

Suffolk Business Board Terms of Reference

Purpose

The Business Board is a partnership between business, education, the voluntary sector and local government in Suffolk. The Board brings together local leaders to shape a prosperous and sustainable economic future for the County. The Board will set and drive the implementation of an ambitious economic strategy; providing a clear vision and action plan to help focus actions, interventions and investments that create value and opportunity for Suffolk's people and businesses to flourish and grow.

Key Responsibilities

Strategy:

- Shape a compelling and ambitious economic strategy and brand for Suffolk.
- Determine a set of strategic priorities for nurturing business, innovation, skills and infrastructure development.
- Embed clean growth in the development and delivery of the economic strategy supporting the Suffolk wide commitment to achieve net zero by 2030.
- Identify and articulate strategic infrastructure needs to support the economy.

Investments

- Identify and drive the development of interventions, programmes and investment opportunities which deliver the biggest economic impact for residents and businesses.
- Review and challenge existing (former LEP) programmes including Growth Hub, Inward Investment, the innovation programme and skills bootcamps.
- Inform and direct business support priorities.
- Work with regional partners to shape and agree priorities and investment decisions (e.g. Network rail and National Highways).

Collaboration

- Provide a forum for political, business and education leaders, and innovators to come together to share insights, exchange ideas, and sponsor projects in support of Suffolk's economy.
- Use its convening power to bring together partners from the private, public and Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sectors to boost productivity, skills and drive clean growth.
- Provide a platform for wider business engagement and ensure a thorough understanding of regional business priorities across the East, working with neighbouring counties, and engaging with key economy initiatives such as Tech East and Transport East.

Advocacy

- Shape a compelling and ambitious Suffolk narrative which is supported and promoted by key stakeholders and influencers.

- Support the attraction of inward investment and nurture business development, innovation and creativity.
- Promote and champion the economic success of Suffolk, and act as an ambassador for Suffolk.
- Influence national and regional policy to ensure Suffolk has the skills it needs to deliver its ambitions for a high-skilled workforce of the future.
- Work with wider business stakeholders to promote Suffolk and the wider region nationally and internationally to raise its profile, nurture talent, attract and retain businesses and secure funding for investments.

Membership

The Business Board will comprise up to 17 members, including:

- A business member as Chair
- The Leader of Suffolk County Council, as deputy chair, and a further County Council representative
- The Leaders of two Suffolk District Councils
- One Higher Education representative and one Further Education representative
- Up to two business association representatives, including the Suffolk Chamber of Commerce
- Up to 10 business members (including business association representatives)

Business members will be senior leaders able to influence and advise both within the region and beyond. They will have knowledge and expertise in a range of industry sectors, representing both established industries, and the key growth areas in the County. Business representatives will cover a range of businesses from multi-nationals to local SMEs. At least one of the business members will represent and engage with the small and medium sized enterprise business community, and at least one member will represent the VCSE sector.

The Board will be diverse and representative of Suffolk people and business.

Council representatives are able to send substitutes, where necessary, as are education representatives. No substitutes are allowed for business members. All private sector members of the Business Board act in their individual capacity and not as representatives of their respective organisations.

Irrespective of background or geography, it is the responsibility of Business Board members to act in the best interests of Suffolk and in accordance with policies of the Business Board.

Business Board members are expected to discharge their duties in line with the Nolan Principles for Standards of Public Life and the Code of Practice for Board Members of Public Bodies.

Political Leaders who are Members of the County, District and Borough Councils must also comply with the Business Board Code of Conduct.

All Business Board and sub-committee or sub-group members will make decisions on merit having taken into account all the relevant information available at the time.

Term

The initial chair will serve for one year. Following which, the Board will elect a new chair. The term of the new chair will be two years from the date of appointment. The term for business members and education members will be either two years or three years from the date of appointment. Terms will be staggered to ensure efficient succession planning and continuity amongst the membership.

Business members to serve a maximum of 6 years (various combinations of 2/3 year terms possible). Renewal of term will not be automatic but will be considered by the Board.

The Districts / Borough Council seats will rotate annually. The Districts / Borough will confirm their nominations via the 'SCOLT' forum.

Appointment of business members

An open process, operated by the County Council, took place to recruit the first Business Board. For future appointments, the Business Board Chair (with support from officers as required) is responsible for nominating business members, or running a process to identify business members, including the vice chair, and the education representatives, for approval by the Business Board.

Any Board member can nominate a future Chair candidate, for approval by the Business Board.

Governance

The Business Board shall meet up to six times a year. Suffolk County Council will support the Board and will ensure appropriate papers are prepared for discussion and review, in coordination with other key economic partners, including the District and Borough Councils, and other key groups such as Sector Group leads. Council officers will attend the Business Board meetings as required to present papers and take meeting minutes.

Business Board members may be sought to represent the Business Board on other relevant Boards which already exist or which may be established in future, such as:

- Suffolk Skills & Employment Board
- New Anglia Capital Board
- Norfolk and Suffolk Innovation Board
- Investment Board

The Business Board will provide advice to Suffolk County Council and will engage with wider Suffolk public sector leadership groups including Suffolk Public Sector Leaders (SPSL) and Suffolk Chief Executives (SCOLT).

The Business Board may recommend establishing committees or sub-committees as it sees fit to discharge its functions. The Business Board will also invite Chairs of existing Committees (e.g. the Sector Groups) to provide updates to the Board.

Suffolk County Council, as accountable body, is responsible for supporting any new committees. Any such subordinate body reporting to the Business Board shall include one or more Business Board Members, as nominated by the Board. With the consent of the Chair, any such group may also co-opt onto it any independent person with the relevant expertise.

The Business Board does not have legal status to enter into contracts and will act through Suffolk County Council as the accountable body. As part of this, Suffolk County Council will manage the financial obligations of the Business Board.

Suffolk County Council's Scrutiny Committee may review or scrutinise any Council decision in its role as accountable body for the Business Board. The Monitoring Officer shall ensure that this includes appropriate scrutiny of Business Board decision making and achievements. The Business Board Chair (and any additional member whom the Chair sees as appropriate) may be asked to attend, or otherwise contribute to, a meeting of Council Scrutiny Committee. The Council's Audit Committee will review how any relevant local assurance frameworks are operating in practice.

Declaration of Interests

Members should ensure that the register of interests is kept up to date, as per the separate Conflicts of Interest Policy. This will be published on the Business Board website. All Business Board members should take personal responsibility for declaring their interests and avoiding bias. This should be evidenced by producing and signing a Register of Interests.

Remuneration

Business Board members will not receive compensation for attending meetings, and associated pre and post work.

Reasonable expenses will be refunded.