

Suffolk Coastal Disability Forum

**Minutes of the Meeting held in the Richards Room, Martlesham
Community Hall, on Tuesday 4 July, 2017, at 2pm**

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

Present:

Linda Hoggarth	Disability Forum for Suffolk (Chair)
Gillian Benjamin	Active Communities Officer, Suffolk Coastal & Waveney District Councils
Simon Dawes	Resident
Paula Hitchings	Leading Lives
Steve Hodgkiss	East Suffolk Association for the Blind
Leigh Horton	Secretary, Disability Advice Service East Suffolk
Paul Kelly	Resident
Liz Mark	Resident and Bawdsey Parish Council
Margaret Morris	Resident (Secretary)
Graham Walker	Avenues East

Guests:

Sam Richardson	Manager, Suffolk Coastal Norse
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Apologies:

Michael Friend	Hollesley Parish Council and Carer
Sylvia Izzard	Resident
Kathleen May	Resident
Maureen Mee	Resident
Stuart Mortimer	Operations Manager, Suffolk Coastal Norse
Jen Morcom	Disability Advice Service East Suffolk
Kerry Overton	Community Development Officer, Healthwatch Suffolk
Don Tricker	Pastel Wellbeing Club, Saxmundham

1. Welcome & Introductions

Linda welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made. She explained why the venue had to be changed.

2. Apologies

The above apologies were received and noted.

3. Bin Collections – Suffolk Coastal Norse

3.1 Linda introduced Sam Richardson, one of the Managers at Suffolk Coastal Norse. She explained that Suffolk Coastal Norse had been invited to the meeting to discuss with Forum members the issues and concerns raised by wheelie bins being left thoughtlessly obstructing the pavements making access difficult or impossible for disabled people,

3.2 Sam explained that Stuart Mortimer, the Operations Manager, for Suffolk Coastal & Waveney Norse, was unable to attend the meeting but that he would take the issues and concerns back to him.

3.3 Members raised specific issues in order to illustrate the difficulties being encountered as follows:

- Simon explained the difficulties he has when out with his guide dog and how the bin collection day, for him, has become a 'don't go out day' as the bins are left blocking the exit from his house. He follows the guidelines: 'Your bin should be left on your property adjacent to the pathway': this is how he leaves his bin but once it is emptied the bin can be left anywhere on the pavement. He pointed out that a Guide Dog will not proceed if it cannot see a way ahead. The obstruction would cause similar problems for wheelchair users and people with pushchairs. This is a problem all over the country, not just in Suffolk Coastal.
- Liz said that in Bawdsey there are similar problems especially with bins being blown over in the wind. There are also many second homes so their owners may not be there to put their bins away for several days.
- In Felixstowe, Margaret said that she puts out her bin on the pavement right next to the wall as she has no driveway. It is sometimes returned in front of and blocking the exit from the gate – or down the road. A number of bins can be left blocking the pathway.
- Photographic evidence has been sent to Suffolk Coastal Norse to make them aware of the fact that bins are being left blocking gates and pavements.
- Some time ago, Guide Dogs offered some education for Suffolk Norse so that operators can be made aware of the impact their

actions have when leaving wheelie bins abandoned on the pavements but this has not been taken up

3.4 This led to the following questions from members:

- What can be done to alleviate the problem when bins are put out correctly but are returned and left causing an obstruction on the pavements? It is a general problem across the SCDC area.
- Does Suffolk Coastal Norse expect their operators to replace bins in the same place as they are taken from?
- Is there training available for the operators? It was noted that it is technically an offence to block the pavement. Guide Dogs would provide training at no cost.

3.5 Sam responded that operators have 'Toolbox Talks' which last 15 minutes, highlight issues and provide hand-outs for training. When a complaint is received, this is investigated and the crews are made aware of the need not to abandon the bins on the pavements causing obstructions for pedestrians.

3.6 He said there are problems with holiday homes where bins can be left out all week.

3.7 In response to a question as to whether there is a time limit for the rounds; Sam said that once operators have finished their rounds they are free to go home. It was considered that perhaps the speed at which they worked contributed to the problem.

3.8 Sam said that Suffolk Coastal Norse does respond to specific requests such as door collections for people who cannot get their bins to the kerb side. Exception Forms are available for people to complete and there is a good uptake of that.

3.9 Linda will provide Suffolk Coastal Norse with a link to Helen Sismore from Guide Dogs so that appropriate training and information can be given that will help operators understand the need to keep pavements as clear as possible.

Action: Linda Hoggarth

3.10 There was a general discussion on recycling including glass collections as well as bins being emptied on alternate weeks. Sam advised that a new leaflet on recycling is coming out soon but it was unlikely that Suffolk Coastal Norse would implement a kerbside glass collection service. The difficulties for disabled people in getting to

recycling services were noted and in particular the danger of broken glass by the bottle banks.

3.11 It was felt that residents should also be reminded of the importance of putting out their bins so they do not obstruct the pavements and to take them back in as soon as possible after they have been emptied. They could be reminded of this at the same time as collection dates are notified to them. Sam would ask Suffolk Coastal Norse to consider this.

Action: Sam Richardson

3.12 Linda thanked Sam for attending the meeting and responding to the issues raised. She summarised that members can continue to raise individual complaints with Suffolk Coastal Norse, including the provision of photographic evidence. Sam said that Suffolk Coastal Norse would consider providing some training/education for their operators from Guide Dogs, would respond to individual complaints and consider providing more information to residents and operators about the importance of ensuring bins do not block pavements.

Action: Sam Richardson

4. Woodbridge Action Day

4.1 The Woodbridge Action Day took place as planned on the 28th June and it was pleasing to note that there had been of good turnout of members and our numbers were boosted by members of the Suffolk Coalition of Disabled People. Linda thanked everyone for their efforts.

4.2 Comments included:

- Inadequate and poorly maintained paving;
- Vehicles driving through the Thoroughfare despite there being, in Theory, very little access permitted;
- Plain black bollards to prevent parking on the pavements, which need highlighting with a coloured stripe;
- Some shops and cafés do have portable ramps, provided they are requested. However these are rarely advertised;
- Some businesses have just a small threshold making wheelchair access difficult and which apparently cannot be changed because it is in a Conservation Area;
- There are steep steps to some of the businesses, such as access to the osteopath;

- The hearing loop at the East of England Co-operative Store is only available at one check-out. It was agreed to check why there is only one.

Action: Linda Hoggarth

- It was felt that about 50% of businesses in the Thoroughfare were accessible.
- The route from the Hamblin Road Car Park, through the Turban Centre to the Thoroughfare is challenging;
- There were fewer A-Boards than usual which may have been due to the fact that there was some publicity prior to our visit. Businesses are reminded that they are only allowed one board;
- One ATM was at a good height for a wheelchair user but they could not enter their PIN confidentially;
- The pavement in Quay Street is very narrow – The Mayor would not be pushed down there in the wheelchair!
- Portable ramps are not always the solution as they can be too steep and they can be dangerous if they have no upstands to prevent the wheels going off the sides;
- Getting to the Riverside Walk from the Avenue remains hazardous and Sylvia has reported that her correspondence with Suffolk County Council continues. The Area Rights of Way Manager, Suffolk County Council has visited the site and agrees that the surface here is poor;
- Signage could be improved to locate the Riverside Walk;
- The amount of car parking for blue badge holders could be improved;
- On the day of our survey, the parking for blue badge holders in the Station Car Park was unusable due to flooding.

4.3 The Mayor has been thanked for coming out with us and taking part in the survey.

4.4 The next stage is to draft the report, once all contributions have been received.

Action: Planning Group

4.5 Members thought it would be interesting to invite SCDC Conservation Officer, Robert Scrimgeour, to the next meeting in order to understand the restrictions imposed by much of the Woodbridge Town Centre being in a Conservation Area.

Action: Planning Group

5. Minutes from the meeting held on 4th April 2017

The Minutes of the meeting held on 4th April 2017 were agreed as correct.

6. Matters Arising

6.1 Item 3 Housing for Disabled People including Supported Housing:

6.1.1 Following the discussion at the last meeting, when Paul Little, Head of Strategic Commissioning, Adult & Community Services, Suffolk County Council, was unable to attend, some questions were sent to him and he responded as follows:

- With regard to Disabled Facilities Grants, a disabled applicant requires an assessment from an Occupational Therapist as part of the process. Are these Occupational Therapists still employed by Suffolk County Council or is this a service that has been contracted out? If it is the latter, please could you explain how this works and why it is that people still seem to have to wait many weeks for the assessments to be carried out delaying their applications?

Paul replied: 'For adults, the OT assessments are part of the contract for the Home Improvement Agency service provided by Orbit Housing. This assessment forms part of a total service, which includes housing advice if needed and the contracting and management of grant funded adaptation work. The contract with Orbit started in May, 2016 and inherited long waiting lists which SCC continues to work with the provider on to increase the flow of cases through the system. Improvements have been made, with a 45% increase in OT assessments completed in the last quarter of this financial year for the Suffolk Coastal area. There are still delays and SCC is continuing to work with all concerned to get through the waiting lists as soon as possible with the resources available. SCC also employs OTs who are more focused on wider rehabilitation and reablement work.'

- Could you confirm that tenants in Housing Association properties have to claim Disabled Facilities Grants for major adaptations and provide an explanation for this?

Paul replied: 'There are different arrangements for different housing associations, but in principle the same process would apply where a grant is needed (i.e. through the Home Improvement Agency).

- With regard to the support for older and disabled tenants, please could you explain the fact that tenants of Housing Associations are being advised that SCC has cut the funding for the support so that these tenants no longer receive visits from wardens, etc.?

Paul replied: 'Grant levels have been reduced in comparison with historic levels, but it is disingenuous to say this is the cause of changes in sheltered housing as this represents a small subsidy not the entirety of funding. It is a complex picture.'

6.2 Item 4 East Suffolk House Item:

6.2.1 No further response has been received from Mark Speller, Building Manager, regarding the concerns raised with him.

6.2.2 Liz reported that she attended a meeting at East Suffolk House recently and when she was leaving there was no-one at Reception to open the doors leading to the parking for blue badge holders so it was necessary to leave by the main entrance and walk all the way round the outside of the building to reach her car.

6.2.3 An update will be sought from Mark Speller.

Action: Linda Hoggarth

6.3 Item 7.1 Parking Issues:

6.3.1 There remain a number of concerns regarding vehicles being parked on pavements, thus causing obstructions. Guide Dogs are currently campaigning against this. Simon had been at a Parliamentary Reception organised by Guide Dogs and had spoken to a number of MPs about the issue. Guide Dogs has also organised a petition that will be presented to the Government on the 12th July.

6.3.2 The following link provides information on what Guide Dogs has done so far. There is a video featuring Simon available here.

<https://www.guidedogs.org.uk/supportus/campaigns/streets-ahead/pavement-parking#.WWnPslKWzDc>

6.3.3 A Parking on Pavement leaflet is attached to the minutes.

6.3.4 Guide Dogs is also running a campaign against Street Clutter – Streets Ahead which looks at A-Boards, café furniture, etc. More information is available on their website.

<https://www.guidedogs.org.uk/supportus/campaigns/streets-ahead/street-clutter#.WWnQ3IKWzDc>

6.3.5 Paul is concerned that parking on pavements was not being enforced correctly at present. He heard that SCDC had taken over responsibility for on-street parking though Margaret had heard this would not happen until 2018. This will need to be clarified.

6.4 Item 7.2 Footpath in Woodbridge: As referred to in Item 4.2.

7. Updates on Specific Issues.

7.1 Disability Focus: This will take place on the 24th October, 2017 at Suffolk One, with booking information available from the end of July. It is open to everyone with an interest in disability.

7.2 Felixstowe Action Day: Nothing further has been heard from Helen Greengrass in respect of the leaflet and the provision of on line information to assist disabled residents and visitors. The Planning Group would follow this up.

Action: Planning Group

7.3 Report back from the Planning Group:

7.3.1 As a result of concerns highlighted after the last meeting of the Forum, the Planning Group has drafted a Good Practice Guide regarding the way meetings are organised and run and the expectations of members. This was discussed in detail and it was proposed by Liz Mark, seconded by Steve Hodgkiss, that this be approved. Members agreed unanimously. The Good Practice Guide will be distributed with the minutes.

Action: Planning Group

7.3.2 Issues remain regarding the Station Road Car Park and the request for an additional bench in Hamblin Road Car Park.

8. Views on Health and Social Care with Healthwatch Suffolk

8.1 Kerry Overton, Community Development Officer, Healthwatch Suffolk had submitted a written update and this will be distributed with the minutes.

8.2 Linda reminded members that 'About Me' could now be downloaded from a number of websites including the Disability Forum for Suffolk, the Disability Advice Service (East Suffolk), the Suffolk Coastal Disability Forum webpage on SCDC's site, and the Ipswich Hospital. 'About Me' is a version of a health passport that can be used by any person with a disability or a long term condition so that they can share information with health and care professionals involved in their care. Steve would send some hard copies of 'About Me' to Liz for her use.

Action: Steve Hodgkiss

9. Information Round / Any other Business

9.1 Leading Lives: Paula said that one of her service users had gone to his surgery to have his ears syringed. However, the surgery no longer does this and suggested he go to a private clinic – the cost was £40 for one ear and £60 for two. As this service user is on benefits, this is not affordable. Paula wanted to know if this was the same for all surgeries/health centres. Linda will follow this up via the Suffolk Disability & Health Action Group.

Action: Linda Hoggarth

9.2 Disability Advice Service (East Suffolk): Leigh said that the Advice Service needs three trustees. Ideally these would be people from a wide range of backgrounds. Further information is on Disability Advice Service (East Suffolk) website.

9.3 Bus Service to Ipswich Hospital: Paul said that First Eastern Counties have introduced the No. 68 service from Kesgrave to the Ipswich Hospital between 10am and 2.30pm. He queried why this was just a Kesgrave service and it was thought that the Kesgrave Town Council were involved in setting it up. Members felt that they would like to pursue this with First Eastern Counties, and possibly the Ipswich Hospital.

Action: Planning Group

Members noted that the Park and Ride Service now extends to Rendlesham.

9.4 East Suffolk Association for the Blind: Exhibition: Steve advised that there is to be an Equipment and Information Exhibition on the 27th October, 2017, from 10am to 3pm, at Woodbridge Community Centre. There will be a number of businesses/organisations present that provide equipment or services to visually impaired people.

9.5 Footpath Access to Tesco's Martlesham: Simon reported problems with a footpath that enables access to Tesco's as it is often full of rubbish from the Wickes building site.

9.6 Suffolk Axis: Leaflets were distributed providing information that Suffolk Axis (formerly Mid Suffolk Axis) is now offering services to disabled people in the whole of Suffolk and has some free sessions available.

10. Date of the Next Meeting

This will take place on Tuesday, 3rd October, 2017, at 1pm, at East Suffolk House, Riduna Park, Station Road, Melton, Woodbridge, IP12 1RT.