

Mid Suffolk Disability Forum

Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday, 21st January, 2026, from 10.30am to 12.30pm, via Zoom

Present:

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| Linda Hoggarth | - Chair / Resident / Disability Forum for Suffolk / Avenues East |
| Cllr Terence Carter | - Vice Chair / Mid Suffolk District Council / Stowmarket Town Council / Resident |
| Simon Barnett | - Integrated Transport & Enhanced Partnership Manager, Suffolk County Council |
| Jonathan Chew | - Self-Advocacy & Engagement Lead, Ace Anglia |
| Elysa Dale | - Poverty Reduction & Digital Inclusion Lead, Mid Suffolk & Babergh District Councils |
| Wendy Johns | - Communications & Engagement Officer, Suffolk Sight |
| Archie Merritt | - Customer Engagement Lead, Regal Theatre |
| Jasmine Moss-Rahman | - Diversity, Equality & Inclusion Lead, East of England, Co-op |
| Cllr Jen Overett | - Mid Suffolk District Council, Access for All Needham Market |
| Ellie Robertshaw | - Mid Suffolk Citizens Advice |
| Christine Steward | - Resident |
| Helen Toffanello | - Secretary / Resident |

Guests:

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| Sharon Bayliss | - Service Improvement Advisor, Mid Suffolk & Babergh District Councils |
| David Connors | - Head of Elections and Land Charges, Mid Suffolk & Babergh District Councils |
| Oliver Faiers | - Head of Service for Waste, Mid Suffolk & Babergh District Councils |

Apologies:

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| Cllr Libby Brooks | - Diversity Group, Mid Suffolk Liberal Democrats |
| Mark Conquer | - Resident / ACE (Anglia) Ltd |
| Dr Su Conquer | - Co-production Lead, Integrated Care Partnership, Suffolk and North Essex |

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| Elizabeth Delaney | - Communications & Engagement Officer, Mid Suffolk & Babergh District Councils |
| Anselm Gurney | - Partnership Manager, Everyone Active |
| Paul Hughes | - Head of Service – Building Control & Access Officer, Mid Suffolk & Babergh District Councils |
| Samantha Lake | - Director – Customers, Vulnerabilities & Governance, Mid Suffolk & Babergh District Councils |
| Steven Largent | - Resident / ACE (Anglia) Ltd |
| Cllr John Matthissen | - Mid Suffolk District Council |
| Gareth Moir | - Integration & Partnership Manager, Suffolk County Council |
| Miles Row | - Suffolk Artlink |
| Claire Smith | - Chair of Operations, Suffolk Parent Carer Forum |
| Elizabeth Storer | - Community Development Officer, Healthwatch Suffolk |

1. Welcome and Introductions

Linda welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made.

Chewy and Ace Anglia were thanked for hosting this meeting on Zoom.

2. Apologies

The above apologies were noted.

3. Changes to Waste Collection Services

3.1 Sharon Bayliss, Service Improvement Advisor and Oliver Faiers, Head of Service for Waste, Mid Suffolk & Babergh District Councils, were welcomed to the meeting.

3.2 They explained that 'Better Recycling' is being implemented, in accordance with the Environment Act 2021, to improve recycling performance, ensure clean and good quality recycling and help the environment.

3.3 Using slides, Oliver outlined the incoming arrangements for

waste collection, commencing on the 1st June, 2026. The slides will be distributed with the minutes of this meeting.

3.4 Changes are as follows:

- 240L green lidded bins will be retained for card and paper.
- New 240L blue lidded bins will be introduced for glass, metal, tetra packs, plastic and cartons.
- A grey, small 5L caddy, suitable for indoor use, will be supplied for food waste which can be transferred to fill a larger 23L grey caddy kept outside. The larger caddy will be emptied weekly from the kerbside.
- The black bin will be kept for refuse which will be collected every three weeks. Two sizes of bins will be available, 180L or 240L depending on the size of the household.
- For non-standard housing, 50L sacks will still be available – clear sacks for glass, metal, cartons, plastics and film; paper sacks for paper and card; orange sacks for refuse. More sacks can be purchased if needed as residents do at the moment. Waste officers have reviewed properties that have sack collection to see what best suits as smaller 140L bins are also available.
- Residents with disabilities or medical conditions can still sign up on the Council website for assisted collections where the Council collect from and return the bin to the property.
- Bins will be collected on a three weekly schedule with food waste being collected weekly. Garden bin collections will remain on a fortnightly schedule.

3.5 The new waste programme is about to be widely publicised. There will be an article in the next Mid Suffolk Magazine, information posted on the Council website, a recycling pack of information sent to all households, media campaigns via television, radio and sides of buses. Councillors will also receive a recycling pack in order to advise constituents.

3.6 The packs and materials will be accessible for everyone and available in Braille, audio version, large print, image only and in the 10 most spoken languages. The packs will contain a printed calendar so residents know which week to put out which bin. The Waste Services Team will show the packs in all the different formats to the Forum for feedback.

Action: Oliver Faiers

3.7 A question was raised about how people with visual impairments could differentiate between the bins in order to put out the right one. Currently assistance is needed from friends and relatives. Simple tactile stickers attached to the bins were suggested as a solution such as a triangle, square and circle as many with sight impairments do not read Braille. It was thought that there may be national standards that could be used. Oliver will follow this up. Additionally, Wendy will ask members' views at an upcoming Suffolk Sight event and report back.

Action: Oliver Faiers / Wendy Johns

3.8 Members noted that there may be difficulties in remembering which bin to put out for collection each week but the information being provided should be helpful.

3.9 Information on the new recycling programme will be forwarded to Wendy, by mid-March, for inclusion in the May Suffolk Sight newsletter.

Action: Oliver Faiers

3.10 The new bins and caddies will be delivered between February and April before the new system goes live on 1st June.

3.11 Linda thanked Oliver and Sharon for attending the meeting.

4. Update on Accessible Voting

4.1 David Connors, Head of Elections and Land Charges, Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils, was welcomed to the meeting.

4.2 David has had a series of successful meetings with ACE and the following has been achieved:

- Easy Read guide on Understanding the Poll Card, a first in the UK. It is live on the website and with the printers with matching QR codes for future elections.
- Easy Read guide on Voting in Polling Stations. This type of guide currently already exists in the UK but David and ACE have included an extra section on all the support that is available there. It is also available on the Council website and printed copies will be available at the entrance to polling stations.
- Simple video on how to complete the postal vote pack, also to be available on the Council website.

4.3 Wendy and members of Suffolk Sight have been helping to test

various pieces of equipment and David is now engaging with local suppliers. One piece of equipment will support people with no sight and the other will support those that are partially sighted.

4.4 David is pushing for all residents to understand that reasonable adjustments can be made such as bringing in aids from home such as magnifying glasses.

4.5 The council has invested in ten different coloured acetates as overlays which will be available in the polling stations.

4.7 Staff are being trained with a strong emphasis on accessibility.

4.8 As part of his work nationally, David is in discussion with Southend Council and the National Forum on the use of the NaviLens. (The NaviLens makes QR codes accessible to blind and partially sighted people.) It is similar to a QR code, but the user does not have to be as accurate when they point their phone at it, and it can include spoken information. It is very expensive but if adopted nationally costs would reduce dramatically.

4.9 Work is now being carried out to encourage political parties to make their information as accessible as possible and to promote nationally collaboration with charities, advocacy groups and forums such as ours for inclusivity and the best outcome.

4.10 Linda thanked David for attending the meeting. Information can also be found at <https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/w/voting-accessibility>. David will continue to provide updates to the Forum.

5. The Forum's Future Plans and Goals for 2026

5.1 In Sam's absence, Elysa outlined the plan and its separate sections. The plan is work in progress and each section needs to be addressed individually to refine it and make the content more accessible. The plan includes a number of action points suggesting meeting topics and Elysa will collate these and email to Linda.

Action: Elysa Dale

5.2 The plan is based on the priorities agreed by the Forum in July, 2025, as follows, including some of the actions:

- **Accessibility to shops, businesses, leisure and sports**

activities:

- Encourage applications for the £10,000 shop front grant for purposes of improved accessibility. The application is too lengthy and complicated which Elysa will report to the Economic Development department.

Action: Elysa Dale

- Solve longstanding local issues.
- Recognising accessible businesses through an in person summer event.
- Review previous access surveys in Stowmarket and Needham Market.
- **Accessible and Affordable Transport:**
 - Accessible taxis with well-trained drivers.
 - Transport services such as Rural Connect and the Mid Suffolk Taxi Bus.
 - Updates from Sustainable Travel Manager.
 - Collaboration with the Community Rail Partnership.
 - Develop accessible trails, footpaths and mobility hire options through 10 year plan to improve walking and cycling routes.
 - Access to green social prescribing.
- **Ensure Council Services are Accessible:**
 - Cost of Living and Winter Support.
 - Accessible Voting.
 - Council provision (buildings, training, employment opportunities)
 - Planning of new developments including housing.
 - Reducing delays in home adaptations.
- **Council Involvement, Representation, Communications and Engagement:**
 - Cllr Terence Carter has been appointed as the Councillor Champion for Disability
 - Formal role in policy and decision making
 - Working with other district Disability Forums
 - Improving Communication and public awareness

5.3 The Forum's Planning Group has been working with Elizabeth Delaney, Communications & Engagement Officer, to create a logo for the Forum, an updated leaflet and poster and templates for social

media posts. The logo has been agreed by members through a voting process and is now ready to be used. In order to be able to deal with social media posting, assistance will be required. Additionally, Elizabeth would be pleased to hear from members who can share photographs of their activities so that these can be used in the Forum's promotional material.

5.4 In terms of next steps, the Plan will be used to identify future meeting topics. A shorter version needs to be produced in due course for the website and to be more accessible to members. Forum members will be kept informed of progress at meetings. It is a living document and changes and additions will be made as necessary.

5.5 The full presentation slides containing much more detail will be sent out with the minutes of the meeting.

6. Minutes from the Meeting held on the 8th October, 2025

The minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record.

7. Matters Arising

There were none.

8. Updates, Issues, Concerns and News from Members

8.1 Be Well Bus: Gareth had advised that the Be Well Bus was currently out of use. If any members were organising or interested in attending well-being events, he would like to hear from them.

8.2 NHS Community Contract: A conversation on the NHS Community Contract is taking place on the 27th January, at the Pod, Stow Lodge, Stowmarket, from 10am to 12noon. This is about money being allocated to community health provision (excluding GPs).

8.3 Greater Anglia: Alan Neville has provided an update regarding Stowmarket Railway Station – the new lifts are due to be completed by late Spring. Additionally, Access for All funding has been awarded to progress improving accessibility projects at Wymondham and Colchester Railway Stations.

8.4 Haughley Beavers: Christine was pleased to report that a group of Beavers in Haughley have been awarded their disability

badge, part of which involved learning finger spelling.

8.5 Reporting Potholes: Christine asked how to report potholes as she had assisted a visually impaired person to navigate past potholes in Lockington Crescent. Go to:

<https://highwaysreporting.suffolk.gov.uk/>

8.6 Red Gables: Terence reported that the threshold to the Redwoods building is being lowered in July to improve the accessibility. Funding is being sought to improve the toilet facilities.

8.7 The Regal Theatre: Archie reported that the hearing loops have all been reviewed and improved.

8.8 Community Rail Partnership: Jen advised that the Community Rail Partnership is being launched at the end of March, location and time to be confirmed. She has asked that the Forum can send a representative to attend the launch, the lunch and the following stakeholder meeting. She also said that she has applied to Mid Suffolk District Council for funding to improve Needham Market Railway Station.

9. Access Issues

9.1 Planning Applications: Comments have been made on the following planning applications:

DC/25/04838 – Manor Farm Creamery, Pakenham Road, Thurston – Planning Application for proposed building works, extension and change of use to provide a café, farm shop and gymnasium.

DC/25/05114 – Land at Field Quarry, Bramford Road, Great Blakenham – Outline planning permission (with layout, scale, appearance and landscaping being reserved) for the extension of Port One Logistics Park, to include up to 195,000 sqm of commercial floorspace comprising logistics warehousing with ancillary offices; offices and vertical farms; up to 115,000 sqm of depots and container storage; a solar farm, café and substations; new vehicle and HGV access from the south, the improvement of the existing access from the B1113 and a means of emergency access only from Circular Road; associated earthworks to create development platforms and barriers to boundaries; new landscaping and recreation areas; creation of nature reserve and the burying of overhead powerlines underground; together

with a full sustainable drainage scheme and the provision of private treatment plant(s).

DC/25/05123 – Balfour House, Eve Balfour Way, Haughley – Planning Application to convert former Residential Home for people with a disability (C2) into 4 self-contained flats for residential use (C3). This will be used as temporary accommodation by Mid Suffolk District Council. The two ground floor flats will be adapted for wheelchair users and the two parking spaces created will be accessible to disabled people.

DC/25/05097 – Stowmarket Recreation Ground, Finborough Road, Stowmarket – Planning Application for change of use, internal remodelling of existing toilet block to provide improved toilets (including accessible toilet, parent/child unit, and 2 unisex toilets) and small café kiosk.]

9.2 Other Access Issues:

9.2.1 Post Office, Stowmarket: It was reported that the entrance door remains difficult to open for disabled people despite information received that the door has been adjusted. It was noted that the landlord has been encouraged to apply to the council for Shop Front funding.

10. Health and Social Care

10.1 Healthwatch Suffolk: Elizabeth had prepared an update to be circulated with the minutes.

10.2 Community Health in Suffolk: Elizabeth had reported that colleagues are working on a project for the Integrated Care Partnership, Suffolk and North Essex, to engage people on how NHS community services should be delivered in the future. This link explains more - https://www.letstalksnee.co.uk/suffolk-community-services?utm_source=ehq_newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=ehq-Whats-Happening-on-Lets-Talk-SNEE-9-January-2026&utm_campaign=website&utm_medium=email&utm_source=ehq This shows that engagement is in the co-production stage. The links within the attached poster will be live in the coming weeks when the project is live. Please note that Dr Su Conquer, Co-production Lead, had been expected to attend the meeting to give more information about this work.

11. Future Meetings

11.1 Topics for Discussion: The Planning Group will study the Forum Plan for topics and decide when to include an item on Local Government Reorganisation.

Action: Planning Group

11.2 Format of Meeting: The next meeting will take place on Zoom.

12. Information Round / Any Other Business:

12.1 Summer Meeting: Members were asked if they thought an “in person” summer event to meet each other and celebrate good practice in the community would be a good idea. Those present indicated their approval so the Planning Group will now go ahead and organise it.

13. Date of Next Meeting:

The date of the next meeting will be Wednesday, 22nd April, 2026, 10.30am to 12.30pm, via Zoom.

The link for the meeting will be sent in due course.