £10,000 per eligible household for Loft Insulation Top-Up as well as for Cavity Wall Insulation. Emergency fuel payments can be made via the Suffolk Community Foundation. In addition, there are Green Home Grants. This scheme enables homeowners the chance to apply for a grant of up to £10,000 to make energy efficient changes to their home.

5.7 Homes should have an Energy Proficiency Certificate (A being high). The Green Home Grant is available to homes where the Energy Proficiency Certificate is D or below and the house holders' income is below £30k per annum.

5.8 NICE (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence) recommends that all Councils should have this support as there is a massive demand.

5.9 More information is available on:

<https://www.warmhomessuffolk.org/> and also

<https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/housing/energy-efficiency-and-warm-homes/>

Referrals can also be made to Gary Crockett at East Suffolk Council or Tel: 03456 037 686.

5.10 Stepping Home from Hospital is a project designed to prevent people from going into hospital or being discharged by providing housing support. For more information, go to:

<https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/housing/energy-efficiency-and-warm-homes/stepping-home-from-hospital/>

5.11 In response to a question about Energy Proficiency Certificates for older properties, Gary said that energy use would be assumed. The annual income threshold is not likely to be amended to the current £30k. However, savings are not taken into account.

5.12 Members felt that Suffolk's 'Warm Homes Healthy People' should be publicised widely through Parish Magazines and local radio. It was noted that there had not been any publicity recently in the Felixstowe area. A member noted that there are sometimes local charities that can assist with heating costs, for example, Trimley's 'Coals for the Poor'.

5.13 Gary was thanked for his input to the meeting and for all the information he had shared.

## **6. Minutes of the Meeting held on the 5<sup>th</sup> April, 2022**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Suffolk Coastal Disability Forum held on 5<sup>th</sup> April 2022 were agreed as a correct record.

## **7. Matters Arising**

### **7.1 Item 3 Long Covid – Services provided in Suffolk by the NHS:**

The slides from the presentation have not been made available. Joss will follow this up with John Mapiscay.

**Action: Joss Mullett**

### **7.2 Item 7.2 Traffic Regulation Order, Thoroughfare, Woodbridge:** This was made permanent in January 2022.

**7.3 Item 7.4 Lasting Power of Attorney:** Joss has not progressed this. However information can be found on: <https://www.gov.uk/power-of-attorney>

**7.4 Item 7.5 High Street Car Park, Leiston:** Joss said that, before the upgrade, there were 6 spaces for blue badge holders. He will check how many spaces are now being provided.

**Action: Joss Mullett**

**7.5 Item 7.6 Station Car Park, Woodbridge:** Joss said that the spaces for blue badge holders have been moved to a higher section of the car park so they should not now be flooded when it rains. Wet weather was needed to confirm if this is correct.

**7.6 Item 8.2 Landlines:** The Planning Group will continue their discussions as to which organisation would be the most relevant to discuss the withdrawal of telephone landlines.

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

### **8.1 Transport Issues**

**8.1.1 Lack of Co-ordination between bus and train services:** Bryan raised his concerns regarding the lack of co-ordination between bus and train services. Simon B said that transport by buses and trains are seen as competing organisations. He has regular conversations with Trevor Garrod, East Suffolk Travellers Association regarding these issues, and would continue to do so.

**8.1.2 Timetables:** Suffolk County Council no longer puts timetables up at bus stops. It is up to First Bus and any other operators to do this. However, the timetables were on the website. Bryan commented that not all people have access to the internet.

**8.1.3 No 64 Service:** Yet again, Simon D raised the issue of the route of the No 64 Service which no longer goes through Martlesham. There would be passengers at Martlesham who could be picked up with very little extra journey time. Edward suggested that contacting the local media might bring about some progress. Simon B would ensure that the changed email address for Nigel Crisp was sent to Linda and Margaret. The web site for First Bus is now <https://www.firstbus.co.uk/>

**8.1.4 Traffic Lights, Felixstowe:** Deborah raised concerns that there is no 'beeping' sound from the traffic lights to indicate when it is safe to cross. It was thought that this is apparently due to interference from a nearby crossing. Simon D said that there may be a revolving conical fixture underneath which revolves when it is safe to cross. Margaret would check.

**Action: Margaret Morris**

**8.1.5 Reporting a Highways issue:** This can be done by going to: [www.suffolk.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/highways-maintenance/report-a-highways-issue.gov.uk](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/highways-maintenance/report-a-highways-issue.gov.uk)

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

9.1 Kerry provided the following update from Healthwatch Suffolk:

- **Masks:** From the 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2022, masks do not have to be worn. However, these are still required in some places. It is understood that masks do not have to be worn when visiting care homes and there are changes to the rules in hospitals. There are still many patients with Covid-19 in hospitals. Kerry will find out if there is guidance on the wearing of masks given the increase in infections.

**Action: Kerry Overton**

- **Dementia Project:** A new project has been launched with the Dementia Alliance to explore the support given to people with dementia and their family carers.
- **Services for people who are deaf or hard of hearing:** This project aims to ensure there is access for people who are deaf or hard of hearing to services particularly for people who communicate via



British Sign Language. Healthwatch will also look at the accessibility of their own services.

- **Accessible Information Standard:** A poster has been designed to give people information about understanding their rights to get information in the way they require it and about understanding the system.
- **Feedback:** On the Healthwatch Suffolk website, every NHS service in Suffolk is listed and people can provide feedback on the service they have received.
- **Poverty:** A new project is being set up and staff are being recruited to undertake this. Further information will be made available.
- **Integrated Care System:** Clinical Commissioning Groups have been discontinued and there is now an Integrated Care System for Suffolk and North East Essex (not including Waveney). Commissioning and performance will be the responsibility of the Integrated Care Board. The voluntary sector is represented at Board level.
- **Telephone Charges:** Kerry will seek more information on a new tariff system where there are no charges for some NHS calls.

9.2 Kerry would ensure the Forum is kept up to date with Healthwatch Suffolk projects.

## 10. Information Round / Any Other Business.

There was no further business.

## 11. Date and Format of Next Meeting – 4<sup>th</sup> October, 2022.

11.1 It was agreed to leave the discussion on the format of the meeting to the Planning Group.

11.2 With regard to topics for future meetings, the following were noted:

- Lasting Power of Attorney – Possible guest speaker offer
- Cost of Living Crisis – East Suffolk Council's Communities Team

11.3 The next meeting of the Suffolk Coastal Disability Forum will be on Tuesday, 4<sup>th</sup> October, 2022, at 2 pm, probably via Zoom in view of the increase in Covid-19 numbers.

**Action: All to note.**