

Suffolk Coastal Disability Forum

**Minutes of the Meeting held in the
Council Chamber, Suffolk Coastal District Council Offices, Woodbridge,
on Tuesday, 7th April, 2015 at 1pm**

SCC: Suffolk County Council; SCDC – Suffolk Coastal District Council

Present:

Linda Hoggarth	Suffolk Consortium of User Led Organisations & Individual Disabled People (Chair)
Gillian Benjamin	Active Communities Officer, Suffolk Coastal & Waveney District Councils
Moira Bevilacqua	Resident
Angie Brett	Papworth Trust
Michael Friend	Resident and Hollesley Parish Councillor
Wendy Hall	Age UK Suffolk - Independence Advisor
Paul Kelly	Resident
Simon King	Community Development Officer, Healthwatch Suffolk
Linda Layton	Resident / Family Carer
Liz Mark	Resident and Bawdsey Parish Council
Maureen Mee	Resident
Cllr Margaret Morris	Resident and Suffolk Coastal District Council
Cllr Caroline Page	Suffolk County Council
Jacqui Pearson	Age UK Suffolk – Dementia Adviser
Mandy Schlarb	Papworth Trust
Don Tricker	Pastel
Graham Walker	Avenues East

Apologies:

Alex Catling	Sensing Change
Jean Cook	Leading Lives
Stuart Ellis	Resident - Melton
Steve Hodgkiss	East Suffolk Association for the Blind
Diane Miles	Resident
Peter Miles	Resident
Althea Unthank	Resident
Judith Wood	Resident – Felixstowe

1. Welcome

Linda welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made.

2. Apologies

The above apologies were received and noted.

3. Accessible Britain Challenge

3.1 Members were reminded that the vision of the Accessible Britain Challenge is for communities to become more inclusive and accessible by working with disabled people to remove barriers that prevent them being full and active contributors in their community.

3.2 Members were invited to raise issues which prevented their full inclusion in the community and responded as follows:

- There are fewer **accessible taxis** in Suffolk Coastal than in Ipswich;
- Getting to hospital appointments is more difficult due to the strict application of the eligibility criteria for **non-emergency hospital transport**;
- **Free bus passes for disabled people** cannot be used before 9.30am (Mondays to Fridays) making it difficult for young adults to get to work or volunteering placements on time. Bus passes are no use if there are no buses.
- **Information** is harder to find in small villages that do not get free newspapers and magazines or may not have broadband connections. For example, Saxmundham gets free publications but nearby villages do not.
- Whilst Libraries have free access to the internet, this raises **transport issues** for people.
- **Suffolk Infolink** was flagged up as a County-backed database available on the internet. Infolink is good at sending out email requests to organisations for updated information. If there is no response the organisations are removed.
<http://infolink.suffolk.gov.uk/kb5/suffolk/infolink/home.page>
- **Local publications** could be a good source of information and various organisations have lists of contacts, for example Healthwatch Suffolk, and the Suffolk Association of Local Councils (for parish council clerks).

Action: Gillian Benjamin will ascertain whether Suffolk Coastal District Council has a list of local publications.

Action: Healthwatch Suffolk will provide contact details of publications known to them.

- It was recognised that **information** needed to be distributed in a variety of formats and methods. The use of **social media** is increasing but there are many people who do not use this to acquire information. A number of organisations still exist that use one contact number to give information: For example: Age UK Suffolk's Ipswich and South Suffolk East Suffolk Information Centre – Tel: 01473 351234 and the Disability Advice Service East Suffolk – Tel: 01394 387070. A number of organisations such as Healthwatch Suffolk use Twitter and it is not necessary to have a Twitter account to follow this. <https://twitter.com/hwsuffolk>
- **Communication** is very important and this is not just via the internet but also by face to face meetings and through the production of written information such as leaflets. A good example is the Rural Coffee Caravan which visits small communities. However, it is important that the information is kept up to date – a list of buses to the hospital gave information on services that had been taken off two years before.
- **Portrayal of people with disabilities** needs to be positive. An incident was reported where a man refused to move parcels on the next seat so a blind man could sit down but no action was taken by the bus driver. This should be reported to First Bus.
- **Education** should start with young children enabling them to understand what it is like to have a disability and how they can support one another and help where they can. Positive attitudes prevailed at the time of the 2012 Olympics but no longer do so.
- **Advertising** does not help. People are mostly portrayed as young and beautiful, but no people with disabilities are rarely included - and nothing ever goes wrong. The media does not portray real life.
- **Sports venues** often do not provide good **access** for disabled people so that they can watch sport, for example, at Ipswich Town Football Club.
- People without disabilities can be very thoughtless and use **parking spaces** that are marked for use by blue badge holders.
- **Shopping** in the local towns is often difficult because the shops are not accessible to everyone. For example, Woodbridge Thoroughfare has many shops with steps. Listed buildings can be altered as long as the historical features are retained. Someone needs to invent a pull-down ramp with a remote control! Shops in Felixstowe are more accessible.
- Shopkeepers need to be persuaded to improve **accessibility**: Are doors wide enough? How easy would it be to change a doorway, remove steps and provide a ramp?
- It was suggested that a symbol is used in shop/business windows to indicate whether the property is accessible and whether the staff are

disability aware. For example, using a logo of '**Suffolk Cares**' with a symbol of a smiley face.

- A-Boards remain a barrier to **easy access** in town centres but Suffolk County Council has decided not to insist that they are removed from the streets.
- It was suggested that Chris Herald from 'Choose Woodbridge' be invited to the next meeting of the Forum to talk about access to shops and the barriers faced by people with disabilities.

Action: Planning Group

- The availability of **accessible housing** is an important issue. New housing developments do not include specific housing for people with disabilities. The current building regulations just require new housing to be 'visitable' with wider doors, a downstairs loo and no front steps. However, houses need to be built to 'Lifetime Home Standards' which would provide far better accessibility. Some local councils may insist that some of the 16 standards are incorporated into local developments. A change in legislation is needed to improve this position. Concerns were expressed about bungalows being replaced with two-storey houses. It was noted that Flagship Housing are making entry doors accessible.

Action: Gillian Benjamin to ask Suffolk Coastal District Council whether the Council has a Housing Strategy in place that refers to developing housing to 'Lifetime Homes Standards'.

3.3 In summing up, it was noted that the main issues identified were:

- Communication/Information – ensuring that appropriate, accurate and timely information was available and communicated to everyone;
- Education – ensuring that disability awareness was delivered in schools, and that positive images were used by the media;
- Transport – ensuring that people had access to affordable and accessible methods of getting about in their communities;
- Housing – ensuring that new housing was built to 'Lifetime Homes Standards and that existing housing was adapted as necessary;
- Access – ensuring that people with disabilities had the same opportunities as everyone to use shops, businesses and leisure facilities of their choice.

Action: The Planning Group will consider these issues further prior to the next meeting of the Forum.

4. Minutes of the Meeting on the 6th January 2015

The minutes of the Meeting held on the 6th January, 2015 were agreed as an accurate record.

5. Matters Arising

5.1 Item 3 Healthwatch Suffolk: Simon provided a brief update and said that there had been a good response to the survey on accessing transport to health services.

5.2 Item 5.1 Transport Issues:

5.2.1 It was noted that drivers for community transport minibuses can no longer be over 70 years of age which creates problems for recruitment with people retiring later.

5.2.2 The decision of the Appeal Court in respect of wheelchair users having priority to use the wheelchair space on buses was that wheelchair users do not have priority over those using the space for pushchairs. It would require the government to change legislation in order for wheelchair users to have priority as a legal right. Therefore, wheelchair users may still find themselves refused access to a bus because there is a pushchair in the space.

Action: Planning Group to note these issues.

5.3 Item 5.2 Tesco Martlesham: Members were disappointed at the lack of response from Tesco Martlesham. Margaret will try again both locally and nationally, including contacting the Chief Executive to ask what is being done about the issue of thoughtless parking. Possibilities for action suggested were stickers for windscreens or posters discouraging people from parking in the blue badge spaces.

Action: Margaret Morris

5.4 Item 5.3 Leisure Survey: It was noted that the temperature in many swimming pools is too cold for many disabled people. Avenues East has provided information about assisted swimming sessions for disabled people and facilities at swimming pools in the county which will be distributed with the minutes.

Action: Margaret Morris

5.5 Item 6.5.1 Applications for Planning Permission: Margaret will ask the Planning Department at SCDC how they consult on access issues in respect of planning applications.

Action: Margaret Morris

5.6 Item 6.5.2 Framfield House: Caroline said that there were now improved bus services to Framfield House. There are still issues with the entrance doors, where the outer set of doors is automatic but the second set is not automatic and the doors are heavy.

Post Meeting Note: Ipswich and East Suffolk Clinical Commissioning Group have been in contact with Framfield House and received the following response: So far we have been unable to find a way it is possible to change these to automatic doors so we may need to install some kind of buzzer system to assist both disabled patients and parents with pushchairs who are then unable to open the inner doors.

6. Updates on Specific Issues

6.1 SCDC Leisure Strategy:

6.1.1 Keri Ryder, Leisure & Countryside Manager, SCDC, came to the Planning Group meeting to discuss the Leisure Strategy. This was very helpful and enabled the Forum to reiterate the importance of inclusion of people with disabilities in leisure activities and disability awareness training for staff.

6.1.2 Simon Walker, Property Services Manager, Suffolk Coastal & Waveney Norse, also attended the meeting to discuss the plans for the new section of the Martello Park at Felixstowe which includes a Changing Places facility, toilets, and a very good selection of play equipment that is accessible for children with a range of disabilities. Planning Group members were able to make useful suggestions and these were warmly welcomed.

6.2 Public Transport Forum:

6.2.1 Linda had attended the first meeting of this Forum on the 16th January. There had been a number of presentations including: The Passenger Perspective, The Bus Industry Perspective, Community Transport, and the Public Sector.

6.2.2 There was also a presentation about Medilink which provides shuttle bus services in Nottingham to the two hospitals there, via

electric buses. As it was a city area, it did not have too much relevance for Suffolk.

6.2.3 The meeting agreed that setting up a Public Transport Forum was a good idea. Geographical or topic groups would be needed to deal with relevant issues and it was important that users of public transport continued to be involved. However, no further meetings have been arranged.

6.2.4 Caroline noted that the current government is not interested in funding rural bus routes. Once the elections are over, Linda will ask SCC for information on how much money is saved through reducing support for rural routes.

6.3 Healthwatch Suffolk:

6.3.1 Simon explained that Healthwatch Suffolk is using a new feedback system, similar to that used by Trip Advisor. Positive and negative comments on health and social care services can be posted online. Service providers are able to respond to the comments made.

6.3.2 Reports on surveys are available on line. Hard copies are available but it is not always practical to circulate such reports with our minutes. For example, the report on the approved repairer service for NHS wheelchairs runs to 39 pages.

6.3.3 The current research work project is in respect of mental health and wellbeing. Healthwatch Suffolk is thankful for all completed questionnaires, in respect of this research the questionnaire can be found online at www.surveymonkey.com/r/HWS_wellbeing , or if preferred a paper copy(ies) can be obtained by calling the Healthwatch office on 01449 703949.

6.3.4 In respect of each research work project, Healthwatch Suffolk aims for a level of response which will enable meaningful findings to be reported, and as and when appropriate, conclusions and recommendations to be made. The level of response that Healthwatch Suffolk is aiming to achieve varies with each piece of research, depending on the subject and the size of the population group who can give feedback informed by their experience.

6.3.5 It was suggested that the Forum invites the Chief Executive of Ipswich Hospital to discuss various issues for people accessing hospital services such as having to attend the hospital for blood tests which could be done locally.

Action: Planning Group

6.4 Report from the Planning Group

6.4.1 The Planning Group dealt with the consultation on the Leisure Strategy and the redevelopment of the Martello Park, Felixstowe, as per Item 6.1.

6.4.2 The Forum now has a section on the SCDC website which explains the purpose of the Forum and publicises future meetings. It was agreed that only more recent Minutes of Meetings will be uploaded.

6.4.3 Work was undertaken to publicise this meeting as widely as possible. SCDC issued a press release which was published in local newspapers. A poster was designed and distributed by members of the Planning Group, particularly by Gillian Benjamin.

6.4.4 Work on the publicity leaflet can now be commenced using the text supplied for the webpage as a starting point.

Action: Planning Group

7. Information Round / Any Other Business

7.1 Papworth Trust: Mandy Schlarb explained her current role with the Papworth Trust which is to provide advice, information and guidance, to disabled people. People can have benefit checks, help to complete benefit applications or renewals, or get advice regarding re-considerations or appeals. The Trust can help with Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independent Payments, Attendance Allowance, Carers Allowance and Adaptations to Housing. The Freephone Telephone Number is 0800 952 5000. The Papworth Trust has bases in Ipswich, Bury St Edmunds and Lowestoft. There are leaflets giving information in libraries.

7.2 Pastel: Don provided information on two weekly clubs (in addition to their regular activities) for adults including people with additional needs:

- The Pastel Singing Club – Every Friday, 10am to 12pm, £6 per session;

- The Pastel Cooking Club – Every Tuesday, 10am to 1pm, £10 per session;

Both Clubs are held at the Fromus Centre, Seaman Avenue, Saxmundham; Tel 01728 604944 for further information.

7.3 Age UK Suffolk: Wendy explained that there had been some reorganisation at Age UK Suffolk. The Ipswich and South East Suffolk Information Desk can now be contacted on 01473 351234. It is understood that regular activities such as Silver Surfers and Food 'n' Friends Groups will continue as usual.

7.4 Disability Focus 2015: This one day event will take place on Tuesday, 27th October, at One (formerly Suffolk One), Scrivener Drive, Ipswich. Members commented that more disabled people needed to be encouraged and enabled to attend. Assistance with transport would be beneficial and it was hoped that this could be provided. It was noted that Waveney District Council pays for a minibus so that members of the Waveney Disability Forum can attend. More information on Disability Focus will be available In due course.

8. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will take place on **Monday, 6th July, 2015**, in the Council Chamber, Suffolk Coastal District Council Offices, Melton Hill, Woodbridge, from 12.45pm, for a 1pm to 3pm meeting.

The meeting closed at 3 pm.