

## Agenda Item 4: Norfolk Ambassadors Programme

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### Summary

The aim of the programme is to engage the wider Norfolk business community to support the delivery of the Economic Strategy and promote the county as a place to live, work and do better business thereby supporting inclusive economic growth.

The Norfolk Ambassador Programme will be made up of business partners from across the county who are passionate about Norfolk both as a place to live and do business. The programme will cover all sectors (public, private and VCSE) and will identify and coordinate a range of opportunities for the Ambassadors to raise the profile of Norfolk.

Ambassadors will support the Norfolk Business Board and will act as a voice for business sharing concerns and ideas with local and central government. They will also use their network of contacts to promote business support programmes throughout Norfolk including existing support and sharing new initiatives. Ambassadors will act as a knowledge bank to provide direct training, advice and support to businesses either by participating in formal training or speaking at relevant events.

The Norfolk Ambassadors programme is not a membership organisation and has been designed with the FSB and Norfolk Chambers of Commerce to complement their work and link together events and support for businesses across the county.

### Background

It has historically been identified that Norfolk needs to be more proactive in promoting its key assets and this has been further echoed by those inputting into the Norfolk Economic Strategy. The Local Growth Plan has established, as one of its key priorities, the need to “promote Norfolk as a place to live, work, visit and invest” and this programme supports that aim.

In June 2024 the recruitment process for the Norfolk Business Board was launched and nearly 70 high quality applications were received from business leaders across the county who wanted to actively support the growth of the Norfolk economy.

While board places could only be offered to 8 applicants it was agreed that this enthusiasm and energy should not be lost and could be harnessed in a different way while still supporting Norfolk and its business community. The Norfolk Ambassadors Programme proposes to use these business experts and their contacts in both a practical and strategic programme of support and to date over 30 of the initial board applicants have expressed an interest in becoming Norfolk Ambassadors. While no overall limit to numbers is proposed we envisage the total remaining no more than 50.

## **The Objectives of the Norfolk Ambassadors Programme are to:**

- Champion Norfolk as a place to work and do business by highlighting the wealth of existing business strengths
- Advocate on behalf of the Norfolk Business Board on Norfolk on topics where greater business feedback is needed
  - Input business need to local and central government
  - Secure business case studies, testimonials and support
- Highlight opportunities for business engagement to access new ideas, perspectives and best practices.
- Ensure business are kept aware of the support network available including financial and training opportunities
- Provide practical input into events, training and networking

### **How will this be achieved**

Similar programmes have been established in elsewhere in the country offering various models:

#### **Invest in Suffolk Ambassadors**

<https://www.suffolkchamber.co.uk/about-us/invest-in-suffolk-ambassadors/>

This is a partnership between Suffolk County Council and the Suffolk Chamber of Commerce to promote the county as a business location and to respond to Inward Investment enquiries.

#### **Sheffield See It Be It Campaign**

<https://seeitbeit.campaign.sheffield.gov.uk/our-ambassadors#:~:text=Our%20SIBI%20Ambassadors%20are%20a,%2Dto%2Ddate%20and%20collaborative.>

The Sheffield City Council's See it Be it campaign is targeted at supporting young people in the workplace and its ambassadors are a group of representatives from local employers and businesses who have come together to help shape the campaign, share best practice and promote it to their connections.

#### **Hemel Hempstead Business Ambassadors**

<https://thinkhemel.com/about/our-partners/hemel-hempstead-business-ambassadors/>

These ambassadors are economic champions who bring together their knowledge, networks and influence to compete, attract investment, business and visitors to create a more successful local economy.

#### **Scarborough Business Ambassadors**

<https://scarboroughbusinessambassadors.org/>

Scarborough Business Ambassadors use their collective knowledge of business and enterprise to apply that to promote Scarborough, connect organisations and create partnerships, champion greater aspiration and skills and help to represent the interests of Scarborough businesses.

## **Areas of Involvement**

### **Regional & National Influencing and Advocacy**

Ambassadors will provide a voice for Norfolk businesses at a regional and national level and will advise policymakers about the real issues facing businesses across the county. They will also help us to understand those business needs and priorities they want to voice to government.

## **Promotion of Norfolk as a place to live, work invest and visit**

Ambassadors will work to promote local and national views of Norfolk and what it offers and will have the opportunity to attend a wide range of events. This may include:

- Attending the launch event for the Norfolk Economic Strategy at that House of Lords
- Attendings/speaking at events relevant to Norfolk's key sectors - SNS24, Norfolk Farming Conference, Royal Norfolk Show supporting the Norfolk Rural Business Awards and the business leaders reception.
- Supporting relevant local or sectoral programmes – arts festival, tourism campaigns, Sync The City etc
- Visits to local businesses to see the latest developments and witness the results of local investment while understanding the key challenges
- An annual event to showcase Norfolk businesses

Ambassadors will also be asked to use their network of contacts to reach a wider audience. Communications may include:

- Details of new funding opportunities
- Invitations to training and events
- Ad hoc requests such as support for local awards, promotion of the Norfolk Film Office database of locations

## **Practical Support to Businesses**

Ambassadors will provide practical support to businesses operating in Norfolk which may include:

- Using their networks to promote funding opportunities and training events
- Providing mentoring support
- Speaking at business networking events
- Providing face to face training at organised sessions or at webinars

Ambassadors will receive a monthly newsletter details areas of involvements, events and requests for support and will also be provided with a pack to assist them containing:

- Facts about the Norfolk economy
- Upcoming events
- Key contacts
- Opportunities for investment
- Current funding training programmes

## **Steering Group**

A Steering Group will be established and will provide expert support, strategic direction and oversight to the Norfolk Ambassadors programme. It will consist of 5-6 members including the FSB, the Norfolk Chambers, 1-2 business representative(s) from the Norfolk Business Board and 2 of the 'founding' Norfolk Ambassadors from the original business board applicants.

The Steering group will meet quarterly and will:

- Provide a link between the Ambassadors Programme and the Norfolk Business Board
- Establish and connect to existing business events and identify any event gaps
- Ensure the programme aligns with other existing business networks/ groups

## **Next Steps**

- Present the proposal to the Norfolk Business Board for discussion (Dec 24)
- Identity steering group members (Jan 25)
- First meeting of the steering group to agree initial programme of events and engagement covering the first 6 months (Feb 25)
- Development of support pack by Comms team (Jan - Feb 25)
- Launch event (Mar 25) to include
  - Introduction about raising profile of Norfolk
  - Building on the Norfolk Economic strategy
  - Why become an ambassador?
  - How you can engage?

## **Recommendation**

The Board is to:

1. Receive the proposal for the Norfolk Ambassadors Programme
2. Endorse the approach to the formation of the Norfolk Ambassadors Programme