

Mid Suffolk Disability Forum

Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday, 17th July, 2024,
from 10.30am to 12.30pm, via Zoom

Present:

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| Linda Hoggarth | - Chair / Resident / Disability Forum for Suffolk / Avenues East |
| Gary Allen | - Assistant Manager, Customer Experience, Mid Suffolk & Babergh District Councils |
| Simon Barnett | - Integrated Transport & Enhanced Partnership Manager, Suffolk County Council |
| Jonathan Chew | - Self-Advocacy & Engagement Lead, ACE (Anglia) Ltd |
| Mark Conquer | - Resident / ACE (Anglia) Ltd |
| Bethany Couch | - General Manager, The Regal, Stowmarket Town Council |
| Nigel Crisp | - Staff Manager – Ipswich Depot, First Bus |
| Anselm Gurney | - Partnership Manager, Everyone Active |
| Paul Hughes | - Head of Service – Building Control & Access Officer, Mid Suffolk & Babergh District Councils |
| Wendy Johns | - Communications & Engagement Officer, Suffolk Sight |
| Steven Largent | - Resident / ACE (Anglia) Ltd |
| Gareth Moir | - Integration & Partnership Manager, Ipswich & East Suffolk Alliance |
| Jae Short | - Self-Advocacy Facilitator, ACE (Anglia) Ltd |

Guests:

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| Kate Parnum | - Regeneration Project Manager, Mid Suffolk & Babergh District Councils |
| Matt Smith | - Parking Manager, Mid Suffolk & Babergh District Councils |

Apologies:

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| Zoey Banthorpe | - Arts & Culture Lead, Mid Suffolk & Babergh District Councils |
| Connie Barnes | - Step by Step Co-ordinator, Green Light Trust |
| Emma Buckmaster | - Prospective Candidate, Green Party |
| Terence Carter | - Vice Chair / Resident / Mid Suffolk District Council & Stowmarket Town Council |

Samantha Lake	- Head of Service, Customer Experience, Mid Suffolk & Babergh District Councils
Cllr John Matthissen	- Mid Suffolk District Council
Cllr Adrienne Marriott	- Mid Suffolk District Council
Alan Neville	- Community & Customer Engagement Manager, Greater Anglia
Cllr Jen Overett	- Mid Suffolk District Council, Access for All, Needham Market / Inclusion & Diversity Committee, John Peel Centre
Miles Row	- Suffolk Artlink
Claire Smith	- Resident / Suffolk Parent Carer Forum
Sue Spiller	- Resident, Ixworth
Christine Steward	- Resident / Sensing Change
Elizabeth Storer	- Community Development Officer, Healthwatch Suffolk
Helen Toffanello	- Secretary / Resident

1. Welcome and Introductions

Linda welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made.

Linda thanked Chewy and ACE (Anglia) Ltd for hosting this meeting on Zoom.

2. Apologies

The above apologies were noted.

3. Culture, Heritage and Visitor Economy Strategy

3.1 This item was postponed until a future meeting.

4. Parking issues including parking on pavements

4.1 Matt Smith, Parking Manager, Mid Suffolk & Babergh District Councils, was welcomed to the meeting.

4.2 Matt explained that within the county of Suffolk, civil parking powers were devolved to Suffolk County Council in 2020, On street parking enforcement in the Mid Suffolk area is enforced by West Suffolk or by Ipswich Borough Council depending on the location. Both authorities are conducting this activity on behalf of Suffolk County

Council.

4.3 Both West Suffolk and Ipswich Borough Councils work on behalf of Suffolk County Council but Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils work closely with West Suffolk and Ipswich Borough as they enforce in the Council's car parks.

4.4 More information on parking enforcement in this area and who is enforcing this can be found here:

<https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/parking-enforcement>

4.5 The main issue in Stowmarket appears to be in the evenings where cars are parked on pavements blocking access outside takeaways which can cause issues for people who are visually impaired or wheelchair users.

4.6 Matt explained that although in London it is illegal to park on a pavement unless otherwise instructed, in the rest of England there is no law that says that vehicles cannot be parked on the pavement, but drivers are not allowed to obstruct the public highway. In those cases, the Police would have to be informed and requested to take action. Matt explained that there is one caveat, if there is a location where there are yellow lines at the side of the road, then these do also apply on the pavement and verge. So a civil enforcement officer (either from West Suffolk Council or Ipswich Borough Council) could issue a penalty notice even if a vehicle is partially or wholly on the verge or pavement.

4.7 Matt asked if there are any specific areas causing an issue so he can liaise with civil enforcement colleagues in the areas of concern. It was felt that this was mainly an issue with delivery drivers, and this is a complex situation as yellow lines are not always present.

4.8 Matt advised that with the increased popularity within the takeaway industry sector and the boom since Covid, the streets were not built for the volume of vehicles.

4.9 Members of the group mentioned issues on Ipswich Street particularly around the Regal Cinema and the Mix. Matt advised that this is enforceable due to yellow lines and restricted zones that are present in that location.

4.10 Issues can also occur in smaller villages throughout Mid Suffolk

where there are no yellow lines. Matt explained that this comes back to getting the powers devolved from government and the Police to local government and that the British Parking Association will be lobbying for these transfer of powers. Issues can also be raised with local police and their details can be found on the Suffolk Police website.

4.11 It was noted that the RNIB have undertaken some campaigning work to promote awareness of this issue with the government. However, there did not appear to be any active campaigns at present.

4.12 The misuse of Blue Badges was discussed and Matt advised that misuse of a blue badge is enforceable. Matt will link in with colleagues in West Suffolk Council and Ipswich Borough to find out to what extent there is an issue with this in this area and feedback the statistics.

Action: Matt Smith

4.13 Matt advised he has been conducting a review of car parks in the area. Some car parks do not have Blue Badge bays at all whereas some have the recommended amount. Matt has not received much feedback about lack of spaces in some car parks but would be interested to have feedback around this.

4.14 It was felt that there should be Blue Badge spaces in all car parks and good signposting so these spaces can be easily be found.

4.15 In response to a question about electric vehicle charging points, Matt advised that there are bays for these already but currently none available specifically for Blue Badge holders. There is a possibility that some bays could be converted in the area depending on their accessibility and Matt advised he would be keen to have feedback on this.

4.16 It was noted that size and accessibility of spaces are impacted by there being more larger vehicles. Disabled spaces may need remarking in places and potentially increasing in size to accommodate larger vehicles. A question was asked if the size of spaces, particularly Blue Badge spaces will be reviewed. Matt advised that car parks are at or nearing capacity in our area, so this causes a knock-on impact to meet the general demand. It was acknowledged it can be difficult to find a space in car parks as things stand so to enlarge bays would solve one problem but have a knock on effect elsewhere as this

would reduce the overall number of spaces.

4.17 In response to a question about the ratio of blue badge spaces in car parks being increased due to the increased number of blue badge holders, Matt advised this has been reviewed and government guidance is 6% of all bays in a car park should be available for Blue Badge holders. The British Parking Association guidance is stronger and factors in the size of a car park for example. Following the review conducted by Matt, car parks that do not meet at least the government guidance are being looked at to see what options are available to improve given the limitations of each location. Matt is keen to have feedback regarding this.

4.18 Matt advised he would include additional links on the topic of car parking which can be found here: <https://www.britishparking-media.co.uk/campaigns/pavement-parking> and here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/managing-pavement-parking>

4.19 Matt was thanked for his input to the meeting and for answering questions from members.

5. Update on the SHELF Project

5.1 Kate Parnum, Regeneration Project Manager, Mid Suffolk & Babergh District Councils, was welcomed to the meeting.

5.2 Kate explained that the Stowmarket Health Education and Leisure Facilities Project (SHELF) is a combination of sports and leisure facilities in Stowmarket near Chilton Fields and Stowmarket High School.

5.3 Kate thanked the group for their feedback on the planning application so far and agreed to come back to consult further based on that feedback in finer detail.

5.4 Kate explained that the first stage is working on Work Package One, a trim trail, grass football improvements, cricket nets, active track, mini athletics track, 3G pitch and multi-use games area (MUGA). Grass pitch work will be taking place on the Chilton Fields site and alongside this will be a trim trail, hoping to be available in September. It will include accessible elements to it.

5.5 Kate shared and discussed an image of the Trim Trail and agreed to distribute this with the minutes.

5.6 Kate advised that there will be some new cricket nets being installed and these will be set in an enclosed area so less likely to be damaged compared to being in a public space.

5.7 The active track on Chilton Fields will be on an all-purpose surface and is designed to be completely connective. An all-purpose surface from the Northfield Woods Taylor Wimpey site, which will link up allowing people to do whatever exercise they want, off road and safe, will be accessible. This will also allow people to take part in Park Runs and Park Walks in the future in all weathers.

5.8 Kate advised that on the High School site they are working on the installation of a 3G pitch which will be behind the Leisure Centre. Alongside this will be a multi-use games area - two areas contained in one space. There will also be a mini athletics track of 200m. Although this is smaller in size, it will enable younger groups to make use of it. Kate agreed to share an image of the site as part of the minutes.

5.9 Kate advised that a lot of funding applications have been made and these do take some time. Kate will continue to update the Forum as work progresses. .

5.10 Kate was thanked for attending the meeting.

6. Minutes from the Meeting held on the 17th April, 2024

6.1 The minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record.

7. Matters Arising

7.1 Item 3 Accessible Voting:

7.1.1 As there had recently been a general election, members were asked if anyone had encountered any issues when trying to vote, so these can be raised with the Electoral Services team at Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils.

7.1.2 Mark raised that there could be a specific toolkit for disabled people to support them in future voting. People need to know what help is available to them. He had highlighted this as part of a recent

BBC news article, also highlighting issues with accessibility in general for elections. He felt that improving access needs to be a project for future elections. Representatives will ask for feedback from their members.

7.1.3 The Planning Group will invite David Connors, Head of Elections and Land Charges, to a future meeting for further discussion.

Action: Planning Group

8. Updates, Issues, Concerns and News from Members

8.1 New Initiatives for people with disabilities:

8.1.1 Anselm advised that Everyone Active are consulting on the possibility of putting on new sessions for Bowls and Goalball and was seeking feedback about the potential demand for these.

8.1.2 Bowls could take place at the Mid Suffolk Leisure Centre specifically for people with disabilities on a Tuesday or Wednesday between 9am and 3pm.

8.1.3 The second activity is Goalball suitable for people with visual impairments. This could possibly take place at Mid Suffolk Leisure Centre but could also be held elsewhere. There is a possibility of this taking place on a Tuesday or a Wednesday between 9am and 3pm. Anselm explained how Goalball works and that the ball has a bell inside to help people with visual impairment to keep track of it. Anselm asked for any feedback on these suggested activities.

8.1.4 Group representatives would raise this with their members and seek feedback but it was thought that a taster session would be a good idea. It was felt that some sessions could be held in the evening as opposed to always having daytime sessions.

8.1.5 It was felt that the timing of Goalball sessions could also be debated further, thus giving alternatives to afternoon sessions. Members considered that Goalball may appeal more to younger people and suggested contacting special schools and groups for disabled young people to see if they already are involved in this activity.

8.1.6 Indoor bowls has to use a specifically designed wheelchair for the surface as standard wheelchairs are not suitable due to likely

damage to the surface. The Leisure Centre has one of these. If the take up is good, the Leisure Centre may be able to apply for funding for more specifically designed chairs depending on the demand.

8.1.7 Anslem would be pleased to hear feedback from anyone about potential demand for either activity but especially indoor bowls.

8.1.8 Anslem advised that with the activities they are proposing to run, if there is sufficient demand then they will need to apply for grant funding for the initial period. Funding often allows groups to get up and running for the funded period then become self-sustaining from thereafter. Anslem said they would be able to apply for the equipment for the sessions but often do not meet the criteria for the grant funding for the activity. Anslem asked if there would be a possibility of a bid coming forward from the Disability Forum.

8.1.9 Linda explained that the Disability Forum is not able to apply for grants because it is not a registered charity, and does not have a bank account and therefore would not meet the criteria of grant making organisations. However, a member group may feel able to assist and this avenue could be explored.

8.2 Ipswich and East Suffolk Alliance Delivery Plan:

8.2.1 Gareth gave a brief overview and explained that the plan identifies health inequalities, areas of deprivation within the county and the focus on more elderly people.

8.2.2 High priority issues within the plan are reduction in hypertension, reduction in falls, Childrens health and reduction in health inequalities.

8.2.3 He drew attention to the Be Well bus which visits eight localities and will be in the Stowmarket area on the 14th and 15th August. He asked if there are any other services or information that would be good to have on the bus and suggestions would be welcome so these can be fed back to the bus co-ordinator.

8.2.4 Gareth's slides would be would be distributed with the minutes that go into more detail on the plan and how disability is considered within it.

8.2.5 Gareth would advise the Forum of future Central Connects Meetings

8.2.6 Gareth was reminded of the need to ensure presentation slides were fully accessible to all people. He said that there were on line and in person sessions and that he understood information should be accessible and in a format that can be accessed taking into account that the average reading age is considered to be 9 years of age.

8.2.7 It was felt that the needs of people with sight loss should be higher up on the agenda and this would include information being provided in large print. Gareth noted this.

8.3 Relaxed Family Screenings: Bethany explained that the Regal Theatre, in partnership with Activities Unlimited, will be running family friendly relaxed film screenings which are SEND friendly, and these will be approximately twice per month. Shrek will be shown this Sunday (21st July) and then followed by Shrek 2, 3 and 4. The information will be distributed to the mailing list as requested.

9. Access Issues

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

DC/23/05380 - Land South Of Melvin Way and Old Stowmarket Road, Woolpit - Application for Approval of Reserved Matters following Outline Approval DC/19/02656, Submission of details for Appearance, Scale, Layout and Landscaping for the Erection of 40 affordable dwellings, associated works & infrastructure.

DC/24/02071 - Gateway 14 (1900), Land Between the A1120 and A14 - Application for Reserved Matters following Outline Approval of DC/21/00407 - Submission of details for Appearance, Landscaping, Layout and Scale for the erection of buildings comprising commercial and employment use, open space and landscaping, car and cycle parking, highway works and other associated works, accompanied by EIA Statement.

DC/23/05721 – Land on the North Side of Station Road, Haughley – Erection of 29 dwellings and associated infrastructure – Reconsultation.

DC/24/02330 – Land to the west of Ixworth Road, Thurston – Planning Application for 61 dwellings. No bungalows are planned.

DC/23/05929 - Land south of Eye Airfield and north of Castleton Way – Application for Approval of Reserved Matters in part (Phase 2)

following Outline Approval for Landscaping, Layout and Scale for 127 dwellings,

9.2 Other Access Issues: There were none to report.

10. Health and Social Care

10.1 Linda advised that Elizabeth was not able to be present. Any update will be forwarded with the minutes.

11. Future Meetings

11.1 Topics for Discussion: The Planning Group will work on the following suggestions:

- Voting & Accessibility
- Culture, Heritage & Leisure Strategy
- Further consultation work on the SHELF project
- Ipswich and East Suffolk Alliance Delivery Plan

11.2 Format of Meeting: It was agreed to leave this with Planning Group to discuss but members indicated that they were happy with the current online format.

12. Information Round / Any Other Business:

12.1 Talk Tech 2024: Chewy introduced a video providing information on the Talk Tech 2024 conference for people with a learning disability and for autistic people all about technology. The link can be found here: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/talk-tech-2024-tickets-789157981767?aff=oddtcreator> Chewy requested that the group shares this information to promote the conference and that everyone is welcome.

12.2 LGBTQ Groups, ACE (Anglia) Ltd: Jae advised on the work that will be conducted around starting LGBTQ groups for people with learning disabilities and autistic people. The groups should be starting soon, and Jae requested if anyone knows of anyone who may wish to attend to contact her. Posters and a film will be available soon to promote this.

13. Date of Next Meeting:

The date of the next meeting will be Wednesday, 6th November, 2024,

10.30am to 12.30pm, via Zoom and also possibly as a face to face hybrid meeting.

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