

COMMUNICATING THE ESP

Report by Arthur Charvonia

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1. Purpose of this report:

Once the business plan for the ESP has been formally approved, the task of communicating the work and aims of the ESP can properly get underway. This report contains recommendations of how the Board can communicate appropriately and effectively with ESP stakeholders.

2. Key message

That the ESP is bringing together partners across both districts to work effectively and efficiently to make a difference on some of the key priorities facing our communities, and that we will be working to ensure that our communities are as involved as possible and can even take the lead in delivering those initiatives.

3. Key audiences

- Our communities
- Councillors and staff across the three councils, our town and parish councils, and those within our community, voluntary and business sectors
- Relevant potential funders/supporters/decision makers outside East Suffolk

4. Communications methods

- **Press releases** - highlighting key decisions taken by Board or reports to be discussed; projects being launched, or making an impact, showing how the ESP is successfully making a difference and delivering on priorities and spotlighting community partnerships.

To be circulated to local media, but also to all partners for them to cascade through their organisations.

- **Website** - to be a constant resource of information about the ESP, on the basic level of who are its members, its agendas, reports and minutes, its press releases and also projects and progress on them.

To be used as both a resource for ESP members but also as a source of information for communities about the ESP, its project and how they can get involved.

- **Social media** - to provide a further signpost to the work of the ESP and share news about its aims, work and successes. Initially just a Twitter account, but with a view to developing a Facebook page as time progresses. It may prove more appropriate for individual projects to lead on Facebook depending on its relevancy - for example those project specifically targeted at young people.

- **Publications** - to promote the work of the ESP, its aims, and its successful projects.

Leaflet aimed at public and partner members explaining aims, membership, immediate goals and projects. Print run dependent on how widely Board wants to distribute it.

Annual report summarising work of ESP and spotlight successful projects.

Partners to publicise work of ESP in their own internal and external publications, e.g. Waveney's In Touch, Coastal's e and printed Coastline, County's internal magazine, partner's intranets.

- **Forums/workshops** - an annual Forum is from the Suffolk Coastal and Waveney LSP experience an excellent way of sharing and networking, but the geographical realities may mean that it could exclude some of the community based organisations, unless some hi-tech solution is found to let them access the event, or to run the event at two locations at the same time? Might be preferable to work towards two or three theme or location based events a year and moving them around the ESP area. Board meetings could also be deliberately held throughout the area, with a key relevant local issue under discussion each time to help attract community representatives to attend, and perhaps a question and answer/or any other business section to encourage input from the floor and so increase inclusivity of the Board, the ESP and its meetings. General public attendance is realistically only likely to be attracted if a particularly controversial matter is under discussion.

5. Delivery of communications

Decisions need to be made as to whether to aim at the relevant Board member being the lead spokesperson on any publicity material. If projects and partners are successful in generating good news stories at a sufficient quantity, it may be that the limited resources of the district councils' and county council communications teams may not be able to satisfy that demand.

Should individual partners/project leads be allowed to lead on producing publicity via relevant Board member and Communications officer having official sign off before anything issued? There still needs to be some controls in place to ensure timeliness, consistency and accuracy of message.

6. Conclusions

There is a clear expectation that the Board will work openly and be accountable. In addition to the Forums / stakeholder events, there will need to be an ongoing engagement with stakeholders from the Board. This will partly develop from Board members' roles and networks outside the Board, but it will also need a coordinated approach from the Board as a whole to ensure it's appropriate and effective.

The Board has already agreed to meet in public and publish its papers (as defined in the Terms of Reference). However, it is also prudent that the Board have a communication plan to enable it to have a more proactive and meaningful relationship with the public and other stakeholders.

7. Recommendations to the Board:

- i) To have a communications plan that will accompany its Business Plan and can be regularly reviewed at Board meetings.
- ii) That the first Forum / stakeholder event is an opportunity to widen engagement in the Board's work, develop relationships and enhance accountability for the Board.
- iii) That the first Forum / stakeholder event tests the priorities for the initial ESP Business Plan.