

Suffolk Coastal Disability Forum

**Minutes of the Meeting held in the
Council Chamber, Suffolk Coastal District Council Offices, Woodbridge,
on Tuesday 4th October, 2016, at 1pm**

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

Present:

Linda Hoggarth	Disability Forum for Suffolk (Chair)
Christa Campbell	Learning Disability Project, Lighthouse Women's Aid
Leigh Horton	Disability Advice Service, East Suffolk
Sylvia Izzard	Resident
Paul Kelly	Resident
Liz Mark	Resident and Bawdsey Parish Council
Kathleen May	Resident
Margaret Morris	Resident
Anita Moxley	Action for Blind People / RNIB
Kerry Overton	Community Development Officer, Healthwatch Suffolk

Guests:

Darren Knight	Head of Customer Services, Suffolk Coastal & Waveney District Councils
Peter Revell	Programme Director, SCDC Accommodation Programme
Lynn Butler	Manager, CATS (Coastal Accessible Transport Service)

Apologies:

Gillian Benjamin	Active Communities Officer, Suffolk Coastal & Waveney District Councils
Moyra Bevilacqua	Resident
Michael Friend	Resident and Hollesley Parish Council
Steve Hodgkiss	East Suffolk Association for the Blind
Maureen Mee	Resident
Graham Walker	Avenues East

1. Welcome

Linda welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made.

2. Apologies

The above apologies were received and noted.

3. Discussion with Darren Knight, Head of Customer Services, Suffolk Coastal & Waveney District Councils

3.1 Linda welcomed Darren Knight, Head of Customer Services, Suffolk Coastal & Waveney District Councils, to the meeting and invited him to update members on specific issues.

3.2 Darren said that he was pleased to be invited. He began with an update on the front facing services being provided at Woodbridge Library.

3.3 He reported the following feedback:

- There is an increase in the number of people using Woodbridge Library and overall their response to the service provided is positive;
- The opening hours of the Library have increased and this has been welcomed;
- There are still a couple of areas that need to be improved – the signage and the arrangements for privacy for customers;
- There have been no formal complaints about the parking arrangements though members of the Forum reported that difficulties had been encountered;
- It was not known how many people with disabilities are using the services at the Library.

3.4 Darren is happy to respond to individual queries and complaints raised by customers.

3.5 In response to a question regarding the accessibility of front facing services at the new Council Offices, Darren explained that the offices have not been designed for the public to drop in for generalist advice. For members of the public wishing to meet with specific council officers, it will be possible to telephone them or make an appointment to see them at the new offices. These will be fully accessible to people with disabilities.

3.6 Members observed that people accessing the services at Woodbridge Library have to pay for parking and that it is difficult to access the space for blue badge holders.

Action: Darren would arrange for the feedback to be analysed to ascertain how many customers with disabilities are using the front line services provided at the libraries.

Action: Darren would follow up a member's specific complaint about parking at Woodbridge Library.

3.7 Members noted the difficulty of accessing online services particularly in relation to Universal Credit, for some people. However, it was anticipated that Universal Credit would be introduced in Suffolk Coastal in November, 2016 – it was already in operation in Waveney.

3.8 Members were advised that information on Universal Credit was available online. Leigh said that the East Suffolk Disability Advice Service can give advice and information as they are aware that many people cannot access online services.

3.9 Peter said that, for most services, people can use those that are available in the libraries in Felixstowe and Woodbridge, or people can telephone or make an appointment to meet a specific officer in the new Council Offices.

3.10 Darren offered to come to the next meeting of the Suffolk Coastal Disability Forum to explain what is happening in relation to Universal Credit. He said that there were a number of challenges to overcome.

3.11 Darren also explained that the councils are considering introducing e-billing for the payment of council tax. He has spoken about this at the Waveney Disability Forum and members there are willing to pilot this. There is currently an incentive of a prize draw for people signing up. E-billing saves the council £1.75 per household.

3.12 Darren referred to his previous discussions with the Forum regarding 'mystery shoppers'. The opportunity to be trained as a 'mystery shopper' was still available and members were invited to consider becoming one. Darren would send the information to Linda for distribution to members. Waveney & Suffolk Coastal District Councils are the first authority to use 'mystery shoppers'.

Action: Darren would attend a future meeting to explain Universal Credit.

Action: Darren would ensure the information on becoming a 'mystery shopper' is sent to Linda for distribution to members.

4. Update on Suffolk Coastal District Councils' New Offices

4.1 Peter Revell, Programme Director, Suffolk Coastal District Council's Accommodation Programme, was welcomed to the meeting and invited to update members.

4.2 He said that Suffolk Coastal District Council had taken ownership of the new building and were now at the stage of fitting out the offices. However, as yet, there was no firm date for moving in but it was hoped that this would be in November. The building has been named as East Suffolk House.

4.3 The new offices would have a Conference Room as opposed to a Council Chamber and this large room would be used for a range of meetings, hopefully including our Forum meetings. The furniture will be better and easier to use than in the current Council Chamber.

4.4 The offices will be open during usual office opening hours.

4.5 There have been problems in respect of installing IT and there is a delay because BT Open Reach has to dig up the road in order to put in the fibre cables.

4.6 The new offices fully comply with Building Regulations.

4.7 In respect of the travel plan, discussions continue regarding the introduction of a shuttle bus service. Staff will be encouraged to use a sustainable means of transport.

4.8 Members expressed concern regarding evacuation plans in the event of an emergency, including the siting of the refuge and the use of evac chairs.

4.9 It was suggested that the council puts information into Coastline regarding where people should go for generalist issues and how they can access officers for specialist issues.

Action: Peter Revell

5. Connecting Communities

5.1 Lynn Butler, Manager, CATS, was welcomed to the meeting and invited to talk about the Connecting Communities service in Suffolk Coastal.

5.2 Lynn explained the new contracting arrangements. The county is divided into seven contracting areas, one for each District or Borough Council. A single telephone number is available for customer enquiries.

5.3 CATS has been awarded the contract for the Suffolk Coastal area, and the Felixstowe area is subcontracted to FACTS (Felixstowe Accessible Community Transport Service). CATS also delivers services in Framlingham and Woodbridge.

5.4 Funding for community transport, via these contracts, has been reduced by Suffolk County Council and will result in a 50% cut over the next 5 years.

5.5 CATS runs Section 22 services using paid drivers but these are expensive to run. As a result CATS does not offer as many services as previously. Full details of services can be found at www.cats-paws.co.uk.

5.6 The Door to Door Minibus uses volunteer drivers and CATS are continually looking for volunteer drivers for this vehicle and also those who are willing to drive and use their own cars.

5.7 The Community Car journeys are charged at 45p per mile, which is the rate paid to volunteer drivers. Whilst it was thought that all the Connecting Communities services charged the same rates, it was noted that some areas charge passengers 54p per mile and also a membership fee. The fares on the Section 22 services are set by Suffolk County Council.

5.8 Potential users of the service are advised to telephone the single number and will be advised of the best service to use. Suffolk County Council do advertise the services and produce leaflets but this does not always work for the individual contractors.

5.9 Services are available from 7am to 7pm. The organisation is run as 'not for profit'. Bus passes can be used on some of the services. However, it is possible to apply for travel vouchers for use instead on the door to door minibus and community car journeys.

5.10 It is hard to keep these services running in a rural area, and sometimes there will only be a few people on some routes. It is intended to link people to regular bus services by taking them to bus stops.

5.11 CATS are able to meet 85 – 90% of requests for journeys. This equates to 500+ passengers per week. It is possible to hire the minibuses for community use.

5.12 Lynn was thanked for providing members with this information and the Forum extended their good wishes for the success of the service.

6. Felixstowe Action Day – Tuesday 5th July

6.1 It was agreed that the Felixstowe Action Day was extremely useful. A detailed report was prepared and has been circulated to all members and to Felixstowe Forward.

6.2 The Mayor was thanked for her contribution to the day and her participation was featured in the local press.

6.3 Helen Greengrass, Felixstowe Forward, is keen to meet with Linda and Margaret to talk through the report and its recommendations.

6.4 The Planning Group will follow up the actions arising from this piece of work. Consideration will be given to organising a similar event in Woodbridge in 2017.

6.5 Linda thanked all members who gave their time and expertise to make this a successful venture.

7. Minutes of the Meeting held on 6th April, 2016

The Minutes of the meeting held on the 6th April were agreed as a correct record.

8. Matters Arising

8.1 Items 7.8 Issues with Wheelie Bins, 7.10 Car Parks in Woodbridge: It was noted that the Planning Group continues to follow up the issues raised but it does take a considerable amount of persistence and patience to make progress.

8. Updates on Specific Issues

8.1 Disability Focus 2016: This is an annual event for people with disabilities, their family carers, and representatives of disability organisations to discuss their issues and concerns with representatives from statutory organisations in Suffolk. This year's event is on

Tuesday, 25th October, from 10am to 3pm, at One, Scrivener Drive, Ipswich. There is no charge for attending and lunch is provided. However it is not possible to meet travel costs of those attending. There are still places available.

8.2 Meeting with Cllr Goldson: This meeting took place on the 8th July, 2016, and the Minutes of that Meeting have been distributed and agreed. Cllr Goldson has investigated some of the concerns raised and will be following these up with colleagues in the coming months. He offered to return to talk to members again and it was felt that our discussion at a future meeting should relate more to health and social care which is his responsibility in the Cabinet. It was agreed that this would be useful.

Action: Planning Group

8.4 Footpath in Woodbridge: Sylvia provided additional information on the footpath in the Avenue, Woodbridge, which is difficult to walk on. It is owned by Eversons Boatyard who are trying to sell their whole site. It would cost £5,000 to repair. SCC had followed this up immediately after our meeting with Cllr Goldson but no further information had been received following their initial enquiries. Linda had also raised this at the Deben Estuary Access Group and been advised that such issues need to be reported directly via SCC's website. She asked Sylvia to do this as her local knowledge would ensure the right information was being given.

Action: Sylvia Izzard

9. Views on Health and Social Care with Healthwatch Suffolk.

9.1 Kerry gave details of the Healthwatch Suffolk Annual General Meeting, at Elmswell, on the 27th October, which will focus on mental health, particularly relating to young people. People wishing to attend need to register with Healthwatch Suffolk.

9.2 Kerry provided copies of the revamped 'feedback' card which now meets the Accessibility Standard and is therefore easier for everyone to complete.

9.3 Healthwatch Suffolk has now relocated to Hill View Business Park in Claydon.

9.4 Information is being collected about domiciliary care services. It is proving difficult to contact people in receipt of services as these are

often people who did not attend groups or organisations. Kerry asked that anyone who wanted to share information with her about domiciliary care services should contact her directly.

9.5 In response to a question about an expected report on 'Footcare', Kerry said that this has not yet been published.

9.6 Maternity services have improved following some research undertaken with mothers and their birthing partners.

9.7 Paul said that the Prosthetic Clinic at the Ipswich Hospital has been closed and relocated to Eye or to Norwich, both of which were more difficult to get to. Linda would raise this via the Suffolk Disability & Health Action Group.

10. Information Round / Any Other Business

10.1 Wheelyboat: Members were advised that the Woolverstone Project now has a boat that will allow six wheelchair users and their carers to enjoy sailing. Further information is available on 01394 386933.

10.2 Guests: Members asked that guests have name plates in front of them on the tables to help them remember their names and titles.

11. Dates of Meetings in 2017

These were provisionally agreed as 10th January, 4th April, 4th July, and 3rd October, subject to venue availability.