

Suffolk Coastal Disability Forum

Minutes of the Meeting held at Trinity Methodist Church, Hamilton Road, Felixstowe, on Tuesday, 1st October, 2019, at 2pm.

Present:

Linda Hoggarth	Disability Forum for Suffolk (Chair)
Lucy Beale	JobCentre Plus Leader, Felixstowe (Department for Work and Pensions)
Paul Kelly	Resident
Alison McWilliam	Health Promotion Specialist, Terence Higgins Trust
Margaret Morris	Resident (Secretary)
Kerry Overton	Community Development Officer, Healthwatch Suffolk
Yvonne Smart	Trimley St Martin Parish Council
Chloe Winlow	Communities Officer for Felixstowe, East Suffolk Council

Guests:

Karen Last	Electoral Services Manager, East Suffolk Council
Rebecca Pulford	Associate Director of Nursing - Integrated Pathways, East Suffolk & North Essex NHS Foundation Trust

Apologies:

Gill Cook	East Suffolk Association for the Blind (Felixstowe)
Simon Daws	Resident
John Fitzpatrick	Resident
Trevor Garrod	East Suffolk Travellers' Association
Steve Hodgkiss	East Suffolk Association for the Blind
Sylvia Izzard	Resident
Linda Layton	Resident & Carer
Geoff Manning	Resident
Gill Manning	Resident
Liz Mark	Resident and Bawdsey Parish Council
Alan Neville	Community and Customer Engagement Manager, Greater Anglia Felixstowe
PCSO Ben Sagi	Felixstowe
Andy Simpson	Community Action 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. It was noted that attendance varies at meetings regardless of their location.

3. Voting in Elections

3.1 Linda welcomed Karen Last, Electoral Services Manager, East Suffolk Council and invited her to respond to the questions raised at the July meeting of the Forum.

3.2 Karen responded as follows:

- Are staff fully trained on how to treat people with a range of disabilities?

Polling Station staff are given training which includes being provided with a copy of the Electoral Commission's Handbook. However, it is difficult to cover all eventualities as some people with disabilities want help while others wish to be independent. Wherever possible, the same staff are used at each Polling Station meaning that they do get to know voters and can offer appropriate assistance.

- How do voters know that Presiding Officers can assist them?

There are signs that say people can ask for help. Hopefully people do ask for help if they need it. Polling cards do not say that help is available. Members suggested that the polling cards could include a box to be ticked in the event of assistance being required. This could be a more user friendly way of asking for assistance. However, changing the polling cards would require a change in the legislation. It was noted that the signs in the Polling Stations should have a clear contrast, i.e. black text on a white background and not all in upper case lettering.

- How much help are staff able give to assist people to vote? Are they able to read out the ballot paper to voters who cannot read or cannot see well? How do voters know where to put their cross? Are postal voting papers available in large print? And, if so, how do voters apply for them?

Polling Officers are allowed to assist as are family members / companions. However, it has to be the voter's vote. Staff can read the ballot paper but are not able to discuss it; however, it is different for a companion. Staff can point to where the box for the cross is. If several people come together, e.g. from a Care home, then Polling Station staff

have to ensure that voters are not being led in how to vote. Companions are only allowed to help two voters.

- What support is given to people with dementia?

People with dementia still have a vote whilst they have capacity. While the Polling Officer can assist, clear instructions from the voter must be given.

- Are postal voting papers available in large print? And, if so, how do voters apply for them?

There is no provision for large font. By law, all ballot papers have to be the same size or a voter could be identified and secrecy compromised.

- Are there still some polling stations that are inaccessible to wheelchair users? For example, a caravan would not be considered accessible.

All polling stations in East Suffolk are now accessible. If a voter is not able to get into the Polling Station then the ballot paper can be taken outside to them – it is not unlawful but only the Presiding Officer can do this, not a companion. Venues are checked to ensure there is car parking nearby.

- In cold weather, staff at some polling stations close the doors to keep warm, thus creating a potential barrier for voters with mobility problems. Should a bell be provided?

The doors are now usually kept open at polling stations. It was suggested that a bell should be provided outside a polling station if a door was closed on a very cold day.

- Will a second polling station be provided in Saxmundham to cope with the expected increase in voters created by new housing developments?

It is possible that this will be necessary. Clearly a building is better than a caravan or a portacabin.

- Could the arrangements for proxy voting be clarified?

Applications for proxy voting due to disability can be made on line and put in place until further notice. The application must be supported by a medical professional or by confirmation of receipt of specific benefits. The application must specify who will be the proxy and whether that person will come to the polling station or a postal vote will be needed. The proxy can, for instance, be a relative who lives in a different town,

or a different part of the country, but s/he needs to be on an electoral register. The voter has to tell the proxy who to vote for.

3.3 Linda thanked Karen for the very helpful and full answers to the questions raised. Karen said that she will ensure that their training will reflect the Forum's concerns.

4. Update on Health Service Developments in Felixstowe

4.1 Linda welcomed Rebecca Pulford, Associate Director of Nursing - Integrated Pathways, East Suffolk & North Essex NHS Foundation Trust, and invited her to update members.

4.2 Rebecca explained that her role is to look after all services for older people in the Trust's area. 18 months ago there was increasing concern nationally that people with health problems were not receiving the best level of appropriate care when attending their surgeries or, for instance, attending the MIU (Minor Injuries Unit) in Felixstowe, after a fall. Therefore, work began to create Frailty Clinics. There is already one in the Ipswich Hospital.

4.3 As there is a higher than average frail community in Felixstowe – there are about 460 care home beds in the IP11 area – work has taken place to set up a Frailty Unit in Felixstowe Community Hospital. The plan is for people to be able to visit the Frailty Clinic and be given an all-round assessment (an 'MOT') by a number of health professionals which lasts about 4 hours. This is intended for people before they reach the stage of being very frail. If someone has fallen once or there are signs of memory loss or of incontinence, then these are usually signals that problems are beginning that affect their confidence and well-being. It is intended that the service will be available to people of all ages.

4.4 The aim is to provide a kind of MOT for people where all tests, for mental health, frailty, etc., can be done on the same day in the same place instead of people having to make multiple trips to different places for different specialisms. These 'MOTs' are health-driven at present but may start to include other criteria. People will be given a frailty score and the service is aimed at preventing people becoming 'high dependency'.

4.5 The very first clinic in Felixstowe is currently taking place with two people booked in for assessment. The sessions will be gradually expanded until a clinic is held every day. There may also be a team that goes into Care Homes. They are not yet sure how much demand

there will be for these clinics and the trials in Felixstowe will be evaluated before expanding them to other areas.

4.6 In terms of cross charging, this will follow the principles of the Alliance, consequently charging between services may not be an issue.

4.7 Members noted that the assessment needed to take account of wheelchair and equipment services to ensure people have the most appropriate equipment for their needs.

4.8 The Friends of Felixstowe Hospital have given very positive feedback. Kerry said that Healthwatch Suffolk would be interested in assisting with gathering feedback.

4.9 Rebecca reassured the Forum that Felixstowe's MIU is staying open and is continuing to provide the services as agreed.

4.10 Members noted the difficulty of travelling to access services especially for people living in such towns as Aldeburgh and Southwold.

4.11 Linda thanked Rebecca for coming to the meeting and for explaining how the Frailty Unit would work. It was anticipated that this service would be of benefit to people in Felixstowe.

5. Social Prescribing in Felixstowe

5.1 Linda asked Chloe to give an overview of how Social Prescribing will work particularly in Felixstowe.

5.2 Chloe explained that Social Prescribing aims to get to the roots of why, for instance, people are tiring, or are lonely, or make repeated visits to see their doctor for no apparent medical reason.

5.3 In Felixstowe, the Access Community Trust and the Citizens Advice Bureau have won the tender for Social Prescribing for this area and have appointed Hayley Stern and Deborah Mann as Local Community Connectors. They are already working in the GP Surgeries in Felixstowe.

5.4 The plan is to support people by connecting them to the social activities, clubs and groups that are available in their community. Doctors do not have time to assist people in this way. People can be referred or self-refer. They have a 45-minute initial session to explore their issues. If, for instance, someone wants to go to a particular social

event, then Hayley or Deborah could go with the person for a first session to give confidence and enable them to get to know people.

5.5 It is thought that one third of doctor's appointments could be referred to social prescribing.

5.6 The funding is only for 1 year – it could be difficult to measure the impact after such a short time. However, the recording of detailed case studies showing the benefits would be helpful.

5.7 Transport costs for some people to get to activities could be an issue. Additionally, if someone requires the support of a paid carer to go to an activity, this could also be a barrier.

5.8 The Local Community Connectors have been mapping the facilities available in the area so that they can support people with appropriate activities.

6. Minutes from the Meeting held on Tuesday, 9th July, 2019

The Minutes were agreed as a correct record.

7. Matters Arising from the Minutes

7.1 Item 6.1 Meeting Venues: The Planning Group are looking at venues for meetings in 2020. Venues need to be accessible with parking close by.

7.2 Item 6.4 Railway Issues:

7.2.1 One of the new Greater Anglia trains had been seen once in Ipswich at 2 a.m. and in Felixstowe at 1 a.m. However, it is not thought that Greater Anglia had brought one of the new trains to Ipswich to demonstrate the new facilities to disabled people.

7.2.3 Margaret reported on a conversation with Alan Neville, Community and Customer Service Manager, Greater Anglia. He had explained that if a train suddenly breaks down, it is not always reported that an accessible taxi is needed for a disabled passenger. He recognised that a replacement bus service may not be accessible and that wheelchair accessible taxis might not be available.

7.2.4 The new ticket machines have a button to call for help and enable passengers to talk to a real person at any time.

7.2.5 It was hoped that Alan would be able to attend the next meeting and Margaret would contact him.

Action: Margaret Morris

7.3 Item 9.1 Bus Passes: The Planning Group had written to Councillors as identified in the previous minutes and responses were awaited. It would appear that the use of bus passes on Connecting Community Services has been brought into line across the county. The situation is not helped by the stopping of some scheduled bus services.

8. Updates on Specific Issues

8.1 Access Surveys – Felixstowe and Woodbridge:

8.1.1 There had been no response to a second letter from Margaret with regard to the access to Felixstowe Cinema.

8.1.2 Further to discussion at the previous meeting, the Planning Group would consider organising a repeat survey of Woodbridge during the winter months when shop doors could be closed to find out if shops would be less accessible.

8.1.3 Further actions continue to be progressed by the Planning Group.

8.2 Policing Issues in Felixstowe – Report from PCSO Ben Sagi:

8.2.1 In his written report, PCSO Ben Sagi reported as follows:

- There are ongoing concerns regarding parking in the Shared Space, mainly with motorists parking outside the designated bays. About 50% of offenders are blue badge holders.
- With regard to A-Boards, many of these are now being placed onto the tactile paving and are potentially an obstruction. Whilst no major complaints have been received, any restrictions or regulations will be checked.
- Parking over dropped kerbs has been reported as an issue. This would have to be dealt with at the time of observation.

8.2.2 Ben will be thanked for his report.

8.3 Report back from the Planning Group:

8.3.1 A complaint is being followed up regarding the use of gravel in the spaces for blue badge holders in car parks in Aldeburgh.

8.3.2 Members commented on the surface of the car park at Felixstowe Ferry. Margaret will find out who owns this so that enquiries can be made.

8.3.3 Meetings in 2020 have been discussed and it is thought that there should be two meetings in Felixstowe, one in Woodbridge and one in the Saxmundham or Framlingham area.

8.3.4 Postcards publicising the Forum have been produced and copies were available for members to distribute. Chloe was thanked for her work in producing these.

9. Discussion regarding a possible Consultation Event for disabled people in the Suffolk Coastal locality

9.1 As there would not be a county consultation event for disabled people this year, the Planning Group had discussed briefly whether it would be feasible to consider a smaller event in the Suffolk Coastal area.

9.2 It was intended to discuss this suggestion at this meeting, but given the low attendance, it was not possible to progress any discussion.

10. Views on Health and Social Care with Healthwatch Suffolk

Kerry reported as follows:

10.1 As part of their Care Home Project, Healthwatch Suffolk will be launching a survey of Care Homes in Suffolk at the end of October. All Care Homes will be contacted. The surveys have been co-produced for residents and relatives/friends to complete. The survey forms will be available in large print and will be made accessible on line.

10.2 People are being encouraged to feedback their experiences with the non-emergency patient transport services provided by E-zec Medical Transport Services. Members are encouraged to respond via this link: <https://www.healthwatchesuffolk.co.uk/services/suffolk-non-emergency-patient-transport-service-nepts>.

10.3 The Annual General Meeting of Healthwatch Suffolk will be held on Tuesday, 22nd October, 2019, at the Blackbourne Community Centre, Elmswell, at 2pm. The theme is 'Children and Young People' and will focus on emotional health and well-being. Places for the

Annual General Meeting can be booked via the website of Healthwatch Suffolk.

11. Information Round / Any Other Business

11.1 Terence Higgins Trust: Alison briefly explained the role of the Terence Higgins Trust which focuses on the sexual health of young people. Outreach services are provided only to young people under 25 years of age. However, the Trust only sees those in mainstream education or with formal alternative education providers, so there are some who are missing out on support. Further information will be shared at the next meeting.

12. Dates and Venues for Meetings in 2020.

The Planning Group will arrange the next meeting for January, 2020 and members will be advised as soon as possible.

Meetings will also be arranged for April, July and October, 2020.

Meetings will continue to be held on Tuesday afternoons.