

Position Statements on key issues in east Suffolk

Report by Programme Officers Group

1. Background

Following the Boards discussion on the State of east Suffolk Report at its previous meeting it was agreed:

- i) There are many key issues affecting east Suffolk and the ESP needs to focus on a small number of priorities where it can make a real difference by working together. Many of the issues are interconnected and need a collaborative approach to address them successfully.
- ii) A guiding principal for future work of the ESP is to manage public expectation of what services are / will be available to them and promote personal responsibility and community capacity.
- iii) That the following issues will be explored at a workshop in October:
 - 1 Building on economic prosperity, growth sectors and infrastructure developments.
 - 2 Ensuring people have the skills to meet employment opportunities.
 - 3 Encouraging a growing, ageing population to live well.
 - 4 Reducing disparities in health, housing, employment, education, crime between communities.
 - 5 Reducing the impact of coastal erosion and flooding.
 - 6 Sustainable activities, linked to the environment – food, tourism, green economy, community-focused activities

2. Progress

A range of partners were asked to provide a position statement on these issue in east Suffolk (Suffolk Coastal and Waveney Districts) and in doing so to consult relevant colleagues in partner organisations. (Issue no 4 above was considered too wide to be covered in one document so was split into the following 4 position statements).

- i) reducing disparities in communities
- ii) reducing disparities in health
- iii) reducing disparities in housing
- iv) reducing disparities in crime and community safety

A complete set of the position statements are contained in the appendix to this report. Although not exhaustive these documents represent a rich source of local information to help the Board focus where it wants the ESP to have impact.

3. Summaries

For ease of reference a summary of each of the position statements is provided below which identifies:

- i) Key messages
- ii) Current position
- iii) Where can the ESP add value?

1. Building on economic prosperity, growth sectors and infrastructure development in East Suffolk

Key Messages

The picture is of a relatively prosperous area, but the economic and social challenges faced by Lowestoft impact on the picture in the north of the partnership area.

- Employment is set to rise by 6,500 people by 2031.
- The main employment sectors are retail, health, manufacturing, transport and storage and education.
- Almost 75% of businesses are micro businesses, employing less than 5 people
- Some large and well known employers including BT, Port of Felixstowe, Sizewell Power Station, and Adnams.
- Tourism is vitally important – 9 million visitors a year contributing £500m to the economy.

Current Position

- New Anglia LEP priorities are closely aligned to the opportunities in east Suffolk; the LEP priorities are tourism, energy, business support and the green economy. The LEP believes that these are the sectors and the area that offer real and immediate potential for growth and job creation, especially for small and medium sized enterprises.
- Local authorities have economic growth and inward investment priorities. Current priorities are
 - a) energy sector development;
 - b) business support packages;
 - c) progressing the Enterprise Zone and Area Action Plans;
 - d) improving the availability of land to meet business need;
 - e) increasing inward investment;
 - f) developing strong market town economies;
 - g) improving the rural economy;
 - h) Improving skills levels to meet employment demand.
- Key issues identified from consultation are gaps in business support and employers identifying the need for increased employability skills in young people.
- Several research papers are to be recommissioned including SCDC Business needs Survey and Haven Gateway Port Study
- Strong business associations/forums and partnership working/collaboration
- Consideration of more business representation on the ESP

Where can the ESP add value?

The ESP can break down administrative boundaries and provide a strategic approach to the economy. It can act as a voice for economic needs and opportunities in East Suffolk at a national and sub-regional level. In addition the position statement identifies it can “build communication between partners”, “ensure collaborative delivery to priority areas”, “act as a critical friend”, “a forum to analyse economic data and improve outcomes”, “provide a mandate for sound economic interventions”.

2. Ensuring people have the skills to meet employment opportunities

Key Messages

- Employment is set to rise by 6,500 people by 2031.
- The main employment sectors are retail, health, manufacturing, transport and storage and education.
- A larger proportion of year 13 students leaving schools/6th form in Suffolk Coastal go on to Higher Education (66.4% vs 40.9% in Waveney)
- Suffolk Coastal school attainment levels are comparable with the national average (58.5% of young people achieving 5 A* GCSEs). 48.4% of Waveney’s young people get 5 A*GCSEs. Achievement of 5 A* - C GCSEs is below 25% in Lowestoft, Beccles, Felixstowe and the Trimleys.
- The highest concentration of young people who are Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) is in Lowestoft, though Felixstowe, Beccles, Bungay, Saxmundham and Leiston also have notable concentrations.

- Parts of Lowestoft are the only places in east Suffolk where Job Seeker's Allowance claimants are over 7% of the eligible population. The rest of Lowestoft has rates of 4-7%; parts of Felixstowe and Beccles also have rates of 4-7%. In the main Suffolk Coastal has a low JSA rate - under 1.5%

Current Position

- Strong focus nationally on employability especially in relation to unemployed 16 -24 year olds, Raising the Participation Age and apprenticeships.
- Suffolk Skills for the Future Strategy has priorities focusing on Young People, Enterprise Training, and Skills for the Economy. It has a number of programmes including the Energy Skills programme with a suite of projects to support skills for entry into the energy sector
- The Raising the Bar programme includes a theme to address employability skills for young people and develop closer links with businesses.
- Links to LEP and opportunity to lobby key funders and secure project investment into Suffolk.
- Lowestoft is a specific target area regarding young people who are unemployed and low educational attainment for the East Coast Energy Skills plan.
- Much collaboration– involves education system, business, public sector and voluntary sector. Much closer working with industry and business established
- The key gaps in provision relate to coherence, quality and planning activity in a way which creates maximum impact.
- Schools are measured on GCSE performance, not on employability. Difficult for employers and schools to connect.
- Recognised that being able to offer businesses access to a local supply of highly skilled labour will be a key part of delivering economic success. There are gaps particularly in higher technical level qualifications (Level 3 and 4), skilled labour to meet the specific needs of some key industries and key major projects.

Where can the ESP can add value?

- A voice to East Suffolk about Raising the Bar, building understanding, contributing to the debate and gathering commitment particularly in supporting young people's employability.
- Providing a focus to bring new approaches to improve youth employability in Lowestoft – helping to secure funding.
- To work jointly on the *Raising Awareness of the Energy Sector Opportunities Project*.

3. Encouraging a growing, ageing population to live well

Key Messages:

The number of older people in Suffolk is increasing and this is a particularly relevant to east Suffolk.

There are four key areas in which action is required:

- Helping older people build up their health and wellbeing capital so that they have greater resilience and are better able to respond to life's challenges
- Reducing the risk of episodes or incidents involving avoidable injury, illness or hospitalisation
- Helping people cope with life's significant events
- Creating a strong, secure and safe environment in which older people can live with ease and comfort and access the services they need.

Current Position:

Great Yarmouth & Waveney: Establishment of Neighbourhood Partnership Networks and Stakeholder Leadership Boards together with joint commissioning arrangements and a more structured approach to procurement and quality monitoring.

Suffolk Health and Wellbeing Board: Leading the integration of Suffolk's health and social care services and communities are a critical part of success to the asset based approach (supporting individuals and communities in taking the lead).

There is an appetite for change but the shifting agenda, the aggressive timescales and the diminishing resources are challenging.

Where can the ESP add value?

Can support radical change to address all four key areas above through fundamental organisational and cultural shifts in statutory, voluntary, community and independent partners so that there is more emphasis on prevention, personalisation and a new asset-based approach to working with communities.

Mapping and linking existing services and service providers and capturing knowledge about what services are available in the area.

Taking learning from local projects like Gorleston Connect, Felixstowe 100 and Ageing Well in Kirkley and transferring best practice to other areas.

4. Reducing disparities between communities

Key messages:

- Those facing most severe exclusion live in neighbourhoods experiencing multiple deprivation and consequently suffer from inequalities surrounding issues such as housing, health, employment, education, crime. Not always confined to urban and densely populated areas; often those living in rural areas can suffer the above in conjunction with other challenges such as access to transport.
- Localism agenda and decreasing public sector budgets are putting increased focus on engaging with communities about the future of their local areas in terms of local services and assets. Potential to result in more complex and less consistent service offer across East Suffolk.
- Potential for increased inequalities and numbers of vulnerable people in East Suffolk due to economic situation and reductions in public services.

Current position:

- Range of local and Suffolk-wide partnerships and initiatives looking to build community capacity and provide support for vulnerable and minority communities (e.g. Stronger Communities Network, Waveney Stronger Communities Partnership, Suffolk Coastal Resource Network, Our Kirkley, Community Led Planning programme)
- Public sector approach to Localism (e.g. Our Place)
- Transforming Local infrastructure programme will see merger of Suffolk infrastructure bodies which will see a more effective approach to community and volunteer development that is better able to meet varying needs of communities
- Engagement with communities and frontline groups has revealed following:
 - High demand for funding advice and organisational support
 - Growing recognition of need for whole community involvement
 - Need for support around volunteer recruitment, placement and development
 - Assistance with navigating through myriad of organisations and offers
 - Declining services in rural areas
 - Importance of networking events and peer mentoring
 - Increasing demand for personal and household advice (debt, housing, benefits, legal aid etc)
 - Accessibility issues – transport, rural isolation
 - Identification and support for community champions and volunteers to help them make a real difference in their communities

Where can ESP add value?

- To use existing information and intelligence to improve understanding of inequalities in East Suffolk and identify agreed areas of focus, whether they are place-based or between different sectors of the community (old people, young people, faith groups, ethnic groups etc)
 - Ability to shift resources to areas of need/focus, particularly focussing on localities or communities where there are low levels of engagement/capacity
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5. Reducing disparities in health

Key messages:

- East Suffolk is generally healthy although there are differences in life expectancy between those living in the most affluent areas and the least affluent areas.

- Health and wellbeing agenda has a much broader focus than traditional measures of public health, recognising the wider determinants of health – housing, education, employment, access to open space etc.
- Shift towards an asset-based approach to working with communities, based on what the community is trying to achieve, rather than their problems, and supporting them to achieve their aspirations

Current position:

- New Health & Wellbeing Board will act as forum for health and care system to work together to improve health and wellbeing of local population and reduce health inequalities
- Priorities for action over the next three years are:
 - Proportion of children living in poverty
 - GCSE attainment
 - Violent crime
 - Smoking in pregnancy
 - Breast feeding initiation
 - Under 18 teenage pregnancy
 - Obesity in adults
 - People diagnosed with diabetes
 - Alcohol consumption
 - Infant deaths
 - Road injuries
- Opportunity to adopt collaborative approach to ensure right services are in the right place at the right time, particularly bearing in mind rurality/hidden needs agenda
- Need to accelerate process in helping people to live healthier lifestyles and enabling older people to live independently

Where can ESP add value?

- Act as leaders in developing an asset-based approach to working with communities
- Support CCGs, Health and Wellbeing Board and System Leadership Partnership Board in changes that will be necessary to ensure the preventative agenda becomes embedded across all communities

6. Reducing disparities in housing

Key messages:

- Affordability – house prices vs average earnings. Particular issue for young people/first time buyers. Also applies in private rental market, particularly in Waveney where incomes are generally lower
- Availability - Negative impact of recession on house building starts and completions since 2005/6. Developers not bringing schemes forward until prospective buyers can be more certain of gaining finance. In turn means accompanying affordable homes are being delayed
- Impact of second home ownership is not fully understood but perceived to have an impact on pricing some people out of countryside and coastal towns and villages as well as affecting long term sustainability of some communities

Current position:

- Housing high on political agenda at national level
- Biggest demand for housing in East Suffolk is in main urban areas but opportunities to provide more affordable homes in rural areas
- Public consultation often identifies need for affordable housing but also strong feelings against further development
- Close working between Homes and Communities Agency, Housing Associations, Local Authorities and others to ensure unified approach to increasing supply but restrained by current economic climate

Where can ESP add value?

- Act as lever to ensure consistent approach is maintained

7. Reducing disparities in crime and community safety

Key messages:

- Generally East Suffolk is a safe place to live and work
- Upward trend in burglaries in Lowestoft
- Although reviewed annually, consistent priorities are violence within the night time economy, acquisitive crime, anti-social behaviour and domestic violence

Current position:

- Established and statutory partnership approach to tackling crime and disorder via Community Safety Partnerships
- Safer Neighbourhood Teams identify priorities at a local level
- Troubled Families initiative will look to address underlying and long term issues with individual families via a multi agency approach
- Uncertainty over future direction and resourcing of CSP's due to introduction of Police and Crime Commissioners

Where can ESP add value?

- Effective partnership working to tackle root causes of crime and disorder (housing issues, substance misuse etc)
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8. Reducing the impact of coastal erosion and flooding

Key Messages:

The Suffolk coastline is highly vulnerable and is changing yet is hugely important for the area socially, environmentally and economically.

Future Government funding approach will be 'Partnership funding'. This encourages local funding to contribute to the cost of coast protection schemes to lever in greater amounts of grant aid from the national pot.

This new funding approach whilst providing opportunities for more schemes to be involved and extending the capacity of the national budget is creating huge challenges for local communities and businesses. Work is already underway in two specific locations within the East Suffolk Partnership area around the Deben and Alde Ore estuaries to start to tackle the issues.

Current Position:

Recently very strategic level Shoreline Management Plans have been adopted by local authorities, Environment Agency and others.

Suffolk is at the forefront of developing innovative estuary partnerships made up of local people who are beginning to take on the lead role in particular with flood management.

Future funding will be increasingly focussed on the 'beneficiary pays' principle i.e. those who benefit from flood / coast protection should contribute towards the cost. However this approach is in its infancy and the identification of who benefits and in what way (directly or indirectly) is work that needs to be undertaken.

Where can the ESP add value?

- To provide links into the local business community raising the profile of the work, re-enforcing its value to individual businesses and providing a conduit for information
 - Building business and community capacity to mitigate against major flood events.
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9. Sustainable activities, linked to the environment – food, tourism, green economy, community-focussed activity

Key messages:

Key challenges east Suffolk faces are:

- Helping to reduce Suffolk's Annual Greenhouse Gas emissions.

- Ensuring that protections put in place for wildlife are not breached.
- Continuing to reduce waste production, disposal to landfill and littering.
- The sustainable abstraction and use of water.
- Managing land use changes and protecting/enhancing what exists
- Resilience to the impacts of climate change.
- Ensuring that environmental concerns are embedded within other priority areas such as the economy, health and education.

Current position:

There are a number of active and well-supported organisations working in this sector and communities and organisations are increasingly sharing skills and understanding and overcoming challenges together make sustainable use of their local environment.

Overall positive trends but there remain significant challenges, particularly in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and there is the risk that environmental concerns will not be given sufficient priority.

Where can the ESP add value?

- Ensuring that environmental concerns are embedded within other priority areas such as the economy, health and education.
- Utilise Local, national and international contacts to draw in additional funding and knowledge to enable large scale greenhouse gas reduction and climate adaptation activity.
- Continue to foster greater levels of cooperation between existing networks and organisations.
- Support current initiatives that build community capacity and promote good practice in the planning and delivery of community-led environmental initiatives.
- Act as an interface between communities, key service providers & businesses.