



**West  
Northamptonshire  
Council**

## **Disabled People's Forum**

Minutes of a meeting of the Disabled People's Forum held at on Thursday 7 April 2022 at 2.30 pm.

Present Cllr Alan Chantler (Co-Chair), Martin DeRosario (Co-Chair), John Rawlings, Eleri Neale, Kit Nicholas, James Edmunds, Graeme Wilson, Tracy Tiff, Matt O'Connell, Lord Bungle, Heather Korbey, Norma Hogan, Debs Burns, Debbie MacColl

### **1. Welcomes, Introductions and Apologies**

Everyone was welcomed to the first hybrid meeting. Apologies were received from Rashmi Shah, Jatish Shah, Simone Ettinger, Joanne Box, Matthew Toresen, Rachel Flaxman and Jean Lineker

### **2. Code of Conduct**

### **3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes were agreed as a true record.

### **4. Getting Involved with Overview & Scrutiny**

Tracy Tiff and James Edmunds

The O&S work programme is not open to the public but public participation is welcomed. A survey was sent to the Forums giving an opportunity to put forward issues to be looked at. There is also the community management system which any member of the public can make suggestions. There is an opportunity to address the committee but it needs to be an item on the agenda.

The 3 committees have set work programmes for the year ahead although there is some scope to modify if priorities change. Suggestions put forward that have a high priority can be incorporated into the work programme. You can keep in touch through the website, attend meetings and speak if you wish. One of the main working methods is task and finish review – a process investigating an issue with a view to producing recommendations, if it is not working as should do, what could be done, or confirm it is working as well as it could possibly do. There is an opportunity to get involved if you have a particular interest or expertise. This is generally undertaken by a sub-group.

The 3 committees were Place, People and Corporate Committees along with a coordinating group that covered all 3. The structure can be seen here -

<https://westnorthants.moderngov.co.uk/mgListCommittees.aspx?bcr=1>

Cllr Chantler urged people to get involved and said if there is anything the Council could do better then we need to take it seriously and look into it. However, he stated that he knew not everyone had access to the internet and website.

Carl asked how Overview and Scrutiny was publicised and whether decisions made by Full Council and Planning could be scrutinised.

Tracy responded that things like the Tree Policy currently being undertaken by the Place O&S Committee, <https://westnorthants.citizenspace.com/cet/overview-and-scrutiny-consultation-management-of-t>, were publicised through Forums and Community Groups, Cllrs in their Wards, website and through word of mouth. Members of the public will always get a response if they express interest and they were happy to take suggestions. Carl suggested a flyer in with the Council Tax letter.

James stated that decisions the Council make can be scrutinised if there is an issue arising that will affect a certain area and also retrospectively to ensure the decision is working as it should. Individual planning is outside the remit of Overview & Scrutiny.

Cllr Chantler added that the channel of communication between elected members and the people they represent was extremely important but it did not always work as it should. Planning decisions were made approximately 90% by Officers and 10% by Committee. If anyone thought an application should go to committee, they should contact their local Cllr asking them to pull it in and give the reason why. Once Planning Committee had made their decision a channel group of Cllrs can call in a decision – this is more difficult with the time limits and should be discussed with the local Cllr. Designation as a conservation area affected planning decisions. John stated that it was often difficult to get in contact with the Cllr as not all give a contact number, however, they all had a Council email address. Your local Cllr can be found through this link [Find Councillor - West Northamptonshire Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](https://www.moderngov.co.uk/Find-Councillor) by Ward or post code.

## 5. Highway Code Changes

Matt O'Connell

Matt explained that there had been a lot of media around the changes to the Highway Code but this had muddied the water somewhat. There were only 8 changes that affected anyone.

The first change was the hierarchy of road users, putting most responsibility on the biggest vehicles who were likely to cause the most harm.

Crossings – the old way was for vehicles to give way to pedestrians if they were actually on the crossing. Now the vehicle should give way to a pedestrian waiting to cross. Matt stated he had hoped drivers would have given way anyway.

There were now definitive distances required for passing horse riders and cyclists. They were still 'should' rather than 'must'.

Cyclists negotiating a roundabout were now advised to stay in lane 1 – this could mean a car in Lane 2 could be in conflict.

Carl stated that a pedestrian at, for example Mereway or Barnes Meadow roundabouts, with 4 lanes, would have right of way. Matt did acknowledge the rules did not always fit all circumstances and vehicles should give way when it was safe to do so.

Jatish stated he had experienced being tail-gated which was very unsettling. Matt stated that there was little that could be done without dashcam evidence but to

ensure that you always manage the space between hazards and if needed, to increase the reactionary space.

Drivers parking on double yellow lines and blocking a safe view was another issue brought up. Matt responded that the only parking legislation police could look at was obstruction. By all means call it in, but calls were graded on threat, harm and risk and there may not be able to be a response, but at least the issue would then be known. Cars parked fully on a pavement were classed as an obstruction.

John stated he had witnessed several instances of people riding Voi scooters on the pavement and some by people who were not old enough to have a driving licence. Also there was a parking bay in Abington Street for scooters but it was not permissible to ride them there. Matt responded that there were a number of police operations looking at scooter use, not just Voi but private scooters as well. Voi did a lot to manage their scooters and people needed to use a legitimate account, although some were allowing others to use their account. The police had a really good relationship with Voi and accounts that were misused would be suspended.

However, this came down to availability of staff to do this. Also anyone can report misuse and bad behaviour directly to Voi through their website. All scooters had a 4 digit number on them, also report date/location/time. They could then see which account it was linked to and take action. It could be difficult to see the numbers clearly but if the location and time given was accurate it was still possible to work out who it was.

Carl stated that every time he came into town there was a scooter on its side on Harleston Road on the pavement. Who's responsibility was it to collect it? Matt stated that riders had an obligation to take a photo of the scooter when they left it to show that it was parked properly. Probably someone else has come along and knocked it over. Riders also received a discount if they took the scooter to one of the proper parking bays. The whole business model was around being able to pick up and leave the scooters locally. Sometimes it was necessary for Voi to move the scooters around to more central locations.

Eleri asked if there was a time limit for reporting driving offences and what sort of offences. Matt explained that the quicker a report was made the better, preferably within 1 or 2 days. That gave time for the initial investigation to be complete by day 10 and the expectation that the driver received a letter by day 14. You should be prepared to go to court but it had not been necessary to send anyone yet. Eleri added that if a person perceived an incident was motivated by hate she would advise reporting it as a hate crime as it would be stronger than traffic to the Control Room. Debbie stated she had a good response when hit by a driver when out cycling. The video footage from the handlebar mounted camera had been vital.

## **6. Community Information Exchange**

John stated that he had not attended for a while as it often clashed with another meeting but had an interest as his wife had suffered a stroke in 1997. He thought the Forums were very important.

Cllr Chantler stated that his residents relied on him to keep them informed but they were often surprised when he turned up in a wheelchair. He had been brought up to carry his cross proudly.

Eleri – told the group that her area had similar parking issues, cars parked on the corner, half on half off the pavement. It took long time to get the neighbourhood team interested but then they did a good job and spoke to owners, who, when they realised what an issue they were causing, moved the vehicle.

Heather explained she had an issue in that she cannot renew her blue badge as she fell outside categories and didn't qualify. This had gone to review and her local Cllr had got involved but it was still refused. Other issues experienced included taking 6 weeks to renew, having to renew when it was a lifelong debilitating issue and also that some areas of the country had an automatic blue badge for those on the higher rate PIP. Cllr Chantler stated he was initially refused a blue badge and would raise these issues.

Kit had recently talked about peer support training with those who had lived experience of mental health etc being trained to support others. The next wave of training would take place in July and they were starting to recruit in May. There were lots of paid jobs coming up in NHFT around long term disability and mental health issues. For an informal chat and to find out more, please contact Kirstie Mycroft, Peer Support Co-ordinator, on 07842 301573 or email [admin.peersupport@nhft.nhs.uk](mailto:admin.peersupport@nhft.nhs.uk)

Carl asked if a charity would be able to do this as they had a lot of members and they were all different. Kit stated that the training was intensive and interactive so was not sure how that would work but to have a conversation with Kirstie.

Carl asked if anyone was aware of any hydrotherapy pools, they had used the one at Moulton but were not allowed to use it any more.

Graeme gave some links for hydrotherapy pools he was aware of:-

[Hydrotherapy Pool - Fairfields School Northampton - Children, families and education \(northamptonshire.gov.uk\)](http://northamptonshire.gov.uk)

[Hydro Pool for Hire - Northgate Academy | Northgate School Arts College | Northampton](#)

Other updates from Graeme –

Northants Carers taking on disability sports at Daventry Leisure Centre with 2 hour sessions of various sports then a swimming. Thanks to WNC, Maisie Summers-Newton won the Inspirational Woman Special Recognition Award.

[Four Northants Swimmers Selected in Great Britain's World Para Swimming Championships Squad Including Visually Impaired Twins Scarlett & Eliza Humphrey Who Will Be Making Their Debuts](#)

[Thirty-strong team named for World Para Swimming Champs | Para-Swimming News | British Swimming](#)

[Two Programmes of Interest for People to Watch on BBC iPlayer Regarding Disability Which Show the Positive Impact Sport and Physical Activity Has Had on Them Over the Years](#)

[BBC iPlayer - Silenced: The Hidden Story of Disabled Britain](#)

[BBC iPlayer - Ellie Simmonds: A World Without Dwarfism?](#)

[Northants Carers Have Taken on the Running of DISC \(Disability Inclusive Sports Club\) at Towcester Centre for Leisure and Regularly Had 50 People Attending](#)

[Disability Inclusive Sports Club \(northamptonshire-carers.org\)](http://northamptonshire-carers.org) Contact Rose Kelly if you'd like to find out more about it, attend sessions as a participant, or volunteer on [Rosek@northamptonshire-carers.org](mailto:Rosek@northamptonshire-carers.org) 07706346943.

Sport4Fitness Disability Family Fun Day

Their disability fun day is at Fernie Fields on June 26<sup>th</sup>. They're looking for stall holders and activity providers. Please email [info@sport4fitness-cic.co.uk](mailto:info@sport4fitness-cic.co.uk) if interested.

[Forthcoming Events – Sport4Fitness CIC \(sport4fitness-cic.co.uk\)](http://sport4fitness-cic.co.uk).

The Challenge Hub

This article on The Challenge Hub and its mental health / disabilities agenda came out last week in Disability Horizons magazine:

<https://disabilityhorizons.com/2022/03/the-challenge-hub-enabling-anyone-with-disabilities-or-mental-health-issues-to-reach-their-potential/>

Activity Alliance Who says Campaign

The "Who Says" campaign is well under way and Activity Alliance are looking for people to promote it by producing short videos to be posted on social media dispelling long held myths regarding disabled people and physical activity.

[Activity Alliance launches campaign to challenge negative attitudes towards disabled children and young people | Northamptonshire Sport](#)

## 7. **Items for Future Meetings**

Carl stated that the trials and tribulations of growing older with a disability were taking their toll and it would be good to have a discussion about how to cope and deal with disabilities into older age. He had been told by the hospital that he was using an incredible amount more energy than a non disabled person just to walk up and down and that his father was coping much better as he aged even though he was 26 years older. However, it was fantastic to have a Cllr with visible disabilities as a Co-Chair as it would show others what can be achieved.

## 8. **Date of Next Meeting**

Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> June, 2.30pm.

This will be a hybrid meeting, either in the Jeffrey Room at the Guildhall or by Teams – the link will be on the agenda.