

Norfolk Business Board Draft Terms of Reference

Vision

To drive an economy that is vibrant, entrepreneurial, inclusive, and sustainable, supported by the right jobs, skills, training, and infrastructure.

Purpose

A partnership between business, education, and local government to deliver our vision for inclusive economic growth.

This will be achieved by using the Board's collective expertise to shape strategic thinking, steer programme design/delivery, and influence, both locally and nationally. This board will provide a strong, independent, and diverse local business voice to Norfolk County Council and other public sector partners now and as a devolved authority, to inform decision making.

Structure

The Business Board is an unincorporated partnership with Norfolk County Council (NCC) as the accountable body.

The composition of the board is:

- 1 x Chair (a business sector representative)
- 1 x County Council Member
- 7 x District Council Leaders
- 7 x Business representatives from key sectors
- 1 x Higher Education
- 1 x Further Education

Meeting and Reporting Procedures

The board will meet for a minimum of 4 time per year for at least two hours, plus preparation and business engagement time.

The Board will be supported by Norfolk County Council officers.

Role of the Board

The Business Board delivers a critical function for Norfolk by fulfilling its purpose outlined in section 2. This will be achieved by:

- Overseeing the ambitious evidence-based Economic Strategy for Norfolk.
- Acting as expert consultees to influence policy, major funding decisions and strategy, and making recommendations on topics including, but not limited to:
 - Business Support Programmes including start-up and scale up support
 - Funding for business growth
 - Key sector development
 - Productivity

- Inward investment
- Infrastructure development
- Acting as a voice for industry, with board members representing different sectors, geographies, and business types.
- Oversight of Growth Hub and other business support programmes as appropriate.
- Oversight of performance of projects including receiving regular progress updates.
- Acting as an advocate for Norfolk's Economic Strategy and its key priorities.
- Working to attract new business investment into the county.
- Convening businesses to understand their needs and ambitions.
- Acting as an enabling vehicle and advocate for sector specific councils and groups.
- Developing and overseeing programmes to support business growth.
- Recommending bids for future funding and programmes.
- Collaborating with the new Suffolk Business Board as well as sector and thematic groups as appropriate.

Members Standards and Appointments

Board members will adhere to the Seven Principles of Public Life (the Nolan Principles).

They will support the Chair to embed a culture of professionalism, transparency and accountability for decision making.

Elected Members will be subject to the high standards of behaviour laid out in Norfolk County Council's Code of Conduct.

All members will be expected to demonstrate a suitability of interests and skills.

Appointment of new Business Representatives to the Board will be through an open recruitment process.

The Board will seek to ensure suitable representation from SMEs to reflect the diverse economy of Norfolk as well as a mix of businesses to reflect the sectoral and geographic make up of Norfolk.

Business representative vacancies will be advertised on NCC's website and through sector groups, social media, and other appropriate avenues, where appropriate.

Colleges and Universities will be responsible for selecting their board representatives, one for colleges and one for universities. At the end of the three-year term, a new representative would be selected by them.

District representatives will be the leader of their council.

Roles and Responsibilities

All members will:

- Be an expert in their area of specialism to accurately represent views, challenges, and opinions to benefit the county.
- Read papers, prepare for meetings, and proactively engage in maintaining their local currency to add value to the Business Board.

- Represent the board at events when required.
- Conduct ongoing business engagement and consultation through a range of means, relevant to their role, which may include attending other expert groups and drawing in other relevant individuals with specialist knowledge.
- Work collaboratively with Board members, officers, and external partners, such as other counties, sector skills groups and trade bodies, to shape and steer decision making for Norfolk to drive economic growth.
- They should be able to set aside a day a month or equivalent timing.

Business Member Role, Responsibilities and Person Specification

This is a voluntary role and the term of the position is for up to three years from the date of appointment. A second three-year term is permitted with the agreement of the board.

Business representatives are welcome from for profit, not for profit, social enterprises, and representative organisations.

Business Members will have the following responsibilities:

- Represent the views and interests of private sector businesses, especially those of their sector, business size banding and geographic area.
- Act with the intent to add value locally by ensuring an environment in which Norfolk businesses can flourish and grow the economy.
- Collaborate with all Board colleagues from districts, education and other sectors, to shape delivery of programmes to benefit Norfolk's economic growth.

All new business members must be politically independent to provide a constructive check and challenge on local decision making using their private sector perspective. Politically independent includes but is not limited to; not being a councillor, not being an agent for a political group and not sharing public support for a political party.

The Chair will be responsible for addressing issues of non-attendance.

Conflicts of Interest

Members of the Board will be asked to complete an annual declaration of their interests (based on a financial year) which will be held on record using the Register of Interests Form. Board members should also update this as soon as they become aware (and within 28 days as a maximum) of a new conflict arising.

Members should also review their individual register of interests before each meeting, submitting any necessary revisions to NCC at the start of the meeting.

Decision Making

- The Board will operate within its terms of reference
- Recommendations may be made direct to the leader, the cabinet, an officer with delegated authority or to Districts or external organisations.
- 8.3 Decision making will always be undertaken in line with the constitution of Norfolk County Council and Schemes of Delegation and subject to scrutiny.
- Decisions taken by the board will generally be by consensus. On the occasions where consensus cannot be reached, by a simple majority.

- The minimum quoracy in board meetings is 50% of business and education board members (5 of the 10) and 50% of local authority members present (4 of the 8).

Observers, Substitutions and Technical Experts/Subject Specialists

- Observers may be invited, for example, colleagues from central government.
- The situation may arise where calls for proposals are technical and would benefit from localised input from specialists. Where agreed necessary to ensure the board receives the best possible information, advice and guidance, technical experts or subject specialists may be invited.
- Observers and technical experts/subject specialists are allowed by invitation from the Chair only.
- Observers and technical experts/subject specialists are allowed to participate in the discussion but do not form part of the quorum for the meeting and will not have voting rights.
- Named substitutes will only be permitted by previous agreement with the Board. They must be someone of equivalent status to the board member they are replacing such as a deputy leader. Private sector board members cannot send substitutes as they are appointed as individuals not as an organisational representative.
- Substitutes are allowed to participate in the discussion but do not form part of the quorum for the meeting and will not have voting rights.

Amendments

Norfolk County Council in consultation with the Chair retains the right to amend these terms of reference at any time following consultation with the Board.

The Terms of Reference will be reviewed on an annual basis.

Date of Approval: 26th September 2024