

Suffolk Coastal Disability Forum

Minutes of the Meeting held via Zoom on Tuesday, 11th January, 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	Trimley St Mary Parish Council
Paul Kelly	Resident
Vicki Lee	Suffolk Carers Matter & Economic Development, BSEVC
Margaret Morris	Resident (Secretary)
Joss Mullett	Communities Officer – Framlingham, Wickham Market & Surrounding Villages, East Suffolk Council
Cllr Caroline Page	Suffolk County Council / Woodbridge Town Council
Katie Sargeant	Deputy Head, Patient & Public Involvement & Experience, Ipswich & East Suffolk & West Suffolk Clinical Commissioning Groups
Cllr Edward Thompson	East Suffolk Council / Woodbridge Town Council

Guests:

Jenny Edgerley	Development Officer (Felixstowe), East Suffolk Council
Sarah Garbutt	Resorts Manager, East Suffolk Council

Apologies:

Celia Bonwick	Dementia Together, Sue Ryder
Tracey Evans	Later Life Community ENGAGE Co-ordinator, BSEVC
Trevor Garrod	East Suffolk Travellers Association (ESTA)
Becki Gaunt	Flagship Housing
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. Developments in Felixstowe and along the Coast

3.1 Linda welcomed Sarah Garbutt, Resorts Manager, and Jenny Edgerley, Development Officer – Felixstowe, both from East Suffolk Council.

3.2 Using a small number of slides, Jenny provided information on the current developments along the sea front in Felixstowe. The main developments are located between the Leisure Centre and the new Café at the end of Sea Road entrance to the Martello Park.

3.3 The Café will be called The Kitchen@Martello Park and is at the junction of Sea Road with Orford Road, at the entrance to the Martello Park. The external work on the new café has been completed and the building has now been handed over to the Kitchen@Group who will be responsible for the operating of the café. They are now in the process of completing the internal fit out. The café will be fully accessible with ramped access and automatic doors to the inside area and to the outside decking area. It is anticipated that the Kitchen@Martello Park will be open in the Spring of 2022. Members commented that the café looks very impressive and should provide an excellent facility.

3.4 Close to the new café is a ramp over the sea wall which is currently closed off for Health & Safety reasons. The work to replace this ramp is out to tender and it is hoped that this will be completed in the Spring of 2022. This will give year round access to the promenade.

3.5 Back near to the Leisure Centre and left of the Ocean Boulevard, the planning application has been agreed for Seashore Village. This will be a development of 27 beach huts, 5 fully accessible beach 'pods', and replacement of the toilet facilities currently at the Leisure Centre. It is a very attractive design, laid out in the shape of a fish. The new toilet facilities will include a 'Changing Places' facility and will be relatively close to the accessible beach 'pods'. It may also include a shower facility. It will be possible for the 'pods' to be opened up to form a larger space for group bookings. As yet, the booking arrangements for the hire of the 'pods' are unclear but members felt that there should be

priority arrangements in place for disabled people. Work on the village will commence in September, 2022 with a completion date in 2023. The Trim Trail has been relocated to Langer Park.

3.6 The Seashore Village will be accessible and it will be possible to get to the beach from the Promenade. There is already a ramp from the Promenade to the beach at this location. It was noted that the beach levels do change and it is not thought feasible to install permanent access on the beach such as a board walk. A new beach wheelchair will be purchased and will be stored close by. Members noted that the current beach wheelchair is no longer fit for purpose.

3.7 Sarah explained that developments in Lowestoft include new beach huts, and a more permanent arrangement to access the beach. However, she noted that this is easier in Lowestoft as the sandy beach allows for a different approach.

3.8 An Activity Park will be developed on the other side of Ocean Boulevard. This will include:

- Pétanque Pistes (Stan Harris will stock tennis equipment to buy or hire – this is on Sea Road, adjacent to Ocean Boulevard)
- Table tennis tables
- Outdoor gym equipment
- Climbing walls
- An area for outdoor fitness classes
- Chess tables

The activities will be free though visitors will need to provide their own equipment. There will also be picnic areas with picnic tables that enable wheelchair access. It is anticipated that the Activity Park will open at the same time as the Seashore Village.

3.9 Linda thanked Sarah and Jenny for their very interesting update on the developments in Felixstowe and for answering members' questions. The Forum has welcomed early input into the discussions on these developments to ensure that access for disabled people is considered at the outset. Members hope that the Council will continue to consult with them on their plans for these and other developments and they look forward to Felixstowe being a much more accessible and exciting place to visit.

4. Update – Traffic Arrangements for The Thoroughfare, Woodbridge

4.1 Linda explained that members were still unclear as to the traffic arrangements for the Thoroughfare in Woodbridge. Cllr Caroline Page

explained the background to the introduction of the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order, introduced in July 2020, and the changes that have been made to what is the main shopping street in the centre of Woodbridge. She noted that there were further traffic regulations put in place during the lockdown of 2020 which have now ended and which meant that people became confused.

4.2 Before the changes were introduced there had been chaos in the Thoroughfare. An order had been amended that meant, for example, HGV lorries could drive through at any time. Vehicles had been allowed in from 2pm to 4pm on Tuesday and Thursdays but with no rights to park there.

4.3 The regulations in the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order are as follows:

- Residents or businesses who have private off street parking, accessed only via the Thoroughfare, can enter/exit the Thoroughfare at any time of day to access their parking area. They are not allowed to park in the Thoroughfare itself.
- The marked loading bays on the Thoroughfare can be used for a maximum of fifteen minutes for loading/unloading.
- No other vehicles should use the Thoroughfare at any time, 24 hours a day. Drivers must not use the Thoroughfare and park in the loading bays for shopping, withdrawal of money or as a short cut to Church Street.
- Historic provision for blue badge holders to park in the Thoroughfare on Tuesdays and Thursdays between 1pm and 4pm via a special permit has been removed. Blue badge holders should use the blue badge parking spaces in the adjacent Hamblin Road and Oak Lane Car Parks.

4.4 As this is an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order with a life of eighteen months, there have been opportunities for comments to be made. Suffolk County Council will shortly need to consider these with a view to making any changes before the Order is made permanent.

4.5 A member commented that this is a good proposal, though there have been some negative comments on some social media groups. The proposal has been publicised via social media as well as on the Woodbridge Town Council website.

4.6 Members noted that, with the changes, people can see into the shops because there are no rows of cars parked against the shop windows. Another comment was that cars are becoming wider and more difficult to park.

4.7 Whilst noting, that a small number of blue badge holders feel disadvantaged by being unable to park in the Thoroughfare, the majority of people with disabilities, older people and children feel that this is now a far safer environment and are able to access the shops more easily. The Forum will confirm its view to Suffolk County Council and Woodbridge Town Council that the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order should become permanent at the end of the experimental period.

Action: Planning Group

4.8 Cllr Page will be using her County Council Allowance to provide more seating in the Thoroughfare.

4.9 Attention was drawn to Quay Street where the road is very narrow with uneven drains and the pavements are also narrow and not wide enough for wheelchair users.

4.10 Linda thanked Cllr Page for clarifying the position regarding the Thoroughfare. Cllr Page said that she hopes the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order will become permanent.

5. Minutes from the Meeting held on the 12th October, 2021

The Minutes of the meeting of the Suffolk Coastal Disability Forum held on 12th October, 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

6. Matters Arising

6.1 Item 3 Improving Services and Regaining Normality:

6.1.1 Following the discussions at the last meeting, Katie was able to update members as follows:

- Suffolk is recognised as having one of the top three systems in the country for vaccine centres. The booster roll-out has been very successful and thanks were extended to the volunteers involved. The vaccination programme will continue.
- There continues to be huge pressures on primary care staff with continued high demand and staff sickness. Some practices are performing better than others but telephone triage is here to stay. 50% of patients are happy with this system, whilst 50% prefer face-to-face contact with GPs.
- However, face-to-face appointments with GPs are now only offered if clinically necessary. A considerable amount of screening is being done by the Care Navigators (a new name for Receptionists).

6.1.2 Members were concerned that this approach can result in diseases such as breast cancer being missed, and the fact that GPs do not actually see the patients, and cannot see symptoms such as bruises or an inability to walk, may indicate that patients can be misdiagnosed.

6.1.3 Katie noted the current high demand and explained that the set-up of digitalising systems was completed in a matter of weeks. Members felt that there should be a blended approach depending on whether symptoms are clear - but if not, then a face-to-face appointment would be needed.

6.1.4 Members remain concerned that difficulties with communication for some people such as those who are hearing impaired, have speech difficulties or who have difficulty using technology, mean they are disadvantaged by the move to on-line appointments.

6.1.5 Katie said that it was important that systems are kept under review. Whilst the use of technology is impressive, there were instances where it just does not work, for example, asking a visually impaired person to send a photograph of a symptom.

6.1.6 In response to concerns about attending vaccine centres where there is no public transport, Katie referred to the Vaxi-Taxi scheme which provided free taxi travel to those unable to get to a vaccination centre. However, the general scheme has now ended and free travel is only available for 12-15 year olds plus carer/parent/chaperone.

6.1.7 A member raised an issue about a visually impaired person who was unable to get to a PCR Testing Station because they had no one to take them. Simon B would make enquiries with the Vaxi-Taxi scheme.

6.1.8 If members have concerns about getting to a Vaccination Centre, email: linda.hoggarth@avenuesgroup.org.uk and details will be passed on to Katie.

6.1.9 Members are anxious about the effects of Long Covid especially as this can result in more people having long term disabilities and asked what is being done in Suffolk to help people affected. Katie said that there is a Suffolk-wide Long Covid service and she will invite an appropriate speaker to the April meeting to talk about the service.

Action: Katie Sargeant

6.1.10 A booklet 'Keeping safe - how to avoid Covid' was available. Katie will send a copy of this so that details can be provided to members.

Action: Katie Sargeant

7. Issues and Concerns from Members

7.1 Lasting Power of Attorney: Caroline commented on the issue of Lasting Power of Attorney and the role of Public Deputies. Joss agreed to find out more information about this issue and circulate information via the Planning Group.

Action: Joss Mullett

7.2 Bus Back Better Strategy:

7.2.1 Simon Barnett, Transport Development Manager, Passenger Transport, Suffolk County Council, explained that there is a new bus strategy being introduced. 'Bus Back Better' is a national campaign which was launched last year and required a Bus Service Improvement Plan to apply for funding. Suffolk submitted its plan at the end of October 2021 and there is a budget £77million available over 5 years. For transport improvements all over Suffolk, a Partnership Board has been established which will decide on the priorities.

7.2.2 Members noted the following:

- Bus operators have cut out chunks of some routes leaving large areas with no buses. More information is needed regarding this.
- The No 64 Bus is an example of this where the route through Martlesham was taken out so the bus could travel along the bypass where there are no passengers or bus stops.
- The Woodbridge to Felixstowe bus service is two hourly. Populations are increasing and an hourly service is much more attractive to users.
- There are financial issues regarding concessionary bus passes.

7.2.4 Members looked forward to learning more about Suffolk's Bus Back Strategy at the next meeting and were pleased to welcome Simon B as a regular member of the Forum.

8. Draft Terms of Reference

8.1 Linda explained that the draft Terms of Reference are not yet ready for members to consider and agree and further input is awaited from East Suffolk Council.

8.2 Joss said that this was in progress. There will be separate Terms of Reference for each Forum (Waveney and Suffolk Coastal) to reflect the operating differences between them. However, the objectives will be identical for both Forums.

8.3 It is anticipated that the draft Terms of Reference for the Suffolk Coastal Disability Forum will be ready for consideration at the April meeting.

9. Views on Health and Social Care with Healthwatch Suffolk

9.1 Kerry Overton provided the following update from Healthwatch Suffolk for the Minutes after the meeting:

*“**Long Covid:** Have you ongoing symptoms after contracting Covid-19? There are an emerging number of people experiencing symptoms associated with the Covid19 virus long after the estimated twelve-week recovery period. Symptoms of Long Covid vary in type and severity and can have a huge impact on physical and mental wellbeing.*

“Perhaps you have not had Long Covid but have experienced other post viral illnesses or post viral fatigue syndrome which impacts on your daily life. If you have had ongoing symptoms after contracting Covid 19 or other post viral illnesses we would like to hear about your experience please use the link to the feedback questionnaire here <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/longcovidpostviral/>

*“**Asthma – Feedback about your Asthma Care:** ‘Are you or someone you know one of the estimated 5.4 million individuals living in the UK with asthma? Perhaps you or someone you know were diagnosed as a child and have managed the condition for years, or perhaps you or someone you know have been newly diagnosed as an adult? How has being asthmatic affected you or the person you know? We would like to know how easy or challenging it is to manage the condition? Whatever your thoughts and experiences, we would welcome hearing from you. We have created a feedback questionnaire for this here below. <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/Asthmafeedback/>*

*“**Co-production - Opportunity to improve Macmillan cancer information, support services and hearing about cancer engagement in your community:** Macmillan are really pleased to share they have a new virtual network, for anyone living or working in the South East or East of England, who is interested in getting involved with opportunities to improve Macmillan cancer information and support services, or in hearing about cancer engagement in their community.*

There is a simple survey to join up, and you can choose how you want to be involved.

<https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/Southeastandeastofenglandcancernetwork/>

“The Network is for anyone with cancer experience, any friends and family of someone with cancer, and for anyone who works to support people who may be affected by cancer. If you have any questions you can email:

engagementsoutheastandeastofengland@macmillan.org.uk.

“Future Projects: *Register your interest in getting more information if you would like to be involved as an individual or organisation. Ring on 01449 703949 or email on Info@healthwatchsuffolk.co.uk stating your interest in any of the following:*

“Elective Care: *Delays in what is known as ‘Elective care’ – Any planned treatment at hospital such as knee/hip replacement. We are going to release a survey imminently asking people who are waiting for or who have now had their treatment to let us know what could have helped you during the time you are/have waited for this treatment.*

“Dementia Pathway: *We are reaching out to groups and individuals to be involved in this as it is crucial in helping shape the ‘Dementia Strategy’ for Suffolk.*

“Other information to share: Primary Care: *We have had a high volume of feedback on our online system that has shown a high level of patient frustration. We continued to ensure we have the latest information on how these services are operating and have continued to publish news items such as a ‘call for understanding’ for Primary Care due to the rise in complaints and abuse resulting in the loss of many staff. Our most recent article captures that way that staff have also been affected. <https://healthwatchsuffolk.co.uk/news/it-left-me-wondering-why-i-do-the-job-local-practices-speak-out-about-abuse-from-patients/>*

“The community development officers have been working from home again but hope to be out once again conducting face-to-face engagement in February (under review).”

10. Information Round / Any Other Business

10.1 Swimming for People with Disabilities: Simon D was pleased to report that the sessions for people with disabilities at the Deben Pool in Woodbridge are now open again.

10.2 Car Park, Melton Pavilion: Deborah said concerns had been raised regarding the height of the low level fencing at Melton Playing Fields. There is a meeting of the Recreation Committee for Melton Parish Council on the 12th January at 7pm where this may be discussed. However, no one from the Forum was able to attend. The Parish Council has said that the fencing is the same as that previously installed (Melton green and low level barriers), and there are 3 access points, none of which should be blocked by vehicles. It was agreed to wait to hear the outcome of any discussions by Melton Parish Council.

10.3 High Street Car Park, Leiston: Linda had raised the refurbishment of this car park with Lewis Boudville, Transport, Infrastructure and Parking Manager, East Suffolk Council, but had not had replies to e-mails. Members wanted to know whether the number of spaces for blue badge holders had been reduced as a result of the refurbishment, noting that the Leiston Town Council had commented that 30 spaces had been removed in order to accommodate more modern vehicles.

10.4 Parking for Blue Badge Holders, Woodbridge Railway Station: Members commented that these spaces continue to flood causing difficulties for disabled people using these. This is a long standing issue and efforts to stop the flooding clearly have not worked. Members suggested relocating the spaces for blue badge holders within this car park to an area that is not affected by flooding. This will be raised with Lewis Boudville. Given the difficulties in obtaining responses from Lewis, Joss will contact him in respect of the issues identified in 10.3 and 10.4.

Action: Joss Mullett

11. Meetings in 2022

11.1 The next meeting of the Suffolk Coastal Disability Forum will be on Tuesday, 5th April, 2022, at 2 pm, via Zoom.

11.2 Future meetings in 2022 will take place on Tuesday, 5th July, and Tuesday, 4th October.

Action: All to note