

Mid Suffolk Disability Forum

Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday, 6th November, 2024,
from 10.30am to 12.20pm, via Zoom

Present:

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| Linda Hoggarth | - Chair / Resident / Disability Forum for Suffolk / Avenues East |
| Simon Barnett | - Integrated Transport & Enhanced Partnership Manager, Suffolk County Council |
| Cllr Libby Brooks | - Diversity Group, Mid Suffolk Liberal Democrats |
| Jonathan Chew | - Self-Advocacy & Engagement Lead, ACE (Anglia) Ltd |
| Mark Conquer | - Resident / ACE (Anglia) Ltd |
| Nigel Crisp | - Staff Manager – Ipswich Depot, First Bus |
| Samantha Lake | - Head of Service, Customer Experience, Mid Suffolk & Babergh District Councils |
| Gareth Moir | - Integration & Partnership Manager, Ipswich & East Suffolk Alliance |
| Cllr Jen Overett | - Mid Suffolk District Council, Access for All, Needham Market / Inclusion & Diversity Committee, John Peel Centre |
| Miles Row | - Suffolk Artlink |
| Elizabeth Storer | - Community Development Officer, Healthwatch Suffolk |
| Helen Toffanello | - Secretary / Resident |

Guests:

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| David Connors | - Head of Elections and Land Charges, Mid Suffolk & Babergh District Councils |
| Patrick Richardson-Todd | - Electoral Services Team Leader, Mid Suffolk & Babergh District Councils |

Apologies:

- | | |
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| Bethany Couch | - General Manager, The Regal, Stowmarket Town Council |
| 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
Cllr Adrienne Marriott	- Mid Suffolk District Council
Cllr John Matthissen	- Mid Suffolk District Council
Imogen Tink	- Communities Team, Mid Suffolk & Babergh District Council

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. Integrated Neighbourhood Team Delivery Plans

3.1 Gareth Moir, Integration & Partnership Manager, Ipswich & East Suffolk Alliance was invited to provide information on the work of the Integrated Neighbourhood Teams.

3.2 Gareth explained that the Ipswich & East Suffolk Alliance was one of three Alliances that make up the Suffolk Integrated Care Board. There are eight Integrated Neighbourhood Teams in this Alliance. The Mid Suffolk area is covered by one team is based at Hartismere and one at Stow Lodge in Stowmarket. The Stowmarket area is complicated by the fact that half of this Integrated Neighbourhood Team is in East Suffolk and half in West Suffolk which is overseen by the West Suffolk Hospital.

3.3 The Alliance focuses on six areas, as follows:

- Start Well giving children and young people the best start in life
- Feel Well supporting people's mental well being
- Stay Well supporting adults with health and care concerns to access and maintain healthy, productive and fulfilling lives
- Be Well empowering adults to make healthy lifestyle choices
- Age Well supporting adults to live safely and independently as they grow older
- Die Well giving people nearing the ends of their lives choices around their care.

3.4 The areas being prioritised locally are:

- Reducing the number of people with high blood pressure and enable better management as this region has the highest cardiovascular rates in the East of England. Blood pressure checks are available at surgeries, hospitals, pharmacies and on the Be Well bus. Some libraries also loan out monitoring machines.
- Reducing the number of falls, improving frailty management and equipment provided so people can continue to live at home. 23% of the area's population are aged 65+ of which 30% have at least one fall a year. Currently ambulances are called for minor falls. As the falls are usually non-urgent, ambulances can take a long time to arrive. A new service is being developed where trained staff will come and assist the patient so ambulances are freed up and patients dealt with more quickly.
- Reducing health inequalities
- Improving children's health e.g. support new parents to access community services.

3.5 The Be Well area aims to:

- Enable people to live as long as possible in their own home with support
- Give choice and control over health and wellbeing, care and support e.g. choice of hospital for treatment
- Enable shared decisions in care and support needs
- Encourage healthy behaviour e.g. reducing smoking or increasing physical activity
- Focus on Women's Health
- Focus on Dental and Oral Health.

3.6 The Stay Well area aims to:

- Improve the uptake and quality of health checks for people with learning disabilities
- Improve the uptake and accuracy of GP registers of people with learning disability
- Improve the uptake of cancer screening and immunisation
- Increase investment in intensive, crisis and forensic communities' support
- Tackle causes of morbidity and preventable deaths for those with learning disabilities and autism and those with high blood pressure and pulmonary conditions.

- Work with partner organisations to ensure reasonable adjustments are being met for people with learning disabilities
- To improve consistency and continuity of care.

3.7 Parts of Stowmarket are in the 20% of the UK's most deprived areas and other parts of the area are in the 20-40% category.

3.8 A member asked if the inconsistent care for the Trans community could be addressed as there had been cases reported where hormone treatment had been stopped for no apparent reason. Gareth will find out more and report back.

Action: Gareth Moir

3.9 There was a question about whether hip protectors were used to prevent injury during falls. This had been successful in Gloucestershire. Gareth will enquire and feed back.

Action: Gareth Moir

3.10 In response to a question about access to GPs and whether people would be able to get appointments more easily, Gareth noted that access differed depending on whether the surgery was urban or rural, on capacity and on the number of GPs available. He said that it is planned that practitioners will be employed in surgeries so that patients can be referred by the care navigators to the most appropriate health professionals to better meet their needs.

3.11 Members pointed out that it was not always easy to visit the surgery to have blood pressure checked and Gareth said that there were other ways to get blood pressure checks such as visiting pharmacies. It was felt that ways in which to submit readings remotely would be helpful and Gareth said that could be explored further. There were also issues for people with visual impairments in reading the monitors used.

3.12 Gareth was thanked for his presentation and the information provided. He will provide a copy of his slides for circulation. He will continue to attend Forum meetings in the future.

4. Accessible Voting

4.1 David Connors, Head of Elections and Land Charges, and Patrick Richardson-Todd, Electoral Services Team Leader, Mid Suffolk

& Babergh District Councils were welcomed to the meeting.

4.2 David and Patrick had been invited to return to discuss any issues that had arisen for members when voting in the recent elections. David reminded members that people having any difficulty in voting could contact the Returning Officer to ask for reasonable adjustments to remove the difficulty being faced. It was felt that better publicity of the methods of contacting the Returning Officer for assistance would be helpful.

4.3 Members had raised the difficulties of navigating the postal voting system for people with visual impairments, commenting that it was difficult to cope with using the different envelopes. David would think about whether video instructions might be beneficial which people might be able to access on screen readers.

4.4 An example was given where it was felt that the screens between the polling booths was not high enough impacting on voters' confidentiality.

4.4 Sam considered that the Council's website could be made clearer to assist people with learning disabilities and people with visual impairments.

4.5 It was suggested that a link to Suffolkonboard could be helpful for people who need public transport to access the polling station and who need information. David would progress this with Simon.

Action: David Connors / Simon Barnett

4.6 The importance of people with disabilities being able to vote without assistance was noted in order that their votes were both independent and confidential.

4.7 It was agreed that discussions would progress with Mark and Chewy to address the challenges faced particularly by people with learning disabilities. It was suggested that Wendy from Suffolk Sight should also be consulted because of the difficulties faced by people with visual impairments. David was willing to attend the next meeting to feedback the outcome of the discussions.

Action: David Connors / Chewy / Mark Conquer / Sam Lake

4.8 Members were asked to continue to contact the Forum with any

concerns they had when casting their votes.

4.9 David and Patrick were thanked for their input. Forum members were keen to continue the discussions at the next meeting.

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

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

6. Matters Arising

6.1 Item 4.12 Misuse of Blue Badges: Sam will contact Matt Smith, Parking Manager, Mid Suffolk & Babergh District Councils, to request statistical information on any misuse of Blue Badges in the Mid Suffolk area.

Action: Sam Lake

6.2 Item 5 Update on the Shelf Project: No further updates had been received.

7. Updates, Issues, Concerns and News from Members

7.1 Stowmarket Railway Station:

7.1.2 Jen, Paul, Cllr Matthissen and a number of other councillors had attended a site visit at the station forecourt on the 27th September to discuss concerns regarding the changes made to the car parking and access between the town and the station. Unfortunately, Greater Anglia were not able to be present. However, Linda and Jen had previously raised these concerns with Alan Neville, Community & Customer Engagement Manager, Greater Anglia, who had said the arrangements were compliant.

7.1.2 However, the visit identified a serious lack of ramps and signage both into the station from the car park and from the town centre to the station, and the free disabled parking is challenging to secure. The large turnout for the site visit has caused Stuart Freer, Greater Anglia, to take a closer look into the issue. He will put together a proposal and then invite everyone to another site visit.

7.1.3 The works for the lift implementation could begin as early as January 2025 and any changes to the forecourt could be included in those works. Locality funding could be used to improve the access

from the town centre to the station. Alan Neville will be contacting the Forum concerning the lift work. It was suggested that Suffolk Sight should be involved to give the perspective of visually impaired people.

7.1.4 Jen will contact Alan Neville to ask for a progress report and also request an update on the likelihood of improving the access to Needham Market Railway Station.

Action: Jen Overett

7.2 Stowmarket Library: Sam reported that the current space is to be extended to include meeting rooms. One of the rooms could be a possible location for future Forum meetings. Sam is meeting the Library staff in two weeks' time and will invite a representative from the Library and Suffolk County Council to attend a Forum meeting so that members can hear about the plans and the timeline for the extension, their events and future plans. Currently, however, the lack of parking spaces for blue badge holders and parking in general is a concern. Miles said that Terence had some concerns about this development and Sam would seek further information.

Action: Sam Lake

7.3 Regal Theatre, Stowmarket: It is understood that Stowmarket Town Council is considering implementing an Access Card Scheme for people with disabilities.

7.4 John Peel Centre, Stowmarket: Jen reported that 11 Market Place is now fully open, and the café is accessible with accessible toilet facilities. Currently, there is no lift to view art displays on the first floor but people are able to see them on video in the café.

8. Access Issues

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

DC/24/03559 – Gateway 14 (Plot 3200), Land between the A1120 and A14 – Application for Reserved Matters re the erection of buildings, parking and landscaping in respect of the Skills and Innovation Centre. Documents indicate a fully accessible building and environment inclusive of all people.

DC/24/03763 – 30 Wellington Road, Eye – Reserved matters regarding appearance, layout and scale for a development of 9 dwellings. Outline permission has been granted in DC/21/24401.

DC/24/02330 – Land to the west of Ixworth Road, Thurston – Full planning application for 61 dwellings, including two bungalows.

DC/24/03919 – Land at Norton Rise, Ixworth Road, Norton – Application for 5 self-build houses.

DC/24/04451 – Land to the east of Ixworth Road, Thurston – Application for Reserved Matters for DC/19/02090 – Submission of details for Appearance, Landscaping, Layout and Scale for 210 dwellings. 8 of these will be bungalows, 50% will meet M4(2) (the accessibility and adaptable standard). A children's play area will include equipment that is accessible to all children including wheelchair users.

8.2 Other Access Issues:

8.2.1 Walnut Tree Pub, Stowmarket: A member had reported that this pub was under new management and the owners had no plans to install a ramp. Chewy would ask Emile to check this out and give his views on the access.

Action: Chewy

9. Health and Social Care

9.1 Healthwatch Suffolk:

9.1.1 Elizabeth reminded members that Healthwatch Suffolk is keen to receive feedback on the services received from the NHS or Social Care.

9.1.2 The current Healthwatch Suffolk projects are as follows:

- A survey on elective care and the waiting time for surgery
- A survey at West Suffolk Hospital on the carers' experiences of virtual wards. Virtual wards occur when a patient is sent home to be cared for with a camera installed at the home so the patient can be viewed virtually by the hospital.
- A survey to ask people about their experience of accessing help, treatment or support for back, neck or spinal issues in Suffolk

9.1.3 Suffolk and North East Essex Integrated Care Board has two

engagement opportunities one concerning post viral illnesses, and one concerning new people and their communities.

9.1.4 The Healthwatch Suffolk Annual General Meeting is on the 13th November at 12.30pm via Zoom.

9.1.5 A Co-production workshop is being held at Copdock Village Hall from 9.30 to 12 noon on the 20th November.

9.1.6 It was noted that some members continue to experience difficulties in collecting their prescribed medication, being told it is out of stock or just not available. For many of them, this presents extreme difficulties in having to make repeated visits to their pharmacy.

9.1.7 Emergency dental care is available via a collaboration with the University of Suffolk and the Integrated Care Board. Adults can access this if they phone 111 and the phone number for children is 01473 957010. All dental surgeries are obliged, if they have free time slots, to give emergency treatment even if the patient is not registered with them. However, members were advised when they ring or call in to ask for an emergency appointment and not to register.

9.1.8 The detailed update from Healthwatch Suffolk will be attached to the minutes.

10. Future Meetings

10.1 Topics for Discussion:

- Culture, Heritage & Leisure Strategy - Zoey Banthorpe, Arts & Culture Lead, Mid Suffolk & Babergh District Councils.
- Stowmarket Library
- Further discussion on Accessible Voting

Sam will contact speakers on behalf of the Planning Group.

Action: Sam Lake

10.2 Format of Meeting: January's meeting will take place on Zoom given the likelihood of inclement weather.

11. Information Round / Any Other Business:

11.1 Aspiration and Pneumonia Prevention Workshop: This event

is hosted by adult providers and is for anyone who supports and cares for people with a learning disability and autism. It is being held on the 28th November, from 9.30am to 3pm, at Kesgrave War Memorial Community Centre. To reserve a place, go to

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/aspiration-pneumonia-prevention-event-tickets-1034891908557>

12. Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting will be Wednesday, 29th January, 2025, 10.30am to 12.30pm, via Zoom.

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