

**URN:** 21-088

**Subject:** BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT PLAN

**Report to:** EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM, 26 May 2021  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE, 7<sup>th</sup> June 2021

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#### **SUBJECT MATTER / RECOMMENDATIONS**

There is a clear need to establish and sustain an interface between the Council and local businesses – an ongoing dialogue that will a) inform Council policy, prioritisation and strategic decision making in respect of the local economy, b) identify opportunities for Council intervention (e.g. inward investment facilitation) at an enterprise level, c) pulling in and signposting / facilitating as much of the business support out there, locally, as possible, and d) identifying gaps in provision, barriers to growth.

This paper presents to members an overview of and introduction to a Business Engagement Plan, setting out the objectives and priorities in establishing and sustaining an interface and dialogue with local businesses. Outputs for activities will be monitored and reported to members against on an ongoing basis in line with regular reporting against the Council's Economic Growth Strategy.

#### **Members are asked to:**

- 1) Review and comment upon the content of the report**

### **1. Introduction and Background**

- 1.1. Economic Development Committee members resolved to support the Economic Growth Strategy (2020-2025) and supplementary Economic Growth Action Plan – the latter as a *living document*. The onset of the Pandemic resulted in a rapid reorganisation and refocusing of business support and engagement and the emergence of new priorities outlined in the Borough's *Pathway to Recovery strategy*, which sets out measures to prepare businesses and residents to innovate and adapt to 'new normals' and the wider *Norfolk and Suffolk Covid-19 Economic Recovery Restart Plan*.
- 1.2. The Economic Growth Strategy and Action Plan provide the operational framework against which the Corporate Plan theme of *a strong and growing economy* and its four outcomes will be delivered. These outcomes are broken down into 'Strategic Priorities' in the Economic Growth Strategy and described in terms of challenges, strengths and opportunities. The nature of the local economy continues to change, and the Council continues to play an active role in creating the right conditions for local businesses to thrive.

- 1.3. Theme 1 *“to have secured inward investment in the Borough, creating a vibrant economy and matching local skills provision with future job and career opportunities”* picks up the following aims and outcomes:

Aim	Provide businesses support, guidance and profile exposure via the Enterprise GY service
Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Evidence base and intelligence (the Borough Profile)</li><li>• More economically-viable start-up businesses</li><li>• Improved business survival rates</li><li>• Maximising local uptake of business funding</li><li>• Increased support and profile of local home-grown businesses</li></ul>

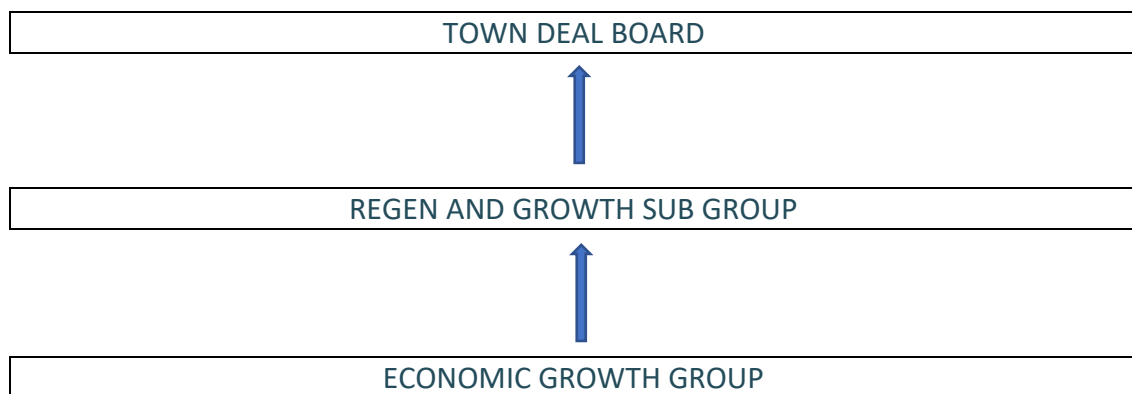
- 1.4. Business engagement has been carried out via the Economic Growth team who lead the enterprise GY service. Whilst businesses are engaged on a frequent basis, the current arrangements do not systematically collect and interpret business views in a way that can provide a clear mandate to the Council and other business representatives (such as the LEP and Chamber of Commerce). This results partly from the fact that the collection and analysis of this information is not able to be robust and objective, and is not assimilated in one place for broader consideration. Much existing business engagement is designed for networking and information sharing, rather than policy development. In addition, current business engagement does not stratify the business population and reflect the views of a cross-section of Great Yarmouth businesses.
- 1.5. As a result, there is a clear need to establish and sustain an interface between the Council and local businesses – an ongoing dialogue that will a) inform Council policy, prioritisation and strategic decision making in respect of the local economy, b) identify opportunities for Council intervention (e.g. inward investment facilitation) at an enterprise level, c) pulling in and signposting / facilitating as much of the business support out there, locally, as possible, and d) identifying gaps in provision, barriers to growth.
- 1.6. This paper, therefore, provides a structured approach to business engagement where officers and business representatives will systematically discuss and consult on economic development issues at a local level. The discussions should be structured in order to reach conclusions when possible, analysed where necessary and reported back to the Council via the various strategic groups (e.g. Town Deal) and political (e.g. Economic Development / P+R etc) committees.
- 1.7. The intention is that a small business led group of business representatives would be brought together to discuss the intelligence gleaned and where necessary and appropriate feed back project, programme or policy ideas to the Council. This collective would bring together representatives (in agreement) from: LEP, Chamber of Commerce, Federation of Small Business, EEEGr, Peel ports, Growth Hub and others.
- 1.8. This would therefore allow the Council to capture business views to help inform strategic discussions and ultimately influence policies and programmes for the Borough.

## **2. GREAT YARMOUTH BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT PLAN**

- 2.1. A key priority is, therefore, to foster a deeper understanding of local business needs in order to represent their interests to various stakeholders (including entities such as the Chamber of

Commerce, the LEP, the Federation of Small Business, etc) and enable effective promotion of strategic and enterprise-level economic growth within the Borough.

- 2.2. As such, the Plan should formalise and structure existing business interaction to systematically capture and evaluate representative and inclusive perspectives to:
- Provide a structured approach to communication between the Council and local businesses on economic development issues;
  - Provide local businesses with a stronger voice and representation to the Council and its stakeholders;
  - Clarify for businesses how and where they can express their views on economic growth and related issues; and,
  - Facilitate the development of sector-specific projects and programmes or discussions in support of the Economic Growth Strategy and Action Plan.
- 2.3. The information loop will provide strategic, political and operational intelligence via various channels to ensure that the Council can consider and act on the feedback provided. The broad schematic below shows how this will work:



### 3. DIRECT BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT

- 3.1. It is recognised that no one single approach, format or channel will capture representative intelligence and that there are inherent challenges to sustaining a meaningful dialogue between the Council and a wide range of businesses and representatives. To ensure that the Council engages with smaller businesses, for example, it is helpful to engage with business intermediary groups, such as the Chamber of Commerce, and it will seek to extend this approach.
- 3.2. In recent years, Governments have made significant changes to economic development funding and councils are more reliant upon business growth to generate revenue. It is, therefore, important that public sector partners consider how they respond to the needs of existing companies, as well as attracting new businesses, entrepreneurs, start-ups and spin-out companies to ensure that there is an environment that both encourages and facilitates growth.
- 3.3. A breakdown of the ways in which direct business engagement is, and will be carried out is presented in the Annex. This includes various types of engagement such as events with

political support (coordinated events and liaison with the BIDs – Town Centre Partnership and GYTABIA), strategic (such as the liaison with Central Government, the LEP, and other key stakeholders) and operational / technical. Some examples include:

- Events – Leaders Reception, Spirit of Enterprise Awards scheme
- Direct / one-to-one – the provision of a ‘Key Account Management’ service, with a lead officer assigned to each of the Borough’s *Top 40* businesses to provide a sounding board
- Training / webinars / one-to-many platforms

- 3.4. Most of the elements of business engagement activity are already underway and this exercise is focused on structuring/formalising them. A Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system is being developed to assist with one-to-one and one-to-many business engagement activities that are taking place. This also provides an opportunity to systematically record/share business interactions internally, streamlining and contextualise support and interactions and ensuring that support and enquiry-handling are effective.

#### **4. EXTERNAL MEMBERSHIP LED ORGANISATIONS**

- 4.1. A wide range of business networks and business representative organisations are active in and around the Borough. Collectively, these provide a platform for consultation and discussion with local businesses, including some of those in the sectors prioritised in the Council’s Economic Growth Strategy.
- 4.2. It is proposed that the Council use these networks more systematically to discuss and consult on relevant local economic development issues. The discussions should be structured in order to reach conclusions when appropriate, analysed where necessary and reported back to the Council and Town Deal Board. This would allow the Council to capture business views to help inform strategic discussions and implement interventions when appropriate and funds allow.
- 4.3. The Annex provides a list of membership led organisations including: the Chamber of Commerce and the joint ‘Coastal Connect’ programme; the Federation of Small Businesses; GYTABIA; EEEGr.

#### **5. EXTERNAL BUSINESS NETWORKS AND STRUCTURES**

- 5.1. Similarly, these networks focus on the other business intermediary groups and provides strategic intelligence, including liaison with key sector stakeholders (such as the Town Centre Partnership BID and GYTABIA) and will work with other business Champions and include: New Anglia Economic Development Officers Group; the All Energy Industry Council via the GENERATE brand; and Business Champions.

#### **6. DIRECT ENGAGEMENT PLATFORMS**

- 6.1. The borough has 3,070 active businesses and two Enterprise Zones, comprising business of different sizes and very different needs. Whilst the Council will not be able to maintain meaningful engagement with all of these businesses, it is important for the Council to engage across a range of both large and smaller businesses across a range of sectors, including those highlighted in the Economic Growth Strategy as key growth/employment priorities.
- 6.2. As such, it is proposed to reach out via social media and the website. Many Councils and LEPs have their own “Invest in” platforms that dedicate space to provide investors with key

information and a Great Yarmouth portal will be developed along similar lines. In the interim, it is proposed to maximise the outreach via the CRM system that is being developed within existing inhouse resources.

## 7. NEXT STEPS

7.1. It is proposed that the Council understand and support / report on:

Key employers	Those identified as the Councils <i>Future GY list</i>
SMEs and start up groups	Federation of Small Businesses Chambers of Commerce Nwes / MENTA (active local enterprise agencies) New Anglia Growth Hub
Businesses from priority sectors	Energy Tourism Manufacturing Health
Sector intermediary bodies	BIDS: Town Centre Partnership and GYTABIA
Others	Business Champions / Ambassadors

These measures will establish and sustain multi-channel interfaces between the Council and local businesses. This will, in turn, improving engagement with businesses, improve service delivery, increase uptake of council and partner services by businesses and extend the local evidence base and characterisation of need/demand in order to maximise funding opportunities available through the LEP and other state-backed schemes.

## 8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1. At this stage there are no financial implications as activities are being undertaken within existing budget allocations – particularly as most activities continue to be undertaken online.

## 9. RISK IMPLICATIONS

9.1. The biggest risk at present is the impact of the Pandemic on the local economy. Whilst this has undoubtedly impacted the Country as a whole, the impact is acutely felt in Great Yarmouth due to the predominance of businesses supporting and servicing the wider visitor economy. Whilst the Council and partners are working hard to deliver support for the economy via the objectives in the Councils Pathway to Recovery Plan, there is a risk that future waves or tightened restrictions place added pressure on all those delivering against this plan.

## 10. CONCLUSION

10.1. As laid out in this paper, there is a clear need to establish and sustain an interface between the Council and local businesses. This paper, therefore, provides a structured approach to business engagement where officers and business representatives will systematically discuss and consult on economic development issues. The discussions should be structured in order to reach conclusions when appropriate, analysed where necessary and reported back to the Council. This would therefore allow the Council to capture business views to help inform strategic discussions and to influence policies and programmes for the Borough.

- 10.2. Officers need to synthesise intelligence from these sources and share with a small business led group of business representatives would be brought together to discuss the intelligence gleaned and where necessary and appropriate feed back project, programme or policy ideas to the Council. This will, for example, help inform policy and identify opportunities for new capacity, collaboration and funding through emerging schemes, such as the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.
- 10.3. This paper presents to officers an overview of and introduction to a Business Engagement Plan, setting out the objectives and priorities in establishing and sustaining an interface and dialogue with local businesses. Outputs for activities will be monitored and reported against on an ongoing basis in line with regular reporting against the Council's Economic Growth Strategy.

## 11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

### Annex: Business Engagement Plan

*Areas of consideration: e.g. does this report raise any of the following issues and if so how have these been considered/mitigated against?*

Area for consideration	Comment
Monitoring Officer Consultation:	Via ELT review
Section 151 Officer Consultation:	Via ELT review
Existing Council Policies:	Great Yarmouth's <i>Pathway to Recovery</i> normalisation and recovery plan Great Yarmouth Economic Growth Strategy
Financial Implications (including VAT and tax):	None
Legal Implications (including human rights):	None
Risk Implications:	As outlined in the report
Equality Issues/EQIA assessment:	None
Crime & Disorder:	None
Every Child Matters:	None

# Business Engagement Plan



The business engagement framework sets out the priorities and objectives recognised to support the delivery of a robust and comprehensive engagement plan between Great Yarmouth Borough Council and the boroughs business community. Output for activity continues to be monitored and with new resource available to the grants team May sees our business advisor returning his substantive role.

## Objectives

- A Understand and support the business communities priorities for growth and infrastructure development.
- B Offer a clear view of what barriers to growth are identified by businesses in GY in order to influence the priorities of partners such as the Local Enterprise Partnership and offer a clear mandate to the GY business representative.
- C Through improved engagement with businesses, look to improve service delivery; increase uptake of council and partner services to businesses; and maximise funding opportunities available through third parties.
- D Provide a structured approach to communication between all GYBC departments, county council and local businesses on economic development plans.
- E Enable businesses to develop a strong voice to support their effective representation with all partners
- F Clarify for businesses how and where they can express their views on economic growth and other issues
- G Facilitate the development of sector specific projects and programmes or discussions in support of economic strategies.

## Direct Business engagement

Engagement		Actions	Objectives							Lead
			A	B	C	D	E	F	G	
Leaders Reception	This annual closed event held by the appointed leader sees leading businesses and elected members invited to a formal event held at the townhall as an opportunity to network, maintain relationships with existing businesses and engage with those new to the borough. The events are seen as a professional but relaxed gathering enabling business to discuss views on strategic issues important to business leaders, such as infrastructure and skills, but these are individual views expressed by senior business leaders, and do not necessarily represent the views of smaller businesses or the wider business community.	Discussions required between the Inward Investment and Events department to understand if this is viable in 2021 due to COVID restrictions			x		x	x		VM & MSM
Top 40	Although face to face meetings will continue through the support offered by EnterpriseGY it is also recognised that meetings with a select number of leading local businesses (Future GY) are critical for the council to understand the needs of the businesses. These informal discussions with key business leaders gives the opportunity to privately discuss some of the main issues they are facing and to put forward actions to help address these, for example but not limited too the current areas of focus seem to be energy, skills and training, and transport. Regular engagement with the Top40 is to be conducted by key members of the council and / or members of the economic development team. Meeting notes to be being taken and held on the GYBC CRM from each meeting and actions allocated to relevant Council staff.	Future GY to be finalised although will remain fluid and a Key account manager to be assigned	x	x	x		x	x		VM
Webinars	A successful networking event has been running for nearly 3 years at the town hall as a joint venture with Norfolk Chamber of Commerce under the branding Coastal Connect, The event ran monthly until the pandemic but recognising the business community still needed support these events are now held online. They are popular and well attended events, each attracting an average of 25 attendees - a mix of private businesses, business support agencies and other stakeholders. They are largely based around thematic issues: for example, one recent event was based around Opening up safely and another was an opportunity for businesses to openly discuss and ask questions relating to COVID business support grants. A full programme of events has been set for 2021.	webinars to be listed on the new website when available to-do so	x			x		x	x	PGG
Finance support	Officers continue to design and implement systems and oversight to receive, manage and locally-administer national government business grant funding, providing underwriting, due diligence and eligibility checks. Officers are actively supporting businesses to apply for the LEP's grant schemes. 9,000+ calls have been made by GYBC and Growth hub officers to actively seek out eligible businesses that hadn't claimed support.	Additional resource required to support the ongoing delivery of much needed funding : Job posing May 2021			x	x			x	OI



Inward Investment	Inward Investment is developing an Inward Investment Plan - in order to provide a more seamless enquiry and processing front-end with active key-account-management, identifying and promoting the Boroughs key assets including land and building vacancies, development of a bespoke introductions service, integration with other 'soft landing' incentives and enquiry tracking.	Grow council department relationships to enable a seamless experience for investing businesses	x	x		x			x	MB
Spirit of Enterprise	This event is designed to engage, inform and inspire Great Yarmouth and surrounding SMEs and to provide a platform for businesses to connect. The annual event has seen a mix of local businesses come together to be recognised and celebrate together as one business community.	Planning for SoE 22 will commence in Q4 of 21 in anticipation of further relaxed COVID restrictions				x	x			VM / MSM
121 Engagement	Enterprise engagement is being delivered through both EnterpriseGY and the New Anglia Growth Hub, which is the Government-backed one-stop portal for businesses. Video conferencing has proved to be invaluable throughout the pandemic as a means of communication which will remain a key method of communication.	Additional resource required to support the ongoing delivery of support : Job posing May 2021	x	x	x		x	x	x	PGG
Online training	Officers continue to streamline business support and economic development webpages to curate a library of practical business growth and recovery webinars, clinics/workshops, tools and other one-to-one and one-to-many learning assets.		x		x	x		x		PGG

## External membership led organisations

Engagement		Actions	Objectives							Lead
			A	B	C	D	E	F	G	
Chamber of commerce	Maintain strong existing relationships with the chamber with the view to extend opportunities for our businesses and new inward investment opportunities. The Chamber has spent years cultivating relationships with businesses across the UK and offers access to a wide range of free and paid-for training solutions, Networking events and signposting opportunities for both member and non members, it is noted we are not promoting membership organisations we do have a responsibility to expose businesses to business support organisations. Promotion of the new Norfolk Knowledge Hub, which has recently been established by Norfolk Chambers of Commerce and Norfolk County Council as a free-to-view online business support and learning space to support local businesses recover and thrive.	Reinstate the popular joint venture 'Coastal Connect' networking event to not only support local business but expose the opportunities with GY for those not located or trading within the area.	x	x	x		x			VM
Federation of small businesses	The Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) is the largest campaigning pressure group in the UK promoting and protecting the interests of the self-employed and owners of small firms. The FSB was established to support the smaller business to achieve their goals and ambitions via a host of support opportunities. The organisation regularly carries out surveys of its membership base, which offer intelligence on business views. The FSB has engaged with Great Yarmouth Borough Council on general business support but a closer working relationship would be valuable in these climates in supporting start up and small businesses.	Reignite relationships to understand what the FSB could bring to the borough and agree next steps.	x	x	x		x			PGG
GY TABIA	Joint activates between GYBC and GY TABIA has enabled GYBC to react to business support needs. Tailored webinars have been delivered in reaction to business needs , support in information sharing enables greater reach for initiatives such as Kickstart and		x	x	x		x			OI
EEEGR	on going existing relationships with EEEGR extend opportunities for our businesses within the energy sectors, The Generate team have maintained regular communication throughout the recent EEZ project.		x	x	x	x		x	x	SB / IP

## External business networks & structurers

Activity		Progress	Objectives							LEAD
			A	B	C	D	E	F	G	
NAEDOG	New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) aims to improve business support services across the region, New Anglia Economic Development Officers Group (NAEDOG) meet monthly to discuss, share initiatives and best practice to support economic growth. representatives from New Anglia growth hub, Great Yarmouth Borough Council. West Suffolk district council, Norwich city council, East Suffolk council, Breakland district council, South Norfolk council / Broadland District council, Babergh & Mid Suffolk, Ipswich Borough Council, Norfolk County Council, North Norfolk, Suffolk County council attend and contribute to the meeting along with guest presenters to ensure the delivery of topical information.	The continuation of monthly meeting remains crucial in current climates especially in sharing funding / grant initiatives and schemes	x	x	x	x			x	VM
Business Champions	Business champions often play an important role in supporting the activities of local economic growth. Business champions are individuals, often business leaders (or former business leaders), who will take an extraordinary interest in the promotion and adoption of local policies and campaign for them among local businesses. These individuals are generally motivated by the opportunity to help steer the local economy stand to benefit from their standing and relationships within the business community.	Early stage development lead by Clare Dybal		x	x		x		x	CD
Generate (EEEZ)	The East of England Energy Zone is a world leader for clean energy generation, leading the UK's transition to Net Zero and at the forefront of the decarbonisation agenda. This achieved by connecting opportunities to people and capitalising on our unique position and offering – all energy, supply chain excellence, world leading centres of innovation, national and international transport links and a committed group of agencies driving clean growth. The East of England Energy Zone offers the space and ideal conditions for a wealth of innovative energy developments, providing clean energy to the UK	EEEZ continues to finalise a new brand strategy, ongoing engagement with all Partner AEIC, EEEGR, East Suffolk Council, Suffolk County council, Norfolk county council, north Norfolk and the New Anglia LEP ensures a coherent, co-ordinated and collectively-owned brand/offer/identity and marketing strategy to complement other strategic and capital initiatives and drive energy sector investment including complementarity with the wider, place-based inward investment brand, Norfolk & Suffolk Unlimited.	x	x	x		x		x	SB

## Digital engagement platforms

Activity		Progress	Objectives							LEAD
			A	B	C	D	E	F	G	
GY CRM	A refreshed Customer Relationship Management system sees the opportunity to assist in the communication of information internally throughout the organisation by recording interactions between the council and businesses which is to be accessible to all officers, thus supporting our account management requirements, future engagements can be set along with the ability for actions to be delegated to other department officers supporting	Training required for the team to understand the full capabilities and opportunities to see this B2C platform utilised as the full B2B solution required.			x	x				VM
GYBC Business website	A platform for business owners to access business support and economic development webpages is underdevelopment which will see a curated library of practical business growth and recovery webinars, clinics/workshops, tools and other one-to-one and one-to-many learning assets.	Officers continue to work on the content and upload to the councils redeveloped platform		x	x		x	x	x	VM
Invest in GY website	Early stage planning to determine the economic value of an individual site dedicated to commercial Inward Investment within Great Yarmouth.	Platform brief to be developed and agreed.		x	x		x	x	x	MB
Social Media	Social media continues to be a valuable source of engagement across the borough, a number of platforms are available but Facebook, Twitter & LinkedIn remain the preferred choice.	Continuation of Social media activity promoting the webinars, grants and topical information.		x	x		x	x	x	PGG /OI