

Suffolk Coastal Disability Forum

**Minutes of the Meeting held in the
Council Chamber, Suffolk Coastal District Council Offices, Woodbridge,
on Wednesday, 6th April, 2016, at 1pm**

SCDC: Suffolk Coastal District Council, WDC: Waveney District Council

Present:

Linda Hoggarth	Disability Forum for Suffolk (Chair)
Gillian Benjamin	Active Communities Officer, Suffolk Coastal & Waveney District Councils
Simon Daws	Resident
Stuart Ellis	Resident
Michael Friend	Resident and Hollesley Parish Council
Steve Hodgkiss	East Suffolk Association for the Blind
Paul Kelly	Resident
Liz Mark	Resident and Bawdsey Parish Council
Kathleen May	Resident
Maureen Mee	Resident
Margaret Morris	Resident
Kerry Overton	Community Development Officer, Healthwatch Suffolk

Apologies:

Moyra Bevilacqua	Resident
Linda Layton	Resident / Family Carer
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. How to make our views known on Health and Social Care – Healthwatch Suffolk

3.1 Kerry explained that she had asked for this item to be on the agenda as it was important to use the knowledge and experience of Forum members to capture the issues affecting the health and social care of people and to influence services provided within Suffolk Coastal.

3.2 She said that Healthwatch Suffolk is an independent watchdog now in its fourth year. Prior to that, Healthwatch Suffolk's watchdog role was undertaken by Suffolk Link. Its offices are now based at the Age UK Offices, at Hillview Business Park, Claydon. Healthwatch has statutory powers to bring about change and monitor services.

3.3 People are able to provide both positive and negative feedback on health and social care services such as GP surgeries, Hospitals, and Residential Care Homes. This feedback can be used to address any problems being experienced. If an organisation complains on behalf of its members, it is recorded as one incident. However, if there are a number of similar complaints from individuals and organisations, then a trend is identified and action can be taken.

3.4 Kerry said that it is really important to know when people with disabilities have bad experiences. Healthwatch Suffolk wants to empower Forums such as this one to engage in providing feedback.

3.5 Examples of the problems people with disabilities encounter are:

- Having information in an appropriate format such as Easy Read, or using a specific font, or printing black text on yellow paper;
- Doctors relying on electronic message boards to alert patients to their appointments;
- Letters and forms are not offered in large print;
- Assumptions that people with disabilities always have support at home or when they go for appointments.

3.6 It was noted that all organisations have to make 'reasonable adjustments' to enable people with disabilities to access their services.

3.7 At present, the Forum picks up health and social care issues on an ad hoc basis and refers these to appropriate organisations but does not always refer these to Healthwatch Suffolk as well.

3.8 Kerry noted that some members are members of Healthwatch Suffolk but they said that they did not necessarily receive very much communication from Healthwatch. She will check this.

3.9 Members were invited to raise any particular issues, as follows:

- There are issues for people who are cared for in the community. For example, catheter users can only have one at a time, with the next having to be ordered on prescription some time in advance;

- People using continence products report that these are of poorer quality and issued in strictly limited quantities;
- Eligibility to be able to qualify for hospital transport;
- Access to GP surgeries and pharmacies: it took many months to progress having a buzzer fitted to summon assistance with the doors at Framfield House; the surgery at Little St John Street would be vastly improved by installing automatic doors;

3.10 People tend to comment through recognised groups such as the Forum – there would be more proof of need if individuals fed back their concerns individually as well.

3.11 Both the Care Quality Commission and Healthwatch Suffolk can carry out inspections when there is sufficient evidence of problems. Healthwatch Suffolk can demand a response to their findings from statutory services.

3.12 Healthwatch Suffolk also carries out specific reviews on services, for example a review is to be undertaken on diabetic foot care and there had previously been a review about getting to health services.

3.13 It was agreed that the Forum should become a member organisation of Healthwatch Suffolk in order to receive up to date news and information and that, in future, Health and Social Care should be a standard agenda item both for Healthwatch Suffolk to share its work and for members to feedback issues of concern. Members noted that if an issue was urgent, there was no need to wait for a Forum meeting but to report the issue to Healthwatch Suffolk via their contact system.

Action: Linda Hoggarth

3.14 Healthwatch Suffolk can be contacted via its website, www.healthwatchsuffolk.co.uk or Tel: 01449 703949, or by completing the feedback form 'Your Voice Counts' and returning this to Healthwatch via freepost.

Action: All to note

4. Planning the Felixstowe Action Day

4.1 The Felixstowe Action Day is to take place during the day on Tuesday, 5th July, 2016, in place of the usual two hour meeting. All members are invited to take part in this.

4.2 Points agreed were:

- The purpose is about checking access to shops, businesses, the beach, and the public seafront gardens;
- Margaret will find out if the beach buggy is available;
- The end point of the day would be at approximately 3pm, at Felixstowe Library as it is near a car park with accessible toilets. Margaret will check on the 'Room at the Top' availability so that members can discuss their findings;
- The Planning Group will prepare a checklist and give Margaret's mobile as a contact for the day;
- People can start their survey from wherever is most convenient to them;
- The checklists can be sent back to Gillian as a starting point for collating the information gathered;
- Margaret will provide hard copies of the checklist on the day;
- For those members who are not available on the 5th July or who would like to do some advance work, the checklist can be made available prior to the date;
- The Mayor of Felixstowe should be invited and possibly invited to use a self-propelling wheelchair to access some of the areas. Cllr Mike Deacon should be invited and it is hoped to use special glasses to allow people to experience visual impairment;
- Felixstowe Forward would be asked to advertise this via Visit Felixstowe and Margaret will contact local media.
- Steve noted that members of the East Suffolk Association for the Blind would be happy to join in.

Actions:

- **Margaret Morris to arrange use of the beach buggy; book 'Room at the Top' at the Library; photocopy the survey checklist; invite the Felixstowe Mayor; contact Felixstowe Forward; and contact the press and local media.**
- **Planning Group to prepare a checklist and to draw up a timetable for the day.**

5. Publicity Leaflet

5.1 The draft leaflet had been circulated for comment prior to the meeting. Members welcomed the leaflet and felt that it met the purpose of explaining the work of the Forum and encouraging people to come to meetings.

5.2 Members agreed the draft as being ready for printing and thanked Gillian for all her work in putting the leaflet together.

5.3 It was noted that very few people now read braille – some have speaking software. A ‘text only’ version would be required for organisations such as the East Suffolk Association for the Blind and also for the Forum’s pages on the SCDC website.

5.4 It was agreed that the leaflet size of A5 was appropriate.

5.5 Leaflets should be available to give out on the Felixstowe Action Day and also distributed to each District Councillor.

5.6 Members pointed out that a Forum poster would be useful to put up in GP surgeries, libraries, local shops, and so on. Gillian will see whether she can create a poster using the leaflet as a basis.

5.7 It was agreed that SCDC Print Room should be asked to print the leaflet, copies can be paid for when printed.

Action: Gillian Benjamin

6. Minutes of the Meeting held on 5th January, 2016

The Minutes of the meeting held on the 5th January, 2016, were agreed as a correct record.

7. Matters Arising

7.1 Item 3 Discussion with Darren Knight, Head of Customer Services, SCDC & WDC

7.1.1 Following our meeting, Darren had asked the following to be noted:

- “Item 3.3 Riduna Park had not been designed for customer drop in. (There were) limited affordable options for front facing customer services.”
- “Item 3.7 I would review the parking situation within 12 months or before based on feedback where there are issues.”

7.1.2 Members noted the continuing difficulties of parking in the Oak Lane Car Park near the Woodbridge Library, including access to the payment machine and the slope of the car park.

7.1.3 It was agreed to check with Darren as to whether any monitoring of the car park at Oak Lane was taking place.

Action: Linda Hoggarth

7.2 Item 4 Planning in Suffolk Coastal:

7.2.1 Linda had e-mailed our steer on the type of applications that the Forum would wish to comment on to Liz Beighton, Development Management Team Leader (South Area) but had not had a response. She would resend the email and copy in to Philip Ridley, Head of Service.

7.2.2 A member commented on charges being imposed for requesting advice and also for planning applications for facilities for disabled people and this would be clarified.

Action: Linda Hoggarth

Post Meeting Note: In response to our query, Liz Beighton has responded that “Regarding application fees, there is no fee if the application is specifically for the benefit of a disabled person, i.e. a ramp to the front or an extension to facilitate a ground floor bedroom/shower room. Regarding pre-application advice, there is a charge and this is £42 for householder applications. The reason we charge for this, is that this service is a discretionary service that the Council offers the public and is a service that can also be provided by external bodies and is also available on the website. This is a function which a large number of councils are charging for in order to cover the costs of providing this service.”

7.3 Item 5 A Guide to using Suffolk Coastal District Council car parks for Blue Badge Holders

7.3.1 Linda advised that the final draft had not yet been sent to her but that she had been in contact with Sue Keeble who had asked about the number of leaflets required.

7.3.2 After some discussion, members thought that a quantity of 2,000 hard copies should be made available for libraries, tourist information centres, and GP surgeries. Members noted that it was important to have a text to speech facility and to have an e-mailable version.

7.3.3 It was hoped the leaflet could be available for the 5th July.

7.4 Item 7.1 Ipswich Hospital NHS Trust: Linda reported that Nick Hulme, Chief Executive, has talked to the bus companies as he promised about more buses being able to access the grounds of the hospital but whilst he can raise issues he does not have control of their plans or resources. All visiting at the Ipswich Hospital is now 11am to 8pm and open visiting is available for all family carers. The Hospital was one of the first 100 hospitals to sign up to John's Campaign - the right to stay in hospital with people with dementia.

7.5 Item 7.2 Riduna Park:

7.5.1 Unfortunately Peter Revell, Programme Director, SCDC Accommodation Programme, was unable to attend the meeting but had responded to questions asked of him as follows:

- There is no fixed date for the new offices at Riduna Park to be open but it is expected to be during the Autumn of 2016;
- The Conference Chamber is on the first floor and it is expected that the evacuation of people with mobility impairments is to be via Evac Chairs. The evacuation plans will be developed in more detail once SCDC has possession of the building. Members noted that the lift is not fire proof and could not be used in an emergency;
- There is ongoing consideration of the parking arrangements but the number of accessible spaces will at least meet the regulatory requirements;
- There should not be any gradients within the building. Externally it is a flat surface with no gravel and no stepped access into the building. There is an accessible toilet with each toilet block i.e. one on each floor. Details of the sizes and layouts of toilets are not yet available;
- The Transport Plan is currently being worked on and the first approved drafts should be ready about the end of May.

7.5.2 Peter is happy to attend a future meeting and it was agreed to invite him to the October meeting.

7.5.3 Moyra is checking on the improvements to the provision for SCDC's front facing services at Woodbridge Library including the provision of confidential areas.

Action: Moyra Bevilacqua

7.6 Item 8.2 Access Issues: Margaret reported that she had been assured that the loop system in the Council Chamber is working properly.

7.7 Item 7.5 Future Meeting: The meeting with Cllr Colin Noble, Leader of Suffolk County Council, has now been agreed for Friday, 8th July, from 1pm to 3pm, in the Council Chamber, SCDC. There will be no fixed agenda but a reminder will be sent nearer the time.

Action: All to note

7.8 Item 9.1 Issues with Wheelie Bins: The issue of refuse collectors leaving bins to cause obstructions to pavements will be followed up now that the roads concerned have been identified.

Action: Planning Group

7.9 Item 9.3: Deben Pool, Woodbridge: The Planning Group is working on the issue of access to swimming pools.

7.10 Item 9.6 Car Parks in Woodbridge:

7.10.1 In respect of the provision of an additional bench at the Hamblin Road Car Park in Woodbridge, further investigation is required.

7.10.2 It is not clear who owns the Station Car Park and who would be responsible for solving the drainage issues near the accessible parking.

8. Updates on Specific Issues

8.1 Disability Focus 2016: Linda reported that Disability Focus is likely to be held on 25th October, 2016, at One, Scrivener Drive, Ipswich.

8.2 Deben Estuary Access Group: Linda said that it was not always possible for her to attend meetings of this Group but she had been asked what disabled people would need in terms of accessibility on a river walk. Members responded that:

- The provision of benches would be useful;
- Paths need to be wide enough to accommodate large wheelchairs, without steep gradients and with a suitable hard packed surface. (It was noted that an upgraded path from Snape to Aldeburgh now has loose hoggin which is preventing wheelchair access);
- The path at Felixstowe Ferry from the Sailing Club towards the Martello Tower would be suitable if the path had a better surface;

- The walk from Broom Hill to Kyson Point is dangerous as the surface has been washed away and has not been replaced.

9. Information Round / Any Other Business

9.1 Corn Exchange, Ipswich: It was noted that the Ipswich Corn Exchange is a difficult building to access as there are a number of lifts, which are accessed via different entrances, to negotiate to gain access to the upper floors. Signage could be improved.

9.2 Housing Development: A member noted that a housing development in Woodbridge has few small houses or bungalows and no affordable homes, making it difficult for people who want to downsize from larger homes. This was agreed as a future agenda item.

Action: Planning Group

9.2 Priority Services Registers: A member explained that people with disabilities can sign up to their energy provider's Priority Services Register which would enable them to get extra help and support. Similarly, people with disabilities can sign up to having their bins collected from and returned to their homes if it is difficult for them to move their bins to the kerbside.

10. Dates of Next Meetings

- There will be a meeting in Felixstowe on **Tuesday, 5th July, 2016**, when members will be checking access to a range of facilities in the town and on the seafront. Details will be finalised by the Planning Group and then circulated to all members.

- There will be a meeting on **Friday, 8th July, 2016**, in the Council Chamber, Suffolk Coastal District Council Offices, Melton Hill, Woodbridge, from 12.45pm, for a 1pm to 3pm meeting. This meeting is specifically arranged to discuss disability issues with Cllr Noble, Leader of Suffolk County Council.

- There will be a meeting on **Tuesday, 4th October, 2016**, in the Council Chamber, Suffolk Coastal District Offices, Melton Hill, Woodbridge from 12.45pm, for a 1 pm to 3 pm meeting.

Action: All to note