

Agenda Item 8: Norfolk Business Board Communications Strategy

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Background

Norfolk Business Board was set up in April 2024 when New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) integrated into Norfolk County Council and Suffolk County Council. This move followed a government decision to transfer the functions of the LEPs to local authorities.

The board is a partnership between business, education, the voluntary sector and local government. Its members come from a variety of backgrounds across the county, and together, they provide a strong, independent, and diverse local voice for businesses in Norfolk. This informs decision-making for the county, and ensures it is a place where businesses can flourish and grow the economy.

As the work of the Business Board gathers pace, it is important it has a strategy to set out how it will communicate with its members, businesses, councils, and other stakeholders, the channels it will use, and its tone of voice. This document will ensure the board's communications are accurate, carefully planned and effective in raising awareness of its activities and news, and share opportunities for engagement. It also explains how communications via different channels will be approved prior to publication so the process is clear.

Aim of the strategy

- Provide an agreed framework for the comms activities of the board
- Raise awareness of Norfolk Business Board and the role it plays in the county
- Amplify the voice of Norfolk businesses

Key messages

- We support the ambitions of Norfolk's Local Growth Plan and will work collaboratively with partners to develop action plans for its delivery.
- The board represents all sectors in Norfolk and aims to create an economic environment in which they can flourish.
- We want to amplify the voice of Norfolk businesses at a regional and national level.

Why LinkedIn?



LinkedIn is already a primary community for business leaders and increasingly used by the voluntary and education sectors, as well as local members. There is no charge to use the service, and it has a good reputation for impartiality and non-interference from its owners. Many of our Business Board members and stakeholders have established accounts of their own and can play a role in promoting its activities by sharing content with their networks.

Role of our LinkedIn account

- Raising awareness of the board and its activities among the business community and stakeholder groups
- Demonstrating how the board is acting as a voice for businesses locally and nationally
- Communicating opportunities for businesses to apply for grants and other support
- Positioning the board as a key collaborator with business, education, local government and the voluntary sector
- Communicating how people can engage with the board or the Norfolk Ambassadors programme

Target audience

Businesses
Local authorities
Industry sector groups
VCSE organisations

Content delivery and planning

- Press releases issued on behalf of the board
- Reports from board meetings
- Statements from the board in response to relevant news stories ie The Budget
- Promotion of Local Growth Plan
- Promotion of Industry Councils ie Norfolk & Suffolk Innovation Board
- Norfolk Ambassadors programme activities
- Grants and other funding opportunities for local businesses
- Other opportunities for businesses ie Norfolk Rural Business Awards
- LinkedIn posts/blogs from individual board members

Board meetings are held four times a year and posts will be planned for each of these. Outside of these scheduled meetings we will look for regular opportunities to share content that is directly relevant to our audience and that supports the objectives of the board and the Local Growth Plan.

One of the key roles of the board is to be a voice for businesses in Norfolk and LinkedIn will provide the opportunity to communicate what it is doing on their behalf. It will also provide a means of promoting opportunities for businesses, from grants and other funding programmes to free workshops and events. The plan will be to post at least once a month, with a view to increasing this as the activities of Norfolk Business Board and the Norfolk Ambassadors programme gather pace.

Board members will not be able to post direct to the page but can submit news items, blogs and thought pieces for consideration and add comments and relevant links to existing posts. Longer reads are popular on LinkedIn and 73% of members are receptive to posts by company representatives and thought leaders.

Richard Balls, Principal Communications Officer for Growth and Investment at Norfolk County Council, will have overall responsibility for planning and producing content for the account, supported by the central comms team where required. Content will be read carefully for accuracy and online links checked to ensure they work and signpost to the correct information.

Tone of voice

The overall tone of the account – both in content and replies to comments – should be professional and business-like, but friendly and accessible. We will always use Plain English, avoiding acronyms, and be active not passive. Posts should have calls to action where possible to encourage engagement and always be accompanied by a good quality image or video.

Evaluating success

Ultimately, we want people to engage with our content and share it with their own networks. The number of likes, comments, impressions will be recorded each month to evaluate levels of engagement. The effectiveness of this account will also be shown in how successfully we attract and engage with people from Norfolk's key economic sectors – agri-food, energy, digital/ICT, manufacturing and engineering – and those which underpin it such as tourism and hospitality. We will also analyse visits to and page views on the Norfolk Business Board website.

Engagement targets 1 April – 30 September 2025

Follower growth rate – 300 followers

Impressions – over 1,000 impressions per post

Engagement rate – 15% per post *

*Clicks + Likes + Comments + Reposts + Follows / Impressions.

Website

The primary purpose of the website is to be a front window for the board, setting out its purpose, providing information about members, industry councils and boards, and funding opportunities, and publishing agendas, papers and minutes, ensuring its activities are transparent.

The news section will carry meeting reports and other relevant stories, although the LinkedIn page will be the more important vehicle when it comes to getting these pieces read and generating engagement. Most often it will simply provide useful links to information that can be shared on LinkedIn and elsewhere.

Richard Balls will liaise with Helen Wilton to ensure the website is kept fully up to date and information is published in a timely way.

Other comms activities

Press releases

Releases issued by the board will have a news hook, quotes, and be written as a news story that can be published as is. A good quality image will be supplied wherever possible.

Various factors will come into play when it comes to the timing of press releases. For example, we will want to avoid issuing a press release on the same day as a major announcement affecting the county as this will lessen its chances of being picked up and used by the press. Alternatively, a release might be timed to coincide with a national announcement or initiative ie National Apprenticeships Week.

Some stories will be issued to all local media contacts, whereas others might be offered to specific journalists ie an agri-food story being sent to the EDP Agriculture Correspondent and/or trade press. Efforts will be made to nurture relationships with local journalists and invites extended for certain events that might receive positive coverage for the board. All releases will be signed off by Nick Steven-Jones as Chair.

Member content

Board members are encouraged to produce thought pieces, blogs or short news items relating to the role they are playing on the board and what they want to achieve for their own sectors. Content should be designed to stimulate discussion and engagement and be accompanied by a good quality image or video. Members can refer to their own business where relevant, but should avoid any wider promotion of it via Business Board channels. Proposed content should be sent to Richard Balls in the first instance for approval and publication.

Stakeholder channels

Our board members' organisations and other stakeholders have their own comms channels, including regular newsletters, some of them business-focused, such as New Anglia Growth Hub, Norfolk Chambers of Commerce and the Federation of Small Businesses. These and other opportunities to share our content will be maximised to ensure the widest possible reach.

Promotional opportunities

We will look for other opportunities to promote the Business Board, such as Parliamentary receptions, MPs briefings, sector/stakeholder events, while support for local businesses can be shared during national campaigns like National

Apprenticeship Week and Small Business Saturday. In addition, we will work with the Suffolk Business Board and publicise our collaborative efforts.

Recommendation/Request

The Norfolk Business Board is requested to:

- Note the contents of the report
- Endorse the Norfolk Business Board Communications Strategy
- Consider and provide input to the Growth & Investment Communications Manager