

Suffolk Coastal Disability Forum

Minutes of the Meeting held via Zoom on Tuesday, 12th January, 2021,
at 2 pm.

Present:

Linda Hoggarth	Disability Forum for Suffolk (Chair)
Tom Ambridge	Resident
Nigel Crisp	Staff Manager – Ipswich, First Group
Deborah Darby	Melton Parish Council
Simon Daws	Resident
Bryan Frost	Resident & Trimley St Mary Parish Council
Becki Gaunt	Housing Manager, Flagship Homes
Steve Hodgkiss	Resident, Disability Forum for Suffolk, Suffolk Sight
Paul Kelly	Resident
Chloe Lee	Communities Officer for Felixstowe, East Suffolk Council
Gill Manning	Resident
Geoff Manning	Resident
Margaret Morris	Resident (Secretary)
Kerry Overton	Community Development Officer, Healthwatch Suffolk
Andrew Simpson	Community Action Suffolk
Yvonne Smart	Chair, Trimley St Martin Parish Council

Guest:

Lewis Boudville	Parking Services Manager, East Suffolk Council
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Apologies:

Jo Bowen	Disability Advice Service (DAS)
Peter Coleman	Resident & Governor, Norfolk & Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust
Jane Drummond	Resident & Martlesham Parish Council
Janice Edwards	Resident
John Fitzpatrick	Resident
Trevor Garrod	East Suffolk Travellers Association (ESTA)
Linda Layton	Resident
Virginia Shoemith	Diverse Communities Advisor, Suffolk Police
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. Minutes from the Forum meeting held on 6th October, 2020.

The Minutes were agreed as a correct record.

4. Matters Arising

There were none other than those covered by agenda items.

5. Discussion about Car Parking Issues

5.1 Lewis Boudville, Parking Services Manager, East Suffolk Council was welcomed to the meeting. Linda said that members were concerned about parking changes that had been introduced and invited Lewis to explain his role and responsibilities.

5.2 Lewis explained that he joined East Suffolk Council two years ago prior to the changes in Parking Enforcement. Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) was introduced in Suffolk in April, 2020. Powers were delegated to East Suffolk Council to ensure that cars were correctly parked and improve parking practices. Prior to that, this had been the responsibility of the Police. All District Councils in Suffolk now have Civil Parking Enforcement arrangements.

5.3 In terms of parking in council owned car parks, Lewis said that changes were being introduced to the way in which people can pay for their parking. He talked about the 'RingGo' system which is cashless. The 'RingGo' app can be downloaded on to a mobile phone (which does not have to be a Smart phone). People can select their chosen car park, before travelling, select their time of arrival and departure, and then pay using their phone. He said that the app is working very well and usage figures are good. This was thought to be a good system for all people, including wheelchair users and families. It is possible to receive a reminder 10 minutes before the parking time is up at a charge of 10p.

5.4 New signs have been erected in the car parks to assist people to use this system. However, it was still possible to pay for parking using cash.

5.5 In response to this, members commented that it can be difficult for some people to use their phones due to dexterity issues and they also

pointed out that not everyone has a mobile phone. There was also some concern that pay machines in some car parks have been removed.

5.6 Lewis said that no pay machines have been removed though some have been covered up and are therefore not in use. Drivers can still pay by cash. Tariffs have been simplified – they are now either £1 or £2.

5.7 Members commented that pay machines should be as close as possible to the accessible parking spaces.

5.8 Lewis said that many of the Council's car parks meet the criteria for the Disabled Motoring UK Accreditation scheme. This means that the car parks will have been checked for accessibility.

5.9 Members said that there are not as many pay machines as before and they have observed queues of up to six people waiting to pay. The machines do not have clear directions for use and the text on them is not in large print. They are not as accessible to everyone as they should be.

5.10 Lewis said that he would take on board members comments though there is not room on the machines for pictorial instructions. The keypad labels have been changed. If a keypad has not been used for some time, it goes into 'sleep' mode and takes time to 'wake up'. The vehicle registration number is needed for payment.

5.11 Members asked if they could have the opportunity to comment on proofs for new signs and labels. Lewis agreed that this would be possible and would send drafts for comment.

5.12 Members asked if steps have been taken to alleviate the effect of sunlight on the pay machine screens. Lewis said that he will consider the issue of the impact of sunlight as the pay machines are replaced, for instance, if they are damaged.

5.13 Members had gathered from the local press that double parking time for blue badge holders had been discontinued and asked for an explanation.

5.14 Lewis said that, with the introduction of Civil Parking Enforcement, there was an opportunity to level up parking arrangements for all users. The view was that a number of different users such as mothers with children need extra time, not just people with disabilities. People do not

have to begin their parking time until they have unloaded from their cars. There is a 'grace' period if people are late getting back to their cars. If a fine is issued for late return, then people have the right to a 3-stage appeal.

5.15 The Blue Badge scheme is intended for on-street parking where a blue badge holder can park for three hours. It was not intended for car parks, where a blue badge holder can park all day using a double time arrangement thus blocking a space in a car park.

5.16 Members commented that the difficulties faced by disabled people are not simply to load and unload a vehicle, but take account of the fact that disabled people take longer to move around. The arrangement for double time was a 'reasonable adjustment' made to assist disabled people to be able to visit town centre shops and businesses.

5.17 Members said that there are fewer disabled bays in car parks. The removal of double time indicated that blue badge holders are being encouraged to use the streets instead of the car parks. However, there are not enough on street parking opportunities for blue badge holders.

5.18 Members had been surprised to read in the local press that the Disability Forums had been consulted regarding the withdrawal of the double time arrangement when this was not the case. Lewis responded that the article had not been accurate and apologised for this. The consultation had been advertised on the website and in the local press during the first lockdown period. Linda observed that the Council could easily have consulted directly with the Waveney and Suffolk Coastal Disability Forums given that their own Communities Team support both Forums. The majority of members were unlikely to see notifications of consultations on the website.

5.19 The disabled bays at Woodbridge Railway Station continue to be flooded when it rains despite £70,000 being spent to make improvements to this area of the car park. Lewis thought it would be possible to relocate the bays to alleviate the problem.

5.20 In response to a question about how the parking attendant knows who has paid by 'RingGo', Lewis said that the attendant carries a copy. Whilst there is a move towards digital payment, there are no plans to remove the facility to pay by cash.

5.21 If a blue badge holder finds a space in a car park, they can only follow the rules of the car park, not street rules.

5.22 It is not clear who can park where there is a dropped kerb. A dropped kerb is a section of pavement that has been lowered to make it easier for vehicles to drive across. It also makes it easier for people with disabilities to get from the pavement to the road.

5.23 A white line is a courtesy line. Parking where there is a dropped kerb to a house can only be enforced if a resident requests it. For other white lines, they are to enable pedestrians to cross the road and cars parking there can be fined.

5.24 Members asked if there would be more robust parking enforcement with the introduction of Civil Parking Enforcement. Lewis said that there is now a team of people in parking services and enforcement has improved since May, 2020.

5.25 If a car wheel is on a yellow line, then Civil Parking Enforcement applies.

5.26 It was noted that the Forum can continue to raise the loss of double time parking arrangements for blue badge holders. This is also a concern for the Waveney Disability Forum.

5.27 For information and to register for 'RingGo', use Ctrl+link to follow the link below:

[Cheap parking in East Suffolk Council | RingGo](#)

5.28 Lewis was thanked for a helpful explanation of the new arrangements and how they are being introduced in East Suffolk.

6. GrandPads

6.1 Chloe explained the introduction and function of GrandPads in East Suffolk. The GrandPad is an easy to use device with a range of supporting services allowing older people to easily keep in contact with their families. By integrating with the family's smart phones, keeping in touch can be done at any time.

6.2 In East Suffolk, the aim of providing GrandPads was to alleviate loneliness and isolation. It was named by the people who had created them. The loan scheme in East Suffolk has been a pilot.

6.3 The following points were noted:

- Social Isolation is an objective measure of the number of contacts people have.
- 10% of calls to Home but Not Alone have been really about loneliness.
- There are two key sources of support: Befriending in the north of East Suffolk Council area, and GrandPads in the south.
- GrandPads use simple technology. They require no Wi-Fi or internet access and they are easy to use.
- There is a 24 hour help button connected to GrandPads.
- People can use the GrandPads to keep in touch with their private family network.
- East Suffolk Council currently has 25 on loan and funding for 100 more (50 of these are funded by Ipswich and East Suffolk Clinical Commissioning Group).

6.4 Further information is available at <https://www.grandpad.net/>

6.5 During discussion, the following points were made:

- People can purchase their own GrandPad system.
- The devices can be connected to the internet but it is not essential.
- GrandPads do appear to have a VAT exemption on the monthly/annual rental cost for a disabled person.
- The cost to rent a Grandpad works out at approximately £60 per month or £600 to £700 per annum.
- Flagship homes have some available in Wickham Market and will soon have some in Felixstowe.
- East Suffolk Council is leasing their GrandPads over 2 years. The criteria are: a person has to be over 65; in a situation where there is poor internet connection; social isolation; or someone is not able to get out easily of the house.
- It was noted that when people are shielding they can be linked up with a buddy.

6.6 Currently, GrandPads are being loaned for 1 year which includes all the support. At the end of the year, they can be given back if the borrower has gained the confidence to get their own device, or kept a bit longer to increase confidence.

6.7 Linda thanked Chloe for the very helpful information about GrandPads and how the current loan system works in East Suffolk.

7. Issues for People with Sensory Impairments during restrictions relating to Covid-19

7.1 Linda explained that both the Disability Forums in East Suffolk have been asked to discuss whether 'a specific to Suffolk' film should be made to raise the awareness of the difficulties faced by people with visual impairments during the lockdown restrictions.

7.2 Kerry explained that a short film had been made by Healthwatch Essex and this had triggered the discussion especially as lockdown restrictions are likely to be in place for a very long time. The film was designed to raise awareness of visual impairment.

7.3 Members noted that, in their experience, people with visual impairments are not going out because they are not able to work out the distances needed to keep safe on pavements, and they are avoiding social interactions.

7.4 Members felt that such a film should be a national initiative, on national TV, not just locally, as many people do not understand how the restrictions of lockdown have impacted on people with visual impairments.

7.5 On balance, members felt that a local film would not be of much assistance and they supported the use of national input from the RNIB as well as making use of initiatives such as the film made by Healthwatch Essex, rather than going to the expense of making a Suffolk film. The links below give a considerable amount of detail:

<https://www.rnib.org.uk/campaigning/priority-campaigns/inclusive-journeys/effect-lockdown-and-social-distancing-blind-and-partially-sighted-people>

<https://healthwatchessex.org.uk/2020/12/support-people-living-with-sensory-impairment-during-covid-19/>

7.6 In terms of public transport, Nigel said that few people were using the buses and there had been no issues involving the safety of people with visual impairments.

7.6 Linda would share this Forum's views with the Waveney Disability Forum at their next meeting.

8. Views on Health and Social Care with Healthwatch Suffolk

8.1 Kerry had asked members to consider some questions in relation to using digital services to access health care. She explained that Healthwatch Suffolk is aiming to reach as many people as possible who are digitally excluded – it would help if those present could contact anyone they know who does not have internet access and ask them to contact Healthwatch to complete the survey. In addition, would people at this meeting consider themselves digitally excluded?

8.2 Members made the following comments:

- There are many situations where people only have access to landline telephones and do not have access to computers, tablets, or smart phones.
- As an example of the difficulties in accessing information online, members noted the difficulty of looking at planning applications on line as the software used excludes people with visual impairments.
- Additionally, people who are dyslexic also have difficulties in accessing online information.
- In meetings via Zoom, it is not easy to get a ‘feeling’ about what people are really thinking when they are using this kind of technology. People cannot see body language.
- When letters or information are required in large print, there appears to be a reluctance to make this possible. This causes problems for people, particularly where people are registered as severely sight impaired and their communication needs should be known to those communicating with them.

8.3 The discussion minuted at the last meeting with David Brown, Deputy Chief Operating Officer, Ipswich & East Suffolk Clinical Commissioning Group, is of relevance to this item and Kerry’s attention was drawn to that. There are clearly differences between the GP surgeries and clinics in the quality of their approaches to assist patients with issues in accessing services via digital means, so people have a better experience if they live in a particular area than they do if they live somewhere else in the county.

8.4 Members can add further comments to this using: 0800 448 8234 or at <https://healthwatchsuffolk.co.uk/digitalhealthcaresurvey/> - then go to Coronavirus, then Digital Health and Care, then What is your experience? and scroll down to access the Survey.

9. Information Round / Any Other Business

9.1 Information on the Coronavirus Vaccine Programme: There is now a website for people in Suffolk and North Essex for information and guidance: www.sneevaccine.org.uk

9.2 Melton Pavilion: Deborah reported that consultation is taking place regarding the new Pavilion in Melton. Details are on the Melton Parish Council website.

<https://melton-suffolk-pc.gov.uk/recreation/pavilion-project/>

9.3 No 64 Bus Service: Bryan said that the current route for the No 64 Bus Service is not satisfactory. Nigel was asked to pursue this with Ian Rankin at First Group.

Action: Nigel Crisp

9.4 Customer Panel, First Group: The forming of a Customer Panel so that customers can discuss their concerns with First Group has not progressed and this will be raised with Ian Rankin.

Action: Linda Hoggarth

10. Meetings in 2021

10.1 Face to face meetings remain unlikely at the present time and therefore the next meeting will take place via Zoom on Tuesday, 13th April, 2021 at 2 pm.

10.2 The link will be made available nearer to that date.

Action: All to note