

Suffolk Coastal Disability Forum

**Minutes of the Meeting held at Trinity Methodist Church, Hamilton Road,
Felixstowe, on Tuesday, 3rd July, 2018, at 1pm**

**SCDC: Suffolk Coastal District Council, WDC: Waveney District Council
SCC: Suffolk County Council**

Present:

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| Linda Hoggarth | Disability Forum for Suffolk (Chair) |
| Gillian Benjamin | Active Communities Officer, Suffolk Coastal & Waveney District Councils |
| Dan Bristow | Disability Advice Service East Suffolk |
| Cllr Peter Coleman | Suffolk Coastal District Council (alternate for Cllr Steve Gallant) |
| Simon Daws | Resident |
| Paul Kelly | Resident |
| Margaret Morris | Resident (Secretary) |
| Kerry Overton | Community Development Officer, Healthwatch Suffolk |
| Sheila Taylor | Hope Trust, Felixstowe |

Guests:

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| Nigel Crisp | Staff Manager – Ipswich Depot, First Group |
| Phil Magill | Operations Manager, Passenger Transport, Suffolk County Council, |

Apologies:

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| Stuart Ellis | Resident |
| Michael Friend | Carer and Hollesley Parish Council |
| Cllr Steve Gallant | Suffolk Coastal District Council (Cabinet Member for Community Health) |
| Steve Hodgkiss | East Suffolk Association for the Blind |
| Sylvia Izzard | Resident |
| Linda Layton | Resident and Carer |
| Liz Mark | Resident and Bawdsey Parish Council |
| Maureen Mee | Resident |

1. Welcome & Introductions

Linda welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Apologies

The above apologies were received and noted.

3. Bus Services

3.1 Phil Magill, Operations Manager, Passenger Transport, Suffolk County Council and Nigel Crisp, Staff Manager – Ipswich Depot, First Group were welcomed to the meeting and asked to provide any updates from their particular organisations.

3.2 Phil explained that since the bus industry was deregulated, bus operators such as First have to run bus services for a profit. This means that Suffolk County Council looks at the gaps in services that are caused by this way of working.

3.3 He said that major changes were coming up in the way school transport was organised for children with special needs. Following consultation, this transport has been re-planned with Phase 1 starting in Ipswich from September. Software has been developed to plug in the needs of the children and this will change the way services are procured. The system now starts from the needs of the child. There is no change in the entitlement of children with special needs. They will continue to receive free school transport.

3.4 Phil said that there has been a reduction in the budget (to £1.78m) to support bus services but this will only result in a small number of cuts in the Suffolk Coastal area. The home/school transport budget is £19m.

3.5 Nigel said that Felixstowe will continue to have a 15 minute service to Ipswich and that no major changes are planned despite the rising costs of providing bus services. It is more difficult to maintain services in other areas such as Stowmarket.

3.6 He provided some samples of ‘Safe Journey’ cards that can be used by passengers with a range of disabilities to inform drivers of their specific needs. These were made available to those present.

3.7 Members then asked questions and received responses as follows:

- What impact will there be on bus services from the proposed housing developments at Adastral Park, Bell Lane, Kesgrave, and the Police Headquarters at Martlesham?

Response: First are aware of the need for forward thinking regarding the provision of bus services to cater for more than 2,000 homes. The proposed plans for the Police Headquarters site may not be agreed because of the difficulties that were identified in getting permission for the Park and Ride site. Developers query every contribution they are asked to make towards the provision of schools, libraries and other facilities. However, there should be a massive contribution of Section 106 funding from the Adastral Park development.

- There are still no audio-descriptions on buses (i.e. ‘talking’ buses) in Suffolk Coastal. When will new buses be required to have audio-descriptions?

Response: The government may make this compulsory through the Bus Services Bill 2017. Nigel agreed to investigate when the more recent buses will be retro-fitted.

- What training is given to bus drivers on how to respond to questions from visually impaired users, such as ‘Can you tell me when the bus gets to a particular stop’? Sometimes drivers say they are not familiar with the route, but they should have learnt it and know the names of the stops. 50% of 90 year olds have some visual impairment. If a blind person or a person with learning disabilities is taken past their stop, he or she may have no idea where they are. However, there are many good and helpful drivers but bus drivers do need to be more receptive.

Response: Bus Drivers are required to undertake 35 hours in a 5 year period of training to maintain their Certificate of Professional Competence. This does not specify disability awareness training but First certainly provides this opportunity. The latest training has been about hidden disabilities. The Safe Journey cards as referred to in Item 3.6 can also help passengers with disabilities.

- When will there be real time information on Suffolk buses?

Response: SCC is seeking funding to provide real time information. The legislation is not being progressed due to the costs involved.

- Why do only Ipswich Buses stop within the grounds of Ipswich Hospital? It is very difficult for visual impaired people and people with mobility problems to cross roads from the bus stops in Woodbridge Road and Heath Road.

Response: The original plans for the development of the Garrett Anderson Department at the Ipswich Hospital had indicated 4 bus stops but the developers only put in 2. This may be because of the need to encourage paying visitors/patients in the car parks. The 75 service

from Felixstowe and the 68 service from Kesgrave are able to use the 2 bus stops. There is a similar problem at the West Suffolk Hospital but, at the Norfolk and Norwich and Addenbrookes Hospitals, they are able to accommodate many buses accessing the sites. It was noted that Ipswich Buses using the stops at the Ipswich Hospital technically block the stops as their buses end there and wait.

Response: Healthwatch Suffolk do not receive specific comments on bus services to the hospitals, such comments would be included within comments made by patients.

Action: It was agreed that the Suffolk Coastal Disability Forum should contact Ipswich Buses about access for buses at Ipswich hospital.

- What is happening about the merger of Ipswich and Colchester hospitals? People may find that their appointments are now in Colchester as opposed to Ipswich.

Response: It is understood that 'imaginary' journeys have been planned to look at the travel issues. For instance, Leiston to Addenbrookes cannot be done in a day by public transport. If ambulances were used to transport patients between the two sites, then they would need to be licenced as taxis. If a clinic is moved from one hospital to the other, there may be no consultation on these issues as it is assumed patients all travel by car. The bus service between Ipswich and Colchester is not good and Colchester hospital is not near the bus or railway stations. There is already immense pressure on community transport and non-emergency hospital transport. It was noted that the Health Scrutiny Committee is aware of the issues.

Response: It was noted that there is no public body that has control over the siting of supermarkets, hospitals, crematoriums to ensure they are accessible by public transport. If there was joined up thinking about the services, then it would be possible to plan how they can be accessed by public transport.

- Which bus service provides the service between the Felixstowe seafront and the town?

Response: This service is the 77 bus and it runs hourly between the seafront and the town. Margaret will check to see if all the bus stops are now in place for this service. Bus stops are a County Council responsibility. Anyone can ask for an extra stage (stop) as well as for a raised kerb at a stop.

Action: Margaret Morris

- Who has priority for travelling in the designated area for wheelchair users on buses? Is it the wheelchair user or is it people with pushchairs?

Response: Bus drivers need to play an active role in ensuring that the wheelchair space is made available for passengers in wheelchairs, which includes requiring other passengers to move where necessary. Drivers need more powers than they have currently to enable them to do this effectively. It is believed that Ipswich Buses are modifying some buses to take 2 wheelchairs.

- What about the availability of real time screens?

Response: Real time screens are now defunct. People need to have a smart phone to be able to access real time information on bus services.

3.8 The Disability Forum for Suffolk is working with Phil to organise a joint meeting of all stake-holders to improve their understanding of the experiences of people with disabilities using public transport, and buses in particular. This would involve people with disabilities telling their stories of what it is like to use all means of public transport. It was suggested that these could be filmed and used as part of getting the message across to drivers. It was suggested that this could be told as a story by people with disabilities and could cover a variety of issues. Members may be asked to contribute to this.

3.9 Linda thanked Phil and Nigel for their very helpful contributions to the discussion and for explaining the reasons concerning particular issues.

4. Follow up actions from Felixstowe and Woodbridge Action Days.

4.1 Felixstowe:

4.1.1 Following the meeting with the Town Clerk and Helen Greengrass from Felixstowe Forward, the Town Clerk has requested some comments on a possible ramp to replace the very steep ramp currently in use within the Town Hall.

4.1.2 Some issues have been referred for discussion to the Felixstowe Highways Advisory Committee as follows:

- One A Board per business policy;
- To consider closing the shared space area in Hamilton Road to all traffic on Saturdays;

- To consider the impact of electric cars in areas like the Shared Space as they are almost silent and a risk to pedestrians.

4.1.3 There will be a follow up Action Day at Felixstowe on Wednesday, 5th September. This time it is planned to target some particular shops where issues were identified. This includes Marks & Spencer and may also include some of the small shops in Orwell Road which were not visited during the original survey. More information will be made available from the Planning Group.

Action: Planning Group / All to note

4.1.4 In response to a query, Gillian had provided a form on which people who need to access the Changing Places facility at Martello Park in Felixstowe or the facility at the Crescent Road Car Park could apply for a key. She had also ascertained that keys were held at the Refreshment Kiosk in Martello Park and at the Library. It was necessary to check that the notices on the doors of each facility provided the correct information.

Action: Margaret Morris / Gillian Benjamin

4.2 Locations of Accessible Toilets Suffolk Coastal: Following a query as to whether there was a comprehensive list of accessible toilets in Suffolk Coastal, it was noted that whilst the Visit Felixstowe website includes such information in their on line Accessibility Guide no other information could be easily found. Therefore, a list will be compiled. This will include information on accessing the Changing Places facilities and where to buy a key for toilets on the National Key Scheme.

Action: Planning Group

4.3 Woodbridge

4.3.1 No further information had been received from Cllr Caroline Page on the issues of A-Boards and the provision of additional benches in the Thoroughfare. It is also not known if the banding on the black bollards in the Thoroughfare has been carried out.

4.3.2 A joint letter from Suffolk Coastal District Council, Woodbridge Town Council, Choose Woodbridge and Suffolk Coastal Disability Forum, encouraging businesses to become more accessible to disabled people, has been sent out via Suffolk Coastal District Council. No feedback has been received. However, the letter did not seek a response; it is merely indicating good practice.

4.3.3 Members of the Planning Group visited the Deben Leisure Centre just before it re-opened and made a number of comments to Tim Snook, the Leisure Contracts Manager. It was a very helpful visit and the centre was found to be generally accessible. Comments made will be useful when the Planning Group comments on the redevelopment plans for the Leiston Leisure Centre.

4.3.4 In response to a question regarding the number of disabled people in Suffolk Coastal, it was noted that the exact number was not known as no register of disabled people is available. It was noted that, with the data, businesses might become more aware of the spending power of disabled people and more willing to make changes. Suffolk Community Foundation has some information on 'hidden needs' which goes further than the information collected through the Census. However it is not 'town specific'. The Suffolk Observatory also is a source of information. Simon explained that the only people who are registered are those who are blind or partially sighted.

4.3.5 It is hoped that a Changing Places facility can be built in Woodbridge and this is being pursued by the Planning Group.

Action: Planning Group

5. Minutes of the Meeting held on 10th April, 2018

The Minutes were agreed as a correct record.

6. Matters Arising

6.1 Item 3.5 Staff Guide to Translation and Interpretation:

Members' comments on this document have been forwarded to Sara Barratt, Customer Experience Officer, Suffolk Coastal District Council.

7. Updates on Specific Issues

7.1 Disability Focus 2018: It has been confirmed that this event will take place on Tuesday, 23rd October, 2018, at One, Scrivener Drive, Ipswich.

7.2 Report back from the Planning Group

7.2.1 Planning Applications – SCDC: The Suffolk Coastal Disability Forum is now a formal consultee on major Planning Applications and

those where there is public access such as Museums. This work is dealt with by members of the Planning Group.

7.2.2 With regard to the ongoing discussions about Leisure Centres, Simon noted his concerns regarding the cost of attending sessions in the gym. He said that there is a small discount for people with disabilities but not for their essential carer who is there to assist them on the equipment but not use it themselves. The Planning Group would take this forward.

Action: Planning Group

8. Views on Health and Social Care with Healthwatch Suffolk

8.1 In response to a question about Health Checks that are undertaken by GPs, it was noted that Health Checks including checking for dementia can be requested.

8.2 Members noted that some surgeries will provide prescriptions for drugs such as paracetamol but others do not. There is therefore a lack of consistency. This will be followed up.

Action: Kerry Overton / Linda Hoggarth

8.3 Members noted the difficulty of getting appointments at their GP surgeries.

8.4 'My care at home' – the report on people's experiences of home care services in Suffolk is now available on the Healthwatch Suffolk website. It is largely positive but a number of recommendations have been made which, if implemented, would improve the service for those in receipt of home care services.

8.5 Members were reminded that they could sign up to receive the Healthwatch Suffolk newsletter. Because of the requirements of GDPR, It may be necessary to do this again if newsletters are no longer being received.

8.6 The Healthwatch Suffolk Annual General Meeting will take place in Felixstowe in November, 2018. Further details will be made available.

9. Information Round / Any Other Business

9.1 East Anglian Sailing Trust: Simon said that the East Anglian Sailing Trust at Levington is in the running for a grant of £5,000 from the National Lottery Good Causes fund. They are competing against six other charities and need people to vote for them. The link to vote on line is: <http://www.lotterygoodcauses.org.uk/project/east>

10. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will take place on Tuesday, 2nd October, 2018. The venue and timing for the meeting will be confirmed as soon as possible.