

Norfolk Business Board

26th September 2024 Meeting Minutes

Meeting details

- Date: 26th September 2024
- Time: 10am
- Venue: Chapman Room, Hethel Engineering, Hethel
- Chairperson: Kay Mason Billig / Nick Steven-Jones
- Minute taker: Helen Wilton

Attendees

Name	Position	Organisation
Denise Hone	Senior Stakeholder Manager	RWE
Mark Gorton	Managing Director	Traditional Norfolk Poultry
Nick Steven-Jones	Chief Executive Officer	Jarrold
Nova Fairbank	Chief Executive Officer	Norfolk Chambers
Robin Milton	Managing Director	Fairer Games
Stephen Crocker	Chief Executive Officer	Norwich Theatre
Amy Griffiths	Chief Executive Officer	Citizens Advice, Diss, Thetford & District
Prof David Maguire	Vice Chancellor	University of East Anglia
Paul Padda	Principal	East Coast College
Cllr Kay Mason Billig	Leader	Norfolk County Council
Cllr Sarah Suggitt	Deputy Leader	Breckland District Council
Cllr Tim Adams	Leader	North Norfolk District Council
Cllr Daniel Elmer	Leader	South Norfolk District Council
Cllr Martin Booth	Portfolio Holder for Economic Development	Broadland District Council
Cllr Daniel Candon	Portfolio Holder for Economic Development	Great Yarmouth Borough Council
Cllr Fabian Eagle	Portfolio Holder for Economic Development	Norfolk County Council
Paul Cracknell	Executive Director of Strategy and Transformation	Norfolk County Council
Chris Starkie	Director of Growth and Investment	Norfolk County Council
Roberta Willner	Head of Economic Development	Norfolk County Council
Helen Wilton	LEP Delivery Officer	Norfolk County Council
William Harley	Project Officer	Norfolk County Council

Item 1 – Welcome and Introductions

Led by: Kay Mason Billig

Kay Mason Billig (KMB) welcomed all attendees to the first meeting of the Norfolk Business Board and thanked them for giving up their time.

KMB then invited all attendees to introduce themselves.

KMB provided the board with an update on the devolution process and advised that she was meeting with the Minister of State for Local Government early in October to agree the process for agreeing a new deal for Norfolk. She noted the disappointment of all involved that the agreed deal had been withdrawn and confirmed that the discussion with the Minister will aim to identify whether any elements can be salvaged from the previous deal.

Nova Fairbank (NF) – asked if the Business Board could provide any kind of support. KMB suggested that a letter from the Board providing the views of Norfolk businesses and the impact on them of withdrawing the deal would be useful

ACTION: NF to draft letter expressing the views of the business community which will be circulated to Board members for approval.

KMB reviewed the role of the board and confirmed that board members would receive regular updates on key projects and initiatives. She also noted that links would be maintained with colleagues on the Suffolk Business Board and advised that a joint board meeting would be held early in 2025.

Item 2 – Apologies for Absence

Led by: Helen Wilton

Helen Wilton (HW) confirmed that apologies had been received by Cllr Mike Stonard, Cllr Alistair Beals and Charlie Wright.

Item 3 – Declarations of Interest

Led by: Chris Starkie

Chris Starkie (CS) explained the process for completing and submitting Declarations of Interest to the Board and noted that blank forms had been issued along with the board papers. These should be returned to Helen Wilton.

HW confirmed that board members would be asked to update these declarations on an annual basis but the onus was on individual board members to submit updated forms if their personal circumstances changed. There will also be an opportunity to make any declarations at the start of each meeting.

Item 4 – Appointment of Chair

Led by: Kay Mason Billig

KMB asked for self nominations for the role Chair from the board members from the business sector.

Nick Steven-Jones (NSJ) nominated himself for the position of Chair.

Daniel Elmer (DE) seconded the nomination.

KMG asked for approval of the appointment and this was confirmed unanimously by board members.

The Board agreed:

- **To appoint Nick Steven-Jones as chair of the Norfolk Business Board.**

NSJ thanked board members for their support and took over as chair of the meeting,

Item 5 – Norfolk Economic Strategy

NSJ introduced Roberta Willner (RW), Head of Economic Development at Norfolk County Council, who has lead the team developing the economic strategy.

RW reminded the board of the background to the strategy and reviewed the process carried out to engage with partners across the county. Over 500 people have attended 17 workshops held in order to meet with stakeholders and seek their views on what they would like to see in the Norfolk Economic Strategy. Key findings were then analysed to determine emerging priorities and actions, feeding into the draft strategy which itself has been reviewed by partners on a regular basis.

RW noted the process had recognised that different parts of the county face different challenges and this is reflected in the strategy which also included both the challenges faced by Norfolk and the opportunities available within the county.

From the consultation and the review of the evidence four key pillars have been identified:

- **Local Business** support and development of key sectors and clusters
- **People and skills** – support to meet future work force needs
- **Infrastructure** – including connectivity and transport
- **Placemaking and Community**

There are also crosscutting themes, including:

- **Decarbonisation and sustainability**
- **Supporting Rural and Coastal communities**
- **Reducing Inequality** and ensuring we work towards inclusive growth

RW highlighted the strategic alignments with other strategies within the region including District Economic Plans and other NCC strategies

RW confirmed that amendments are now being made to the strategy based on feedback from districts and then the final version will proceed through the approval process for districts and Norfolk County Council.

RW invited board members to submit their comments and feedback.

ACTION: Board members to submit their comments on the Norfolk Economic Strategy to RW by Friday 11th October.

The Board discussed the strategy at length and provided initial feedback to RW.

David Maguire (DM) congratulated RW on the extensive work carried out to produce the strategy. He noted there had been a change in Government since the outset and suggested that, as the new Government had identified its 5 key missions to it may be worthwhile reviewing the document again these missions to ensure alignment.

RW confirmed that some text had been changed in light of the recent devolution announcement and advised that the strategy has also been reviewed by officers from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to ensure it is aligned.

Board members felt that strategy needs to ensure that businesses are at the forefront of economic development and that it highlights the opportunities available for businesses to thrive and grow in Norfolk as well as noting the key collaboration across sectors and businesses required to access larger grants and funding. It was agreed that it could be more ambitious and should identify what businesses we are looking to attract to Norfolk and what does the success look like for those working here.

It was agreed that the strategy has a wider focus than just Gross Value Added (GVA) and this needs to be highlighted earlier in the strategy.

Daniel Candon (DC) noted the unique nature of the Norfolk economy and stressed that this must not be lost when reviewing it against Governments priorities.

Stephen Croker (SC) commented on the extent of the stakeholder engagement and proposed enhancing the links between the points raised in the strategy and the vision which had been identified. It was agreed to amend the area entitled "Visitor Economy" to "Culture, Heritage & Visitor Economy" to ensure it is more inclusive.

KMB advised the board that she will take a draft of the strategy to the her meeting with Jim McMahon MP, the Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution in order to demonstrate Norfolk's ambitions and opportunities.

The Board agreed:

- **To content the content of the report**
- **To provide feedback and comments on the Norfolk Economic Strategy to RW by Friday 11th October.**

Item 6 – Terms of Reference

CS presented the Norfolk Business Board Terms of Reference (ToR) and advised that these had been drafted as part of the Local Assurance Framework drawn up as part of the integration of New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership into Norfolk County Council and that these ToR have been discussed and agreed at the Public Sector Leaders meetings, Norfolk Leaders Meetings and were approved by Cabinet on 24th June 2024 before being submitted to and signed off by Government.

CS noted that the board was entitled to change its ToR as was appropriate and reviewed the key elements of the document.

Tim Adams (TA) asked whether economic development portfolio holder from a district could attend.

CS noted that all district leaders had initially asked to be on the board and the membership had been expanded to include leaders of all districts. He queried whether the position of district leaders had changed on this matter.

TA expressed his complete support for the board but felt that portfolio holders were often closer to businesses than leaders and may be able to contribute more to the board. This view was supported by DC.

DE proposed changing the ToR to allow the leader, deputy leader or economic development portfolio holder to attend and to allow them all the same voting rights. This proposal was seconded by TA.

KMB advised that the ToR had been drafted before the recent decision from Government on devolution and as the circumstances had changed she was comfortable the proposed amendments.

DM asked that those attending from the districts come with the delegated authority required to make decisions at the board meetings.

Mark Gorton (MG) also noted that the same people need to attend as much as possible to ensure consistency.

Both of the points were agreed by board members.

SC queried whether the ToR were still appropriate given the withdrawal of the devolution deal.

CS confirmed that the ToR were written on the basis that the board was a stand alone body regardless of devolution and therefore were still fit for purpose but would need to be reviewed going forwards in conjunction with any future plans.

The Board voted on the proposal and agreed:

- **To amend the Terms of Reference to allow the appointed nominee to the board from each district to be a leader, deputy leader or portfolio holder for economic growth who will have full voting rights.**
- **To amend item 3.2 to reflect new composition as per the agreed changes.**
- **To approve the Terms of Reference subject to the above changes.**

Item 7 – Forward Plan

Led by: Chris Starkie

CS confirmed that a forward plan for board meetings was being drawn up and advised that guests would be invited to speak on specific subjects.

CS asked board members to consider areas of interest which they would like to hear about and advise Helen Wilton accordingly.

RW reviewed the plan for the December meeting which will include the Norfolk Ambassadors Programme, the Norfolk Economic Strategy Action Plan and an update from the Sectors and Innovation team.

Denise Hone (DH) suggested providing board members with background information on key sectors to ensure understanding across the board.

NF noted that the Board needed to ensure it produced significant outputs which were visible to external parties.

NSJ proposed meeting with all board members individually in order to understand their priorities.

The Board agreed:

- **To contact Helen Wilton with any requests for items to be included in the Forward Plan.**

Item 8 – Any other business (AOB)

Led by: Nick Steven-Jones

None

Item 9 – Next meeting

10am, Wednesday 4th December 2024