

Suffolk Coastal Disability Forum

Minutes of the Meeting held via Zoom on Tuesday 13th April, 2021,
at 2 pm.

Present:

Linda Hoggarth	Disability Forum for Suffolk (Chair)
Nigel Crisp	Staff Manager – Ipswich, First Group
Deborah Darby	Melton Parish Council
Simon Daws	Resident, Co-ordinator for the Guide Dogs Forum
Bryan Frost	Resident & Trimley St Mary Parish Council
Paul Kelly	Resident
Simon King	Coordinator, Suffolk Voluntary and Statutory Partnership
Chloe Lee	Communities Officer for Felixstowe, East Suffolk Council
Donal Madden	Resident
Margaret Morris	Resident (Secretary)
Joss Mullett	Health Projects Officer, East Suffolk Council
Kerry Overton	Community Development Officer, Healthwatch Suffolk
Cllr Caroline Page	Resident & Suffolk County Council
Ginny Shoemith	Diverse Communities Advisor, Suffolk Police

Guest:

Nicole Rickard	Head of Communities, East Suffolk Council
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Apologies:

Peter Coleman	Resident & Governor, Norfolk & Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust
Jane Drummond	Resident & Martlesham Parish Council
Trevor Garrod	East Suffolk Travellers Association (ESTA)
Becki Gaunt	Housing Manager, Flagship Homes
Jan Gregory	Dementia Together
Steve Hodgkiss	Resident, Disability Forum for Suffolk, Suffolk Sight
Sylvia Izzard	Resident
Linda Layton	Resident
Geoff Manning	Resident
Gill Manning	Resident
Andrew Simpson	Community Action Suffolk
Yvonne Smart	Trimley St Martin Parish Council
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. Suffolk in 20 years – Nicole Rickard, Head of Communities, East Suffolk Council

3.1 Linda welcomed Nicole Rickard, Head of Communities, East Suffolk Council to the meeting and invited her to talk about how Suffolk will look in 20 years.

3.2 Nicole used a series of slides to explain her presentation and these will be distributed with the minutes of the meeting.

3.3 In East Suffolk, the largest age group of the population is between 70 to 74, with the smallest age group being 85 plus, but still higher than the national average. The population of over 65's is predicted to grow by 39% by 2039. This will have implications for health and social services. There are areas in East Suffolk that are more deprived than the rest of Suffolk and there are centres of population within the district such as Felixstowe and Woodbridge.

3.4 The effects of the pandemic have been significant. Twice as many people, who live in deprived areas, become infected with Covid-19 and more die as a result.

3.5 There are three types of vulnerability:

- Financial
- Clinical
- Social

3.6 People who were vulnerable before the Pandemic are still vulnerable. If people have been shielding for a year and have not been out of the house, they are now finding it challenging. Fewer people with long term conditions have been seeking help, frailty is increasing and there are life expectancy changes,

3.7 There has been a detrimental impact on mental health, figures show an 8% decline, particularly for young people and women.

3.8 Loneliness and social isolation is a top priority for the eight East Suffolk Community Partnerships. 10% of calls received to Helplines during the Pandemic were because people were lonely.

3.9 Consequently befriending calls were introduced along with the introduction of GrandPads to enable older people to connect with their families and friends. It was noted that Joss is now the Project Manager for the issue of GrandPads. More are to be made available using additional funding as a result of a partnership with the Council and the Clinical Commissioning Group. For more information, contact: joss.mullett@eastsoffolk.gov.uk

3.10 There are higher rates of unemployment in East Suffolk than in Suffolk as a whole. Statistics indicate that there are more low skilled/low wage jobs. More people are renting houses, needing benefits, or requiring support for basic needs such as food and fuel. There are more people receiving Universal Credit.

3.11 There has been an increase in domestic violence and family breakdowns.

3.12 There has been an impact on voluntary organisations with a significant reduction in income from fundraising.

3.13 To begin to address some of these difficulties, East Suffolk is providing or supporting a number of initiatives, including:

- EAST Bags (Everyone Active, Supported Together) to encourage older vulnerable people to stay active;
- GrandPads;
- Voice cCloud Support (for people to get online);
- Devices to your door;
- Digital buddies
- Talking Benches
- Covid-19 Community Fund
- VCS Bounce Back Fund
- Money Matters Campaign
- Suffolk Advice and Support Service
- Warm Homes
- Social Prescribing

3.14 Members made the following comments:

- Concern was expressed regarding the changes in life expectancy;
- The effects of Covid-19 are a ticking time bomb;

- The population figures may be affected by young people moving away thus making the percentage of older people increase;
- The affordability of housing in East Suffolk is an issue. There are a lot of large houses and second-homes. Places like Aldeburgh and Southwold are apparently affluent but there are real hidden needs. The number of second homes may impact on the figures;
- The presentation omitted transport – this is a particular issue for disabled people as there are not enough bus services, funding is being used to prop up existing services not to develop new services. Nicole said that it is difficult to get data. There is currently an officer looking at transport and a link will be made between this officer and the Forum.

Action: Nicole Rickard

3.15 Members noted the following:

- Woodbridge has Emergency Response Groups;
- There is a frailty hot spot in Felixstowe.

3.16 Linda thanked Nicole Rickard for attending the meeting and for her most interesting presentation raising many issues for the people of East Suffolk.

4. Minutes from the Forum meeting held on 12th January, 2021.

The Minutes were agreed as a correct record.

5. Matters Arising

5.1 Item 5 Car Parking Issues

5.1.1 Following correspondence between the Council and the Forum, it is clear that East Suffolk Council will not change the new charging policy to reinstate double time parking for blue badge holders. The Forum has registered its concern that the Council's consultation process did not involve direct consultation with them prior to the decision being made.

5.1.2 Members noted that the changes to parking arrangements for blue badge holders had not been mentioned in the first issue in March 2021 of the new East Suffolk magazine produced by East Suffolk Council.

5.1.3 A member commented that a Facebook community had shared a video of people at a parking meter trying to work out how to pay. It was

noted that the Council is content that its parking meters meet national standards.

5.1.4 Cllr Page commented that there are now no parking spaces in The Thoroughfare in Woodbridge, and she has requested extra spaces for blue badge holders in nearby car parks.

5.2 Item 9.2 Melton Pavilion: Deborah reported that the helpful comments from the Forum had been considered and the plans are now going forward. There will be a marked parking space for blue badge holders and the accessible toilet will be as large as resources allow.

5.3 Item 9.3 No 64 Bus Service: Nigel is continuing to follow up the concerns regarding the route of the No 64 Bus Service and also the setting up of a Customer Panel with First Group. He will keep the Forum advised of any progress.

6. Issues, Concerns and News from Members

6.1 Rail Travel: Bryan reported that there is an exemption until the end of 2021 for replacement buses to be wheelchair accessible when train services have to be suspended. He recommended that if necessary wheelchair users should use an accessible taxi and reclaim costs from Greater Anglia. He is happy to follow up any access issues.

6.2 Terminology on Council Tax Forms: Jan from Dementia Together had expressed concerns about the wording used when claiming exemption from Council Tax. It was suggested that inviting a guest from Anglia Revenues Partnership to provide an explanation on the terminology used might be helpful. However, Joss said that the terminology is defined in law by the Government. All councils use this terminology.

6.3 Electric Scooters: Members remain concerned about the use of electric scooters and the dangers they present to pedestrians. It was noted that there has been no official trial of them in this area. Under current UK legislation, electric scooters are not permitted to be used on footpaths, public roads or cycle lanes.

6.4 Consultation on the Shared Space, Hamilton Road, Felixstowe: Margaret had responded to the consultation, saying that, in general, it is much safer with no cars allowed in the Shared Space between 10am and 4pm. However, cyclists are still allowed into the Shared Space.

6.5 Voluntary and Statutory Partnership (VASP): Simon explained that this is a Suffolk wide network for anyone with an interest in mental health. It meets quarterly. A newsletter is circulated every two weeks, though this has been weekly during the Pandemic. The aim is to communicate and to share information as well as directing people to events. There is no charge, people can just join up themselves if they are interested or email simon.king@healthwatch.co.uk

More detailed information can be found at:
<https://www.suffolkvasp.co.uk/>

Simon also spoke about the 'Happy to Chat' benches in some Suffolk parks, designed to help people who are feeling lonely. The link below gives more information about where some of these are in East Suffolk.
<https://healthwatchesuffolk.co.uk/news/happytochatbenches/>

6.6 PIP Payments: Paul asked for the amount of the annual increase in the Personal Independence Payment of 0.4%, even less than nurses, to be noted.

6.7 Identifying Carers in Suffolk: Cllr Page spoke about a motion put to Suffolk County Council to create a database of unpaid carers, to be administered by Suffolk Family Carers. This aims to make carers more visible in the community. Information about this can be found at:
<https://suffolklibdems.org/carolinepage/2021/03/21/identifying-suffolks-unpaid-carers/>

6.8 Vehicle Tax Exemption: Paul reminded members that in certain circumstances, disabled people can apply for vehicle tax exemption, at either 100% or 50%. Further information is available at:
<https://www.gov.uk/financial-help-disabled/vehicles-and-transport>
or at <https://www.disabledmotoring.org/information/information>

Post Meeting Note: Please note that disabled people applying for vehicle tax exemption are asked to send original documents to the DVLA, not photocopies.

6.9 Vaccination Feedback: Linda said that the Ipswich & District Clinical Commissioning Group was keen to receive feedback on the Covid-19 Vaccination process. Simon said that it was not well organised in respect of dealing with blind people at the Woodbridge Community Centre. He was taken to a cubicle, put on a seat, and given a leaflet (which was not read to him), told to stay put for 15 minutes. Upon leaving, his guide dog led him out the way he came in as

opposed to following the one-way system. Margaret noted that the organisation at the Grove, Felixstowe was well managed.

Feedback (positive and negative) can be sent to the Clinical Commissioning Group:

[Covid - 19 Vaccination Experience Survey \(surveymonkey.co.uk\)](https://surveymonkey.co.uk)

6.10 Effects of Covid-19 on Disabled Residents: East Suffolk Council is planning to hold a joint meeting of Waveney and Suffolk Coastal Disability Forums to explore the effects Covid-19 has had on disabled residents. A date has not yet been agreed but will be notified to members in due course.

7. Views on Health and Social Care with Healthwatch Suffolk

7.1 Kerry invited comments from members:

- Simon said that there used to be a 'Walk in' foot surgery unit but no-one is able to contact this. He needs treatment so that he can get out and walk his dog.
- There are many delays in people receiving many different treatments, including those with cancer.
- It was noted that some people are receiving treatment at the Nuffield Hospital.
- Deborah asked when audiology will be providing a full service again. It was noted that audiology sometimes operates through GP surgeries. Kerry will take this forward.
- Cllr Page commented on people who had 'next of kin' living on the other side of the world – the question in hospital admission procedure needs to be formulated to ensure contacts are actually able to be present. 'Who would you like to be informed?' would be a better question. Kerry noted there is an End of Life project and the format of questions needs to be improved.
- Linda commented that if a carer also has a disability, then this is often ignored by health services.
- Kerry said that there is the opportunity for feedback on second vaccinations as well as first vaccinations. There have been some accessibility problems and volunteers have had training to support disabled people.

Post Meeting Note: Kerry has provided the following updates:

- **Commencement of Face to Face Appointments for people using hearing aids – Battery Replacement and Repairs:** Kerry has

been in contact with the organisation, 'Suffolk Hearing Advisory Service,' that supports Ipswich Hospital with this service. They stated that they take their lead from the hospital, so they await further updates themselves. The postal service has worked very well for many people. Where possible, patients who can replace batteries themselves just need to call and request them before the batteries run out. Those that cannot replace the batteries themselves need to send in the aid and the turn-around should be no more than 3 days. Two 'drive-ins' are now being operated, one in Felixstowe and one in Ipswich. Other places that could be used for such a service are being used for vaccination services. A person can drive in and use the telephone number provided. A team member, fully using Personal Protection Equipment (PPE), will approach the car with a basket, in which the aid can be put. It is then taken inside and appropriately fixed and then the aid is returned. This is done in a roughly 15 minutes. Staff then must do a full clean down and change their PPE before seeing the next patient.

- **Commencement of Face to Face Appointments at Walker Close Foot Surgery:** Kerry has made enquiries with the Hospital to ask when foot surgery will resume. The Team Member has assured Kerry that they will get back to her with an update. In the meantime, they advised that patients affected should contact PALS so they can liaise directly with them. Telephone: 01473 704781.

8. Information Round

8.1 Suffolk Police

8.1.1 Ginny reported on the continuing liaison regarding Covid-19 issues. Issues concerning the use of face masks have been reported to them. There have been concerns about people in shops not wearing masks who may not have been exempt from wearing them.

8.1.2 Funding has been approved for a dedicated Hate Crime Officer. This post has been advertised and will cover the whole of Suffolk. The Hate Crime Officer will work alongside Community Engagement Officers. There is concern that over the last 2 or 3 years there has been a rise in attacks on guide dogs. It is good that there will now be a single contact for such attacks to be reported to and who can work with other colleagues in community safety teams.

8.1.3 Members wished Ginny a very happy retirement. Her successor will be Stella Frangleton.

8.2 Chloe Lee: Members noted that Chloe's role within the Council is changing and she will no longer be attending our meetings. She is

being replaced by Joss, the Health Projects Officer. Members thanked Chloe for her support and assistance to the Forum – she will be much missed.

9. Meetings in 2021

The date of the next meeting of the Forum is confirmed as Tuesday, 6th July, 2021, at 2pm, via Zoom.