



Federation of Small Businesses

The UK's Leading Business Organisation

FSB Suffolk response to Suffolk Economic Summit and Suffolk Strategic Delivery Partnership Terms of Reference from an SME (Small Medium Enterprise) perspective





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**FSB Suffolk response to
Suffolk Economic Summit and
Suffolk Strategic Delivery Partnership Terms of Reference
from an SME (Small Medium Enterprise) perspective**

1. **Purpose** - to identify priorities for small businesses in Suffolk to achieve future prosperity and to identify and focus attention on the needs of the business sector within the county.

With this in mind we would point out that a Suffolk County Council model built on a day of **whole community consultation** exists that combines the social and community engineering issues with the concerns of the Business Community fighting recession: -

2. **Extract from Suffolk Economic Summit 4th December 2008**

BUSINESSES SECTION

See Appendix 1

24. Get Councils to pay invoices from local businesses quicker (Commitment already made by Councils on 4 December)

25. Get more people to enjoy a holiday in Suffolk

· Promote local tourism as an alternative to going abroad, encouraging people to take breaks and holidays in Suffolk to boost the local economy (Commitment already made by Councils on 4 December)

26. Get Councils to use local suppliers

· Introduce more 'localism' into procurement for local authority goods and services and local business supply chains, supporting investment and reinvestment in the Suffolk economy

27. Make advice to businesses clearer and easier to find

· Co-ordinate business support across organisations that give business advice in different ways (for example, Federation of Small Businesses, Business Link East, Chamber of Commerce) to develop better, more consistent signposting to information

28. Ensure workers are treated fairly by helping businesses understand the law

· Help businesses to understand their legislative responsibilities to avoid unintentional discrimination or unfair dismissal (for example, against young people who may be more at risk of redundancy)

29. Get businesses together and talking to help each other

· Support increased business-to-business networking to share good practice and ways of dealing with the credit crunch

30. Reduce rates for smaller businesses that are feeling the impact

· Help Small-to-Medium Enterprises (SMEs) with a business rate relief system (for example, limited period rate holidays, rate relief on high impact businesses), and lobby for a return to a 50% rate for empty business properties

31. Give more council money to business enterprise agencies

· Enterprise Agencies provide business support and offer accommodation to SMEs

· Increase funding to invest in start up businesses

3. Introduction

In engaging with any process FSB will look at outcomes as a priority. Having looked at all forms of documentation so far we think that even before a recession the aims and objectives were not clearly focused on business growth and achievement. Now that the UK is in a recession we need to refocus because even those pathways previously available no longer exist.

It is commendable that the heavy weighting of NI indicators is focused on disadvantaged communities. However, unless a change of focus is promptly delivered there is a danger that in a recession economy, maintenance of existing economic activity is overlooked. Without this there will be little prospect of achieving growth to support addressing disadvantaged areas in the near future.

In looking at Suffolk, the role of EEDA and their priorities also need to be addressed and their objectives modified in response to the economic downturn. How will the Suffolk Economic Participation Programme be adjusted to take account of the current economic downturn?

EEDA objectives are largely about disadvantaged communities. The FSB would see these as important but they are not the major economic drivers for the prosperity of Suffolk where the majority of employment comes from the SME Sector. How are they going to identify needs of business separate from the deprived areas and how are they going to address the fresh challenges facing the business community? How can a fresh agenda be set to ensure maximum benefit is gained from the revised priorities of business?

How will Suffolk CC measure economic prosperity in the county? Much of it seems to focus on obtaining data from various public sector agencies and local authority departments. These do not necessarily give a true picture of what is happening in the real economy. How will they use organisations such as ourselves, the Chamber, IoD, CLA, NFU, Road Haulage Association to get a broader picture?

The only specific business related Key Performance Indicator in Suffolk's Local Area Agreement is on the "Percentage of Businesses in the area showing growth". It has been agreed with Go-East but no targets set so how can it be measured? Even if targets have not yet been set is any work being undertaken to collect data and, if so, how?

4. Short, medium and long term outcomes: Economy

There is very little that the FSB would disagree with in principle but we are concerned that whilst they are very worthy aspirations it is not clear how they will ultimately be achieved.

For example, making Suffolk "The most innovative and diverse economy in the East of England" within the next twenty years will depend a great deal on the behaviour of individual businesses in how they choose to develop or whether they choose to either set up business here or move into the county. The public sector has an ability to influence those decisions but ultimately it will be down to whether or not it makes economic sense to implement those decisions.

We support the creation of food hubs and a biotech hub in West Suffolk as many of the businesses in those sectors are often small or medium sized.

5. Sector specific priorities

5.1 Transport

See Appendix 2

So far as transport is concerned, the FSB would again support improvements to the Felixstowe to Nuneaton rail link (F2N) and to the other rail infrastructure in the county. However, the benefits to small businesses are probably limited as rail is not suitable for most small businesses to move raw materials or finished goods about due to the small quantities that are likely to be involved. If improved rail links can remove some of the private cars and especially freight off the roads then that is a benefit to our members who heavily rely on roads for regional transport links.

The maintenance of the road network to a good standard surely goes without saying and the FSB is surprised at its inclusion. What is actually needed is increased investment in improving the county's roads and in particular the A14, A11, A12, A140 and A134/A1071 (connecting Sudbury to Ipswich & Colchester).

Transport issues around the redevelopment of the bottom end of Ipswich and the need for consultation and response to the interests of the business community in terms of maintaining accessibility to the town and through routes needs to be addressed before any action is taken in this area.

There is a need to plan infrastructure at the same time as the designation of areas for development within Local Development Frameworks and other strategic plans that impact on transport and infrastructure. This needs to be resolved in advance of new development, with a clear plan for delivery that is transparent, costed and deliverable and which is not going to result in development proceeding without the ability to deal with its consequences. The type of structural deficiencies that are seen in Sudbury, where a failure to provide a bypass has resulted in environmental detriment to the town centre and loss to business when traffic is restricted within the town as a result of historic layout should be avoided. Government and local government should ensure that business can operate freely and efficiently within the environment created. In particular parking provision in new developments should ensure that all cars are accommodated off the highway so that delivery vehicles are not restricted. With businesses seeking to deliver at convenient times for customers this may include evening deliveries when parking issues are greatest and inadequate allowance for parking in new developments may restrict delivery options.

The Planning Officers Society state in their recently published guidance (February 2009) entitled "Infrastructure planning and the Community Infrastructure Levy" that "The role of planning as a delivery mechanism for sustainable communities is reflected in the increasing emphasis on infrastructure planning....." and "Infrastructure planning is not an optional extra and not dependant on the CIL regulations. It is required by PPS12 and essential in developing a sound core strategy" These comments are supported and, in addition to the points raised within the guidance, greater emphasis needs to be focused on ensuring the best environment for competitive business is available across the county.

In rural areas, in which we abound, how do the disadvantaged get to JCP or any

of the aforementioned without rural public transport?

We urge the Council to engage on realistic and detailed consultation with the Business Community in the areas to be effected, through all the Business Groups in Suffolk.

5.2 Housing and infrastructure

Housing and the need to include proper access for business to deliver and to serve the interests of households and also to ensure that travel to work plans are not restricting the efficient operation of business. Parking provisions to ensure access for delivery and quality of life for residents. No housing and development without proper infrastructure in place from the start. Resist government pressure to build without proper resources.

5.3 Town centre parking

From an SME perspective the economies of market towns are being strangled by parking charges. A whole county solution should be agreed between local authorities to free up the cost of parking to avoid economies declining and to encourage growth.

Parking in market towns and smaller communities need to be kept free for users to allow shops and small businesses to compete with supermarkets and other larger shopping centres that can provide parking free for users. It is accepted that Ipswich and Bury St Edmunds have sufficient draw to enable them to sustain parking charges but these should still be kept at a level that allows shops to sustain trade. More detailed FSB national policy on parking can be found at: - <http://www.fsb.org.uk/keeptradelocal/images/fsbparkinglores.pdf>

5.4 Skills and training

The FSB believes that Suffolk should ensure that the education system is aware of and working to support the needs of business and that business is involved as far as possible in the development and planning of training and school delivery.

Monitoring and scrutiny of school and college performance against business requirements

Any issues relating to diplomas and apprenticeships in terms of

1 long term funding of any process and or initiative set up under 14 to 19 agenda is addressed and that there is planned maintenance of funding

2 health and safety issues as well as insurance cover, that both schools and employers have over the 14 to 19 diploma and new apprentices is resolved and not ducked

Every school should have an appointed contact point for business. This role should be clearly recorded for each school and a Deputy also recorded so that vacancies and sickness do not result in contact points being unavailable or missing as at present. Links between schools and business should be a key priority for schools to ensure that training and education is designed to focus students on providing for the needs of business in the future.

Apprentices need to have continuity of work experience even if economic or other circumstances result in their being laid off from their employer. Where skill levels are not developed to a sufficient extent, clear routes to government funding to

make good deficiencies of the education process need to be identified to encourage greater numbers into apprenticeships or trainee roles.

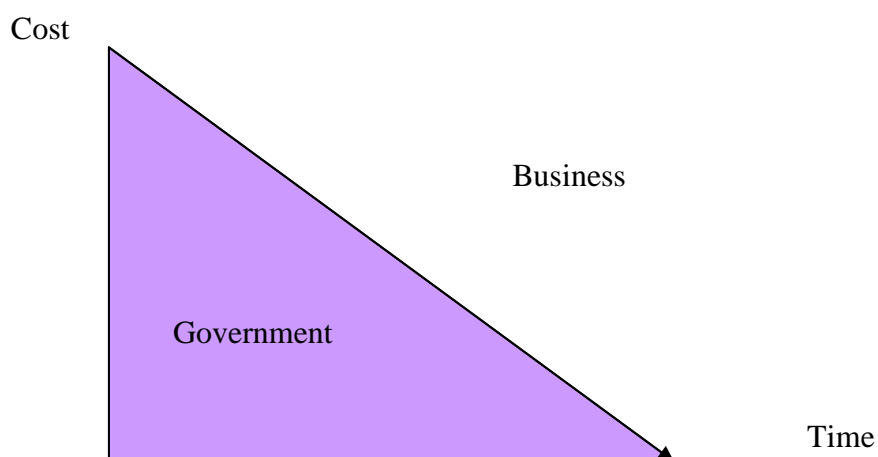
It is essential that the County Council become exemplars in their own apprenticeships process and we suggest the creation of a county wide Suffolk Apprentice' scheme. The scheme would build upon the existing programme run and funded by the public sector in the county but, crucially, would make available apprentices to small businesses that may otherwise be unable to take young people on in the current economic conditions.

Suffolk County Council should set and achieve a target for Apprentices for their own business of taking on themselves and working with businesses to provide placements for 30 (Thirty) Apprentices. Each District and Borough Council should set and achieve a target for Apprentices for their own business of 3 (three) each using the model to be developed within three months by the county council.

There is a strong feeling from the ranks of FSB members in Suffolk that there is a strong case for there being no requirement for 5 GCSE's for Apprentices post 16. This should instead be based on overall skill set and the willingness of an employer to take on the Apprentice.

Also School league tables should be reviewed to ensure that schools are applauded when "low achievers" are encouraged to take exams even if it affects the schools OFSTED parameters and league table position. Exams and the process behind them are a part of and a preparation for "Life Long Learning" and it is the duty of Suffolk County Council to make sure that all schools meet the needs of all their students as they prepare them for the employment market.

Scale in payments from Government for apprentices and trainees so that the initial cost of training to business in the current economy and long term benefit of removing from unemployment is recognised. This is as indicated in the table below.



There should be encouragement for schools to adopt a business and work exclusively through the proposed 14 to 19 Suffolk County Council Portal and to make school links to business a key Suffolk County Council and Schools SMT management objective.

5.5 Crime / Healthy & Inclusive Communities NI 21 explained in Appendix 7

We are concerned that National Indicator 21 – Dealing with local concerns about anti-social behaviour and crime issues by the local council and police – was not chosen for inclusion. The others address some of our concerns on crimes against businesses in the county but we believe that NI21 is particularly relevant to issues raised by our members.

This links in with concerns that we have raised in the past with the County Council and Suffolk Police as to the effectiveness of the County's CDRP's in considering crimes against businesses as part of their work programme. As a result we initiated a Business Crime Forum in conjunction with Suffolk Police and Police Authority to address some of the issues facing businesses within the county. How are Suffolk CC going to build business crime issues into CDRP remit?

The FSB consider that, after advice given by the Eastern Region Fraud Forum, a likely increase in Fraud in the Eastern Region, emanating from economic recession conditions, will need to be planned for by both Trading Standards and the Suffolk Police Authority.

Advise business on how criminals see businesses and how can business be helped to audit their businesses to prevent crime with emphasis on fraud?

Are there any no go areas as far as policing in the county is concerned and how are these being addressed? Will individual police vehicles follow stolen property to all areas within the county?

The FSB is aware that there are links between Poverty and Family Stress and drug taking, particularly in young men, leading to unemployability and all the avenues of Government engagement should be showing joined up thinking and interaction with each other.

5.6 Broadband See Appendix 4

To ensure that the rural areas of the county have access to good quality Broadband at a speed that allows businesses to develop in rural areas as well as within urban areas. Co-ordination of supply quality and driving forward quality of supply standards. Support for alternative forms of supply. Clear responsibility identified and acknowledged with targets set for improvement and proper monitoring.

The FSB has conducted a member survey on Broadband and its detailed conclusions can be supplied on request.

As an example of absurd conditions that Suffolk Business have to operate under in relations to Broadband we offer the following:-

David Baker

Charting Success Ltd

I am a business coach and although most of my work is conducted at client premises, I have a home office from where I do most of my administrative work.

Until recently I have had a wireless broadband connection supplied by Central Suffolk Broadband (CSBB) with a 'backup' and domestic broadband connection via BT. At the end of last year CSBB ceased operation and I was left with only the BT broadband connection which, even on a good day, operates at speeds of far less than 500Kb/sec (typically I get around 360K).

In an effort to improve this situation, I contacted a small Internet Service Provider (Andrews & Arnold) and ordered a second broadband connection - I actually asked for my home phone number to be converted to broadband but was told that since this was connected via a DACS box i.e. an old shared phone line system, that it would be quicker and easier to have a completely new line installed. I agreed to this and Andrews & Arnold accepted the order and said that BT Openreach would be along to install the line within the next few days.

BT Openreach duly arrived, drilled a (large and untidy) hole in the wall and installed a new master socket and cable. The Openreach engineer then came in and told me that he had found a problem - apparently he had cabled the new phone line back as far as the nearest cabinet in the road but there were no spare wires in the cabinet to connect to the exchange. I asked what would happen next and he said that the job would be referred to Planning.

Nothing happened for nearly two weeks and then I received an e-mail from Andrews & Arnold saying that BT Openreach had informed them that they could complete the installation but that there would be an additional charge of "GBP19,542.26 (nineteen thousand five hundred and forty-two pounds 26p) plus VAT in respect of 400 metres of additional ducting and cabling required".

I contacted Andrews & Arnold to say that this was completely ludicrous and that they should ask BT whether there were any other alternatives. They did so and replied "we have spoken to our senior BT liaison manager, and regret that it is not possible to waive the extra charges that BT are asking for" and that apparently BT had said that they had checked and that there were definitely no spare wires available and that they had no plans to install any.

Subsequently I asked Andrews & Arnold to re-institute the original order to convert my home phone number on the basis that this might just happen sometime in the future if whoever shared the phone line with me ceased their connection. Imagine my (pleasant) surprise when, two days later, the BT Openreach engineer called me and told me that my DACS box had been successfully removed and my line had been converted to broadband!

5.7 Business accommodation

To ensure that the quality quantity and range of business accommodation that is required to enable businesses to develop is available at cost effective rates. The FSB believes that there needs to be better promotion of access to details of available property and ensuring that detail on <http://www.choosesuffolk.com/cs/> is kept up to date and that there is greater awareness of the facility and possibly specific link to business premises.

5.8 Business Rates

To minimise business rates for small businesses and to ensure a full uptake of business small rate relief. preferably with an opt out rather than opt in applying.

Empty property rates result in further draining of resources for businesses and landlords and are a disincentive to business. The abolition of empty property rates to encourage speculative development as the economy develops and to prevent business being driven towards bankruptcy where there is increasing

vacant property and in many instances little prospect of an occupier being found is essential. FSB national policy document on business rates is at: - <http://www.fsb.org.uk/keeptradelocal/images/fsbbusrateslores.pdf>

5.9 Health and Safety and Insurance

To ensure that there is a balance kept between supporting employment and opportunities for training and development and Health and safety requirements. Where insurance can reasonably accommodate risks together with a reasonable risk strategy in place then business should be allowed to continue with the support of all concerned.

Allowing trainees and students to increase risk to full employment levels under controlled supervision should be an essential part of education and training. For example using knives and blades in catering or butchery.

There are too many examples of bad practice in pursuing or discouraging business over small risks and common sense should prevail. Working with business should not be discouraged on health and safety grounds and neither should risk assessment be used as a reason for work that is not clearly in the interest of the community. One example cited was a business that was told that it could not water its hanging baskets on the lamp column outside its shop for health and safety reasons. A "test of reasonableness" should apply and some risk applied where there is clear benefit. Business is required to take risk on a daily basis and the same principal should be recognised and accepted by councils and discussed and resolved with insurers if necessary.

5.10 Funding for business

There are major difficulties for businesses in raising both working capital and finance for development. Recognition at a national level has not fed down to local level and needs to be supported at all levels. For example it is purported that Essex County Council have started a "bank".

Maintaining existing businesses must be the cheapest and most sustainable way to preserve jobs and secure economic activity.

Funding for new businesses to get established is also limited and the need for new sources of focused finance was identified in the Suffolk Economic Summit at point 31 as a requirement. This remains an area where limited funds exists despite the clear need to get new businesses established to fill the gap left by businesses that have failed in the current climate.

A means of drawing in and recording and monitoring new funding sources and ensuring that this is new funding and not replacement funding is required to ensure that business can develop. Have the avenues for this been identified?

5.11 Planning

Encourage higher standards for planning and ensure that councillors who take decisions are trained for the role with recognised standards set and achieved as a precondition to sitting on planning committees.

Encourage higher standards for planning officers and a high priority for business applications and priority for business for prior consultation. Consider independent ombudsman for business applications to review, possibly in advance of application, to enable clearer faster decision making and prompt response to

strategic decision making that both enables and encourages investment in Suffolk.

The pressures on smaller shops from expansion of out of town stores and larger dominant nationals is being highlighted by regular campaigns against store expansion. S106 monies do not seem to reflect the needs of businesses who are forced into unfair competition. Greater consultation and explanation of what is anticipated to business coupled to a robust approach to supermarket applications with adequate resources deployed to test application and ensure a reasonable basis to any approvals is required.

Where development occurs, as anticipated for the Northern fringe of Ipswich, developers are often required to provide shops within the development. However, the occupation of these shops is generally left to market forces. Councils should draw up arrangements for section 106 agreements that ensure that smaller local businesses and not national chains occupy these premises. In particular, it may be possible to place a requirement on the premises that purchases for, or storage and distribution of stock of the shop should be accommodated within say 10 miles to prevent national distribution centres of supermarket chains being used. Stocking local produce to a required percentage may also be a potential requirement.

The requirements for essential infrastructure for travel to and from work before houses are developed should be lobbied for to ensure national policy is amended to provide this before or alongside national targets for development and not left to follow on afterwards, or not.

We also offer in APPENDIX 6 an example that very much involves Planning and magnifies the relationship that Councils need to change and develop with the Business Community matters concerning "Business to Local Authority Interaction"

5.12 Tourism

There is a need to support tourism to grow and develop.

Where are the answers – what strategic direction and support is there for tourism in co-ordinating investment and promotion.

How is "Suffolk" as a whole marketed as a destination?

Over two years ago the FSB was told that it would not only be consulted on the future of Tourism Industry in Suffolk but would be a part of that process. As we go into a recession and what ever lies beyond this recession economically, consultation and vision needs to come front and centre.

5.13 Drainage, flood prevention and Coastal Defence

There is a need to ensure that an appropriate budgetary provision is made to prevent flooding and to ensure that development is restricted in areas that might be subject to flooding so that priorities can rest on existing areas at risk.

We support the provision of a funded programme of flood defence for Ipswich and Lowestoft but are concerned that other parts of the coast, such as Southwold and the Blythe Estuary, are not included.

These are important areas of the county for tourism and we believe that they should be fully protected from erosion and should be included within the strategy. We oppose the Environment Agency's proposals for managed retreat in the Blythe estuary.

6. Where is the funding

- Are the resources available to deliver community projects and to support organisations that wish to develop at a time of limited investment?

Local community projects often involve local businesses in their development and support Local Trades.

- Transport plan – what is going to be sustained and what is possible what is probable and what is impossible and under what time scale
- How certain is the possibility of the cross county rail link?
- Identify areas where answers can be found, sources of advice to business and how business can go forward.

7. Working with local businesses

The FSB are seeking the support and commitment of local government in Suffolk to the principles and commitments set out in the Glover report to the use of local suppliers for local government.

Extract recommendations attached at Appendix 3.

An example of the interrelationships with councils and business and demonstrating how a better working relationship could be developed to overall benefit is attached as Appendix 6.

The FSB has a national campaign “Keep Trade Local” that is focused on encouraging sustainable communities and how they might best function. Linking and ensuring the sustainability of communities both at a village, town and whole county level. Further information on the national campaign can be found at: - <http://www.fsb.org.uk/keeptradelocal/images/ktl%20manifesto.pdf>

This is not protectionism as many local businesses work with other businesses across the country and keeping overall trade going in a structured way is important. However, the value of keeping money in the local economy should be costed into appraisals as money spent within the local economy is spent again seven times whereas once it goes out of the county it goes for ever.

Keeping business going and developing and money circulating in the economy is essential to the future of Suffolk and FSB members are an essential part of this. Maintaining close links between local business and local government is essential in supporting local sustainability and growth

8. Conclusion

As the SME sector is the biggest employment provider and wealth creator within the various communities in Suffolk, the involvement of business within the County across all groups and interests is important to ensure their proper representation and their involvement.

Again we would reiterate the following: -

How will Suffolk measure economic prosperity in the county? Much of it seems to focus on obtaining data from various public sector agencies and local authority departments. These do not necessarily give a true picture of what is happening in

the real economy. How will they use organisations such as ourselves, the Chamber, IoD, CLA, NFU, Road Haulage Association to get a broader picture?

Consultation should also focus on the needs of business community from the smaller retail outlet to large IT or manufacturing company

Where public funds are used to assist business this should be on an inclusive basis. This will also ensure greatest buy in from the funding and also potentially greater input from others.

The linkage between one business organisation and the county council is appropriate but needs to be broadened out so that other organisations representing business sectors within the county are represented. Organisations including the FSB, NFU, CLA and others all have a valid stake within the business community. Suffolkbusinessonline and the associated eBook and the trading platform suffolkb2b.co.uk could be seen as examples of a potentially limited approach that may disenfranchise sections of the business community, even if this was not, at any stage in the process, the intention of any of the parties involved.

Supply2gov has a process that may restrict involvement due to the time to set up and involve businesses. Supplier matching through business link requires third party involvement that may restrict involvement and covers a larger area. It would be appropriate for the councils and public sector organisations to consider how they can promote and encourage use of these already available facilities. For example, it may be possible for a combined approach from councils, business link or others to offer businesses one to one support to encourage and enable them to benefit from contract opportunities by providing knowledgeable support in setting up profiles for the tendering process. This service could be provided from within the purchasing and supplies services or bought in from an external contractor.

FSB believe that it is essential that the emphasis of all policy is transformed from a perception of borrowing money to support poor and disadvantaged over to a supportive and enthusiastic approach to business that encourages business to drive forward to generate income to support the community generally and to work our way out of the current economic downturn.

Creation of wealth is the long term sustainable means of achieving a better lifestyle for all but does require hard work and a true partnership between regional and local government and with all sectors of business to achieve this.

Christopher Soule FSB Suffolk Chairman
Chris Storey FSB Suffolk Vice Chairman

APPENDIX 1

Ideas collated at the Suffolk Economic Summit 4 December 2008

HOUSING

1. Get families into affordable homes quickly by speeding up the way they are planned and built
2. Make use of empty properties to help landlords and agents get more decent homes available for rent
3. Provide a mortgage rescue service across Suffolk linked to both government and independent schemes
 - Roll out the Coastal Housing Action Group's independent Mortgage Rescue Scheme.
 - Link to government-backed mortgage rescue schemes (run by local authorities and mortgage lenders) to deliver a comprehensive mortgage rescue service across Suffolk.
4. Avoid repossession by working closer with banks and building societies
 - Help to avoid repossession by sharing information with banks and building societies.
 - Encourage them to join county-wide and local strategic partnerships.
5. Get families into proper houses instead of paying for bed and breakfast
6. Prevent repossession by using our expertise and facilities to give people better advice
 - Help prevent repossession and homelessness by providing local, targeted support, advice and mediation (for example, by providing integrated Citizens Advice Bureau, Job Centre Plus and bank information in children's centres, community centres and libraries).
 - Delivery could be supported through specialist staff secondments (accountants, solicitors, etc) from the county and district/borough councils.
7. Investigate the potential to use council tax from second homes to provide social housing.
8. Use housing regeneration grants to pay for social housing projects
9. Prevent homelessness by getting credit unions to support Rent Deposit Schemes

EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS

10. Help people train for new jobs by giving them better advice and access to money available. (Commitment already made by Councils on 4 December)
11. Keep people in employment by Councils speeding up investment in local building projects (Commitment already made by Councils on 4 December)
12. Take a fresh look at strengthening the Suffolk-wide redundancy group to see if there are more opportunities to keep people in Suffolk in work
13. Provide better advice on redundancy to employers and workers
 - Give focused advice to employers who are making people redundant
 - Give focused advice to employees who are at risk of being made redundant
14. Keep apprentices in training
 - Identify those (at risk) if apprenticeships are pulled (learning and skills council)
 - Develop alternatives for continuing in training (JCP and others)
15. Give people more information on training, volunteering and getting back to work throughout all our locations
 - Develop 'hubs' (community centres, village halls, volunteer centres and Citizens Advice Bureau) providing information for people being made redundant on training/skills, volunteering, jobs and starting a business
16. Promote Suffolk's education, employment and economic opportunities
 - Market and promote Suffolk's strengths in education and employment (for example, University Campus Suffolk, expansion of Felixstowe Port, and the Olympics) to maintain confidence in the Suffolk economy

(Commitment already made by Councils on 4 December)

17. Improve skills by getting more people into Train2Gain scheme

18. Bring work experience into schools through films and events

- Promote 'virtual work experiences' with local business in schools (for example, showing films about working in a particular industry or sector, and information about career paths)

19. Use the internet and other ways to promote the work of our local businesses

- Use a website and other media to promote the work of local businesses with a particular emphasis on jobs and products

- Better PR for local businesses

- Create entrepreneurs forum

20. Help our colleges and schools to match people's skills to where they are needed

- Colleges and other learning providers: do more to match skills to vacancies (for example, filling the skills gap left by migrant workers in plumbing, decorating, domiciliary care and so on)

21. Work closely with the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to get more funding for training

- Help colleges where they are constrained to provide courses with qualifications in order to receive appropriate LSC funding.

- Lobby the appropriate government department to lift this restriction on the LSC - "You don't necessarily need a qualification to have a skill".

22. Boost the Job Centre Plus scheme to give people better access to training

- Build on the current scheme that provides access to skills and training providers

23. Do more to get young people to work for themselves

- Do more to encourage self employment among young people – entrepreneurs can be made as well as born!

BUSINESSES

24. Get Councils to pay invoices from local businesses quicker (Commitment already made by Councils on 4 December)

25. Get more people to enjoy a holiday in Suffolk

- Promote local tourism as an alternative to going abroad, encouraging people to take breaks and holidays in Suffolk to boost the local economy

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- Introduce more 'localism' into procurement for local authority goods and services and local business supply chains, supporting investment and reinvestment in the Suffolk economy

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- Support increased business-to-business networking to share good practice and ways of dealing with the credit crunch

30. Reduce rates for smaller businesses that are feeling the impact

- Help Small-to-Medium Enterprises (SMEs) with a business rate relief system (for example, limited period rate holidays, rate relief on high impact businesses), and lobby for a return to a 50% rate for empty business properties

31. Give more council money to business enterprise agencies

- Enterprise Agencies provide business support and offer accommodation to SMEs

- Increase funding to invest in start up businesses

FINANCE AND ACCESS TO ADVICE AND BENEFITS

32. Stop people using loan sharks by providing more money to credit unions
(Commitment already made by Councils on 4 December)
33. Get Councils to help voluntary organisations secure more funding and grants
(Commitment already made by Councils on 4 December)
34. Use one website to give people all the advice they need to manage their debts in one place
- Create and publicise a central website of debt-management advice, including a full range of advice on benefits, organisations that can help with different issues, grants and funds etc.
35. Train more advisors to help people deal with all of their financial problems
- Work with partners to train multi-skilled, multi-agency advice workers, creating a co-ordinate network of advice across Suffolk
 - Put extra money into Citizens Advice Bureaux and other advice agencies to pay for more money advisers to meet growing demand (Commitment already made by Councils on 4 December)
 - Train more money advisors to meet increased demand (Commitment already made by Councils on 4 December)
36. Provide information to help people get the best deals from energy companies
- Research and promote the availability of social energy tariffs and other good practice of energy companies to combat fuel poverty
 - Councils: promote information and lobby central government/utilities/regulators to improve utility company practice
37. Get councils to help people find the advice they need
- Promote a series of 'Networked Information Clinics' (starting with areas of greatest need) to raise awareness of existing advice and assistance services, allowing officers to be alerted to early signs of problems
38. Use all the organisations we can to spot people most at risk of suffering
- Link local volunteers, lunch clubs, parish councils, HomeShield and Suffolk County Council
 - Identify people who are at risk of becoming isolated and make sure they get the pre-emptive support they need
39. Get the Suffolk Strategic Partnership and the Chamber of Commerce together to urge food shops and suppliers to help
- For example, get supermarkets to help people in food poverty
40. Use charity hardship funds to strengthen support to people who need it most
- Create and strengthen points for people to get access in what advice they can get (Commitment already made by Councils on 4 December)

DELIVERY MECHANISMS

41. Know more about people at risk of suffering and help them before it's too late
- Early intervention – focus on prevention
42. Find every possible way to help the voluntary sector fight the credit crunch
- Find ways to maintain, sustain, fund and develop the capacity of the voluntary sector so they can support credit-crunch busting activities
43. Ensure the Local Strategic Partnerships keeps local plans focused on achieving priorities for Suffolk
- Develop local plans to deliver on priority themes for Suffolk in current climate, pulling together initiatives across third sector, public sector and the provider sector
 - Suffolk Constabulary ask LSPs to draw on Suffolk ACRE, business links, LSCs, JCP and key voluntary organisations for support

APPENDIX 2

Transport.

Principal Strategic routes in Suffolk – A140, Trunking of A12, Bottlenecks and restrictions and potential hold up due to accident on A14.

FSB is concerned to ensure that Councils/Councillors understand the business perspective on transport issues. It is essential for them to take on board those concerns.

Key Priorities

1. Ipswich, significant concerns over the potential for delay and risk to traffic flow as a result of options for changes to traffic flows in the Star Lane area of Ipswich and the major risk of substantial business costs of hold up in Ipswich being increased.
2. Improving traffic flows generally in towns with emphasis on assisting business in efficient transport as well as customers to business and acknowledge that the rural areas feed into the major towns and parking requirements to enable efficient delivery of journeys into town supported by public transport recognise the need to generate revenues to business.
3. A14 corridor – Importance of strategic route and risks of bottlenecks and restrictions and potential hold up due to accident on A14.
4. A140 corridor – speed restrictions and differential treatment of section within Suffolk against Norfolk. Need to address the restricted sections of road and improve journey times to Norwich.
5. A11 – support for Elveden improvements and upgrade to dual.
6. A12 Trunking for road north of Ipswich to improve standards and priority for transport improvements to Lowestoft.
7. Felixstowe, rail links to improve to assist with reducing pressure on A14.

Suffolk ultimately needs a Motorway

Secondary Priorities

The A143 and A134 require improving.

Support confirmed for promotion of bypasses for towns where delays are experienced, but with an emphasis on business priorities rather than domestic transport. These may have different priorities for schemes.

APPENDIX 3

Extract from : -Accelerating the SME economic engine: through transparent, simple and strategic procurement – November 2008 – Anne Glover CBE

Box 1.A: Summary of recommendations

Improving SME participation in public procurement is best achieved by making the market work effectively to allow SMEs to compete effectively for contracts. This requires that opportunities should be transparent, the process as simple as possible, and that a strategic approach to procurement encourages innovation and gives SMEs a fair deal when they are sub-contractors. In detail:

Transparency

1. By 2010, contract opportunities above £20,000 across the whole public sector should be advertised electronically with standard indicative contract value ranges, and accessible through a single, free, easy to search online portal.
2. Government should issue all tender documentation electronically by 2010 and this should be kept as brief as possible. Businesses should be permitted to tender electronically for all public sector contracts by 2010; no “paper only” tenders should be required after this date, **with an ambition for all tenders to be electronic by 2012.**
3. Details of contract awardees should be published online in a standard format within 48 days of contract signature, accessible via the single portal by 2010.
4. Tendering opportunities thought especially suitable for SMEs or consortia of SMEs should be flagged by the procurer during the advertising process. Government should provide strategic and detailed guidance for procuring authorities on assessing suitable contracts for flagging, based on risk, value and market maturity.

Simplicity

5. Qualification criteria that are not specific to a sector should be standardised and incorporated in all pre-qualification questionnaires so that businesses do not need to repeatedly submit the same core information in different formats.
6. Procurers should give businesses the opportunity to provide details of all previous relevant experience when bidding for contracts, not just public sector experience. This should be taken into account when selecting successful tenderers.
7. Procurers should ensure that, where they rely on a particular accreditation scheme or standard as part of the process of prequalification or contract award, that they take a flexible approach. Businesses should be given the opportunity to provide evidence that they can meet the contract requirements by reference to other similar equivalent accreditations or standards they may already hold – especially where these have been recognised or required by other public sector procurers.

Strategic Procurement

8. Departments should use their Innovation Procurement Plans to set out how procurement aligns with their overall commercial strategy, encourages innovation and gives advanced notice of long-term procurement plans.

9. Government should encourage wider use of outcome-based specifications across the public sector, as a means of driving innovation.

10. Government should expect and enable prime contractors to make their subcontracting opportunities accessible through the single, online portal created in Recommendation 1.

11. Through contract management, Government should ensure that SMEs and other firms acting as sub-contractors obtain contract conditions, including promptness of payment terms, that are no worse than those applicable to the prime contractor.

Measurement

12. The Committee recommends that all central government departments should report annually on the value of their contract spend with SMEs, creating a reliable single source of quantitative data which can be used to inform future policy decisions and evaluate the recommendations in this report.

APPENDIX 4

East Anglia Broadband Survey 2008

1. Overview

A total of 907 FSB members took part in the survey.

Of these, the vast majority, 723 or 80%, were using landlines supporting a broadband service. Of the remainder, 56 or 6% were using a dial up service and 16 or 2% had a satellite or wireless service. A further 112 or 12% had no internet connection.

2. Q. Who is your Broadband Supplier?

BT was the supplier to the largest number of those responding. Other suppliers had a far less dominant position in the local market.

BT	261	35%
Tiscalli	76	10%
NTL/Virgin	27	4%
Sky	3	0%
Not specified	223	30%
Other	149	20%
(Fastnet, Orange, Demon, Tesco AOL, Pipex, Talk Talk, etc)	739	99%

3. Q. How long have you been on Broadband? Average 1.26 years

4. Q. How long from buying the service until you were able to use it? Average 3.17weeks

5. Q. What is the Monthly Cost? The average cost to those surveyed was £27.92 per month and 248 or 34% had bundled services.

6. Q. Does the service Drop out or slow down? Members affected totaled 297 or 40% and the frequency of reported problems was 1.1per week.

7. Q. What Speed is claimed by the Supplier? Average 5.52 Mb

8. Q. What Speed is actually delivered? On average speeds received were 2.83Mb or 51% of claimed speeds. However, speeds averaged from a high of 8.00Mb to a low of 0.026Mb.

9. Q. What impact does this have on your Business?

A wide range of comments was received indicating the importance for communication within a rural county of receiving a fast and reliable broadband service. Internet based businesses often consider a rural setting attractive as they do not need direct access to larger population centers. However, access to reliable broadband is essential to the success of these businesses and lack of this reliability is a factor in determining business location. Further details are available from the answer to this question.

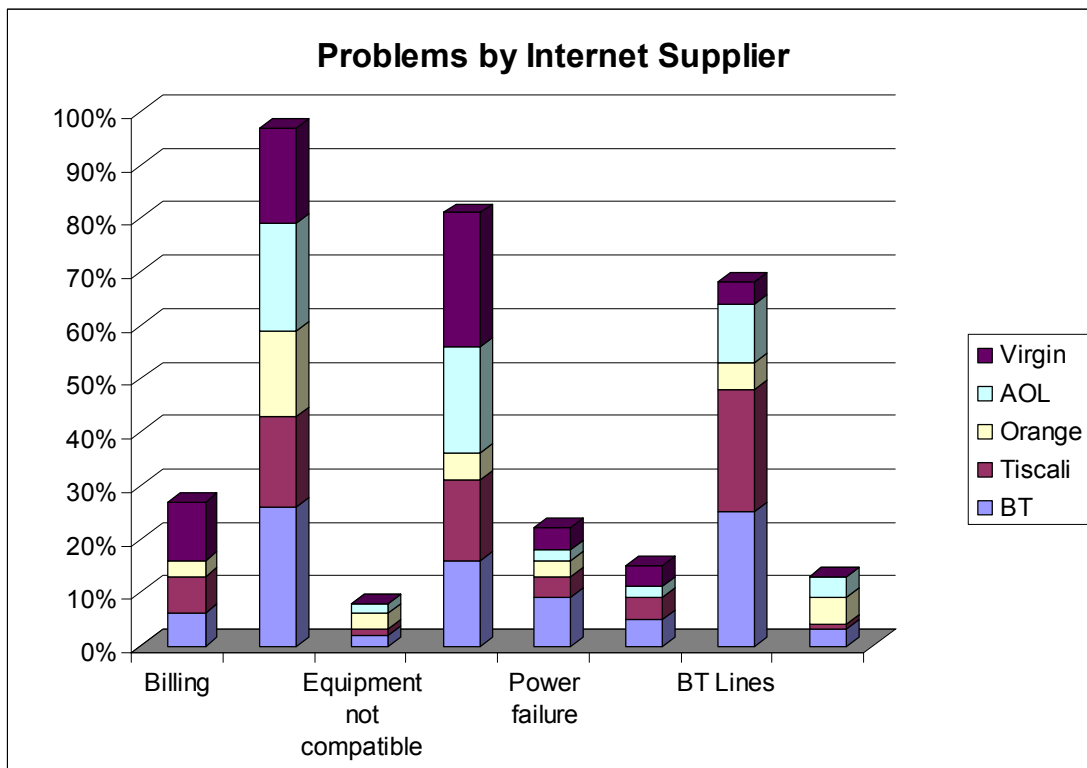
10. Q. What do you use internet for?

(a)	On-line sales	240	32%
(b)	Search for information	619	84%

(c)	Advertising	406	55%
(d)	Data back up	209	28%
(e)	Communicating with Customers, Staff, etc	595	81%

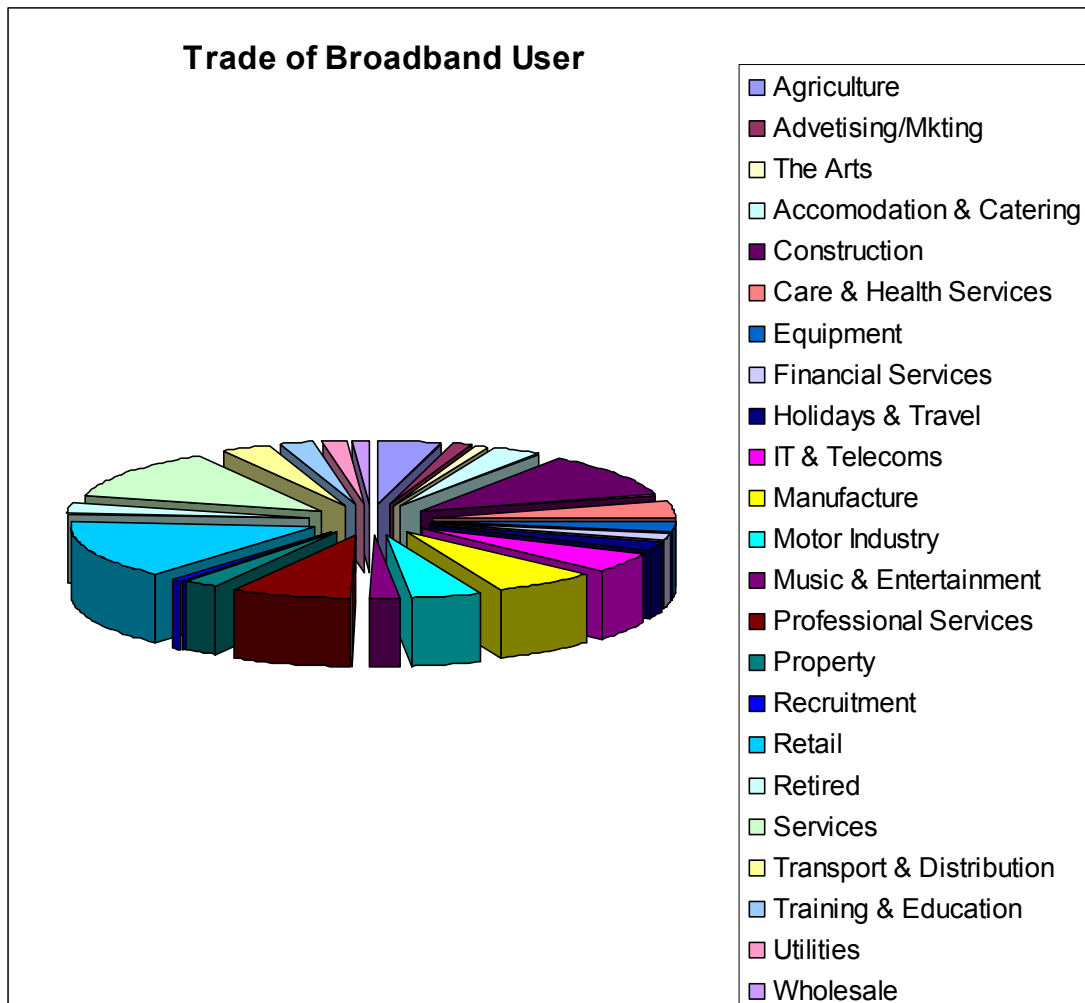
11. Q. What sort of problems have you had with the Broadband service?

(a)	Billing	39	5%
(b)	Technical failure	136	18%
(c)	Equipment not compatible	17	2%
(d)	Customer support	88	12%
(e)	Power failure	36	5%
(f)	Supplier stop service	24	3%
(g)	BT Lines	125	17%
(h)	Other	26	4%
		<u>491</u>	<u>66%</u>



12. Q. If you do not use Broadband, what is the reason?

(a)	Cost	13	1%
(b)	Too Technical	9	1%
(c)	No supply in the area	6	1%
(d)	See no purpose	16	2%
(f)	Other	2	0%
		<u>46</u>	<u>5%</u>



Conclusion

The importance of addressing the provision of a fast and reliable broadband network across the county is difficult to overstate. Most businesses now rely on the information flows that broadband supplies to them and it is likely that this reliance will increase. Many discounted telephone systems such as Skype rely on an effective broadband service. These provide a means for businesses to contain costs and improve overall efficiency and effectiveness of their business. A strategic plan for ensuring that investment in infrastructure within the county as a whole, with targets for roll out of fibre optic cabling and improved services is essential to the future well being of business within the county.

APPENDIX 5

Federation of Small Businesses

Dealing with the current economic climate and “Lifting the Barriers” extract information.

The proposals presented in December do not appear to take account of the downturn in the national economy and its potential outcome on Suffolk’s businesses and residents.

We would question the achievability of some of the aspirations within those proposals in the current economic climate and believe that there needs to be more flexibility within the proposals contained to deal with the realities of the county’s economic situation.

Recent weeks have seen the closure of Woolworth’s stores across the county, although some have been taken over by Iceland; the closure of Marks & Spencers Food store in Sudbury; the closure of Fleetwood Caravans in Long Melford and Sanyo Televisions in Lowestoft. It is not clear how many more businesses will be affected.

Our own members have reported in national “snap polls” that they have seen or are planning the following actions:-

- Ø 60% have seen a decrease in trade
- Ø 39% have seen an increase in payment times
- Ø 51% plan to reduce or have reduced staff
- Ø 48% plan to reduce or have reduced staff hours
- Ø 58% plan to or have stopped hiring staff

Although these are national figures previous membership surveys have shown broad similarities between national results and those for the East of England and Suffolk.

We welcome the initiative undertaken by the County Council to hold a summit of local organisations to consider actions to support businesses and individuals during the downturn.

In particular we would like to see consideration given to the following:-

- Ø Payment of invoices to small businesses within ideally 20 working days
- Ø Greater use of local businesses for public sector procurement
- Ø Promotion of small business rates relief to small businesses by Borough and District Councils
- Ø Relaxation of parking charges at certain times to encourage shoppers into town centres

For further information contact:-

Chris Soule, Suffolk Branch Chairman – 01379 871088

Jeanette Thurtle – East Anglia Regional Organiser – 01953 498915

About the FSB and its members

The FSB has 215,000 members nationally, 18,500 in the East of England and 2,500 in Suffolk.

The majority of businesses are male owned and the average length of time in business is 13 years

55% of Suffolk members run a limited company; 25% are sole traders and 18% in a partnership

81% are registered for VAT

22% work from home; 22% have retail premises; 21% work from factory premises and 18% from office premises

24% are based in towns; 18% in rural areas and 16% in a village

53% either rent or lease their premises; 32% own their own property

21% have a turnover of £50,000 to £100,000 per annum ?

16% have a turnover of £100,000 to £200,000 per annum

12% have a turnover of £25,000 to £50,000

8% have a turnover of £200,001 to £300,000 per annum ?

12% Have a turnover of £300,000 to £500,000 per annum

The average number of employees is 7 full time and 3 part time

Most of the members' customers are locally based with only 3% having EU or world customers

Within the public sector schools (20%); local government (20%); the MOD (6%) and Police (5%) make up the biggest customer bases

E-commerce accounts for 10% of sales

Their growth aspirations are to grow moderately or remain the same size

13% would lose everything and 36% said their basic lifestyle would be under threat if their business went into liquidation

(Source – Lifting the Barriers to Growth in UK Small Businesses 2008)

Appendix 6

Business to local authority interaction

Introduction

This business is used as an example of opportunities for joint working between small business and local and national authorities. This demonstrates how issues arise that impact on business and where existing policies often result in increased costs and pressures on small business that should be being addressed by others to enable the business to operate more effectively.

Orwell Crossing Lorry Park

Orwell Crossing Lorry Park is one of only 4 recognised Lorry Parking facilities in the A14 Corridor, from Felixstowe to Cambridge.

Lorry parking facilities are beset by problems, such as:

- Lack of support from the local council
- Under usage from the HGV drivers
- General public perception of low standards re: cleanliness, service, food that is available, against high prices being charged for parking

In order for the businesses to not only survive, but to flourish, there needs to be some positive action from the local authorities and the Government.

Two small changes could ensure that drivers park in a proper facility:

- The Haulage firm should be required to produce evidence of parking via a vat receipt to the Inland Revenue
- The Driver should be required to provide evidence of his parking and expenses to the Haulage firm before being reimbursed

These small changes would enable Haulage firms peace of mind, as the safety of the driver and his cargo would be more assured through the usage of better regulated parking areas.

Health & Hygiene

Currently, a large number of drivers (male & female) urinate into plastic bottles and defecate into plastic bags. This effluent is discarded along the motorway verges, put into rubbish bins and generally disposed of by unauthorised and inappropriate means. Actions should be taken to discourage and prevent this – There are disease risks (HIV, Hepatitis C et al) and a risk to health and safety for those working along the transport routes and at stopping points.

If drivers knew that action was likely in the event of inappropriate disposal then this would encourage more appropriate behaviour.

The Planning Process

In the experience of the owners of the Orwell Crossing Lorry Park the local authority planning process is open to abuse and misinterpretation:

For particularly complex sites and conditions there is a need for greater detail and explanation. The current local planning sub-committee meetings follow a set procedure, with a three-minute slot for the applicant to present his case. Followed by a question and answer session in which the applicant can be fully involved.

Following this the applicant may not comment even where: -

- Facts may be misrepresented
- Inappropriate remarks may be made
- Misleading or inaccurate remarks may be made

The applicant has no further right to speak. Because of the complexity and the lack of detailed knowledge in many instances of local practices and business interests and involvement, this can lead to poor planning decisions.

Proposals for action to resolve this: -

- The Applicant should be permitted to be available to answer all questions, and bring evidence to support his case until the committee are ready to vote.
- The Council Members should undergo a period of training in Planning Procedure, Planning legislation, and the Planning Departments own 'Good Practice Guide' and demonstrate a reasonable understanding of the basis on which decisions are to be made and policy guidelines as well as training on design and reading plans before commencing on planning committees.

The particular importance and relevance of SMEs and their benefit to the county as a whole should be recognised and not as in the case of Orwell Crossing have to take five years to get appropriate signage agreed.

If the provision of overnight parking for HGVs is to continue to be provided by the private sector, as is the local government policy, then there needs to be active support and engagement from the local authorities. As traffic flows on the A14 increase these matters will grow in importance.

The policy for discouraging 'unnecessary journeys' on the A14 does not take into account the proposed housing developments at St Michaels/Ravenswood, Cranes and Martlesham. A few bus and train passengers are not going to significantly reduce the numbers of private cars on the road.

The A14 was built as the Ipswich by-pass: for local traffic going to Felixstowe etc. Eastbound, and Cambridge/London etc Westbound. It was to be used for local traffic, not solely for HGVs, using it as part of the Strategic Road Network.

Operation Stack

Operation Stack has an available capacity at the lorry park that is currently not promoted up to the capacity of the site. Electronic signage could be incorporated at the lead up to the site to confirm available capacity at the time Operation Stack is in operation. This could be coordinated with the owners to ensure that this resource was used to the maximum, without generating overloading. This would reduce pressures at other locations.

APPENDIX 7

NI means Nation Indicators: points by which audit takes place.

National Indicator Definitions summary
prepared by David Burch FSB Policy Manager Eastern Region

NI 21 – Dealing with concerns about anti-social behaviour and crime issues by local councils and the Police

This indicator is about partnership working with local agencies. This measure is also being used to measure confidence in local agencies to tackle the community safety issues that matter to local people (i.e. a measure of Neighbourhood Policing in the widest sense).

Data will be collected biennially by the Audit Commission from local authorities through the new Place Survey and through the British Crime Survey (BCS).

This indicator is a Statutory Performance Indicator (SPI) within the APACS (Assessments of Policing and Community Safety) framework.

Luton Borough Council (unitary) has it as a local indicator and Norfolk County Council as an agreed indicator with a target to be set in the first year.

In view of the work that has been undertaken with Suffolk Police on business crime, and the role of neighborhood policing teams in tackling it, it ought to be worthy of inclusion.

NI 91 – Participation by 17 year olds in education or training

Suffolk has a poor record in post sixteen participation in education or training and lower educational attainment levels than should be expected considering the county's demographics and wealth creation capacity, whilst the UK has more young people dropping out of education and training before the age of 18 than in many other countries.

This indicator reports the percentages of young people at academic age 17 who participate in education or Work Based Learning in each Local Authority. The Government's long term ambition is to transform participation so that by 2015 90% of 17 year olds are participating. This indicator is regarded as being essential to monitor and drive performance against that aspiration.

This indicator is the only one focusing on young peoples' participation post 16. It is not mandatory and only Suffolk has chosen it with targets having been agreed with Go-East.

NI 163 - Proportion of population aged 19-64 for males and 19-59 for females qualified to at least Level 2 or higher

This indicator is included because of the important role local authorities have with regard to economic development and the key part which skills and qualifications play in supporting economic development.

People are counted as being qualified to level 2 and above if they have achieved at least either 5 GCSEs grades A*-C (or equivalent, i.e., O levels, CSE Grade 1s), two A/S levels, or any equivalent or higher qualification in the Qualifications and

Credit Framework.

This indicator has been adopted by nine of the ten county and unitary councils in the Region and has targets agreed between the local authorities and Go – East. Data is collected via the Office of National Statistics Annual Population Survey.

NI 165 - Proportion of population aged 19-64 for males and 19-59 for females qualified to at least Level 4 or higher

This indicator is used for the same purposes as NI 163 and data is collected in the same way.

Level 4-6 qualifications include foundation or first degrees, recognised degree-level professional qualifications, teaching or nursing qualifications, diploma in higher education, HNC/HND or equivalent vocational qualification. Qualifications at level 7-8 include higher degrees, and postgraduate level professional qualifications.

Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire and Suffolk have it as an agreed indicator with agreed targets whereas Essex and the unitary authorities of Peterborough and Thurrock have it as a local indicator.

NI 166 - Media earnings of employees in the area

Earnings per job is a measurement that local authorities use to monitor a rough proxy for productivity. Used with the employment rate this indicator allows local areas to make a broad assessment of their economic output.

The most appropriate indicator of average earnings, is median gross weekly pay of full-time employees on a workplace basis. This measure is available directly in the results of the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings from the Office of National Statistics. Median earnings are based on the pay period containing a particular date in April each year. Data are published in October of the same year.

This is again an agreed indicator with agreed targets and has been chosen by six of the ten county and unitary councils including Essex and Norfolk.

NI 172 – Percentage of small businesses showing in an area showing employment growth

This indicator is intended to show the strength of the small business sector by monitoring employment growth within existing small businesses. Existing indicators measure new business formation and survival rates of businesses, but there is no current measure of the performance within surviving businesses. This indicator looks at the proportion of small businesses that have achieved some employment growth within the year. It is a measure of dynamism within firms and not an indicator of the overall change in employment.

This indicator includes those businesses registered for VAT and/or PAYE with fewer than 50 employees (around 98% of all VAT registered enterprises). It measures the proportion of those businesses showing year on year employment growth, where employment is measured as the number of employees (full and part-time) plus the number of self-employed people that run the business.

Around 2.1 million of the estimated 4.3 million enterprises in the UK were registered for either VAT or PAYE. It is not possible to produce local area estimates for this wider business population.

Economic Development – NI related to the economic prosperity DP

- NI 116: Proportion of children in poverty (Economic Development)
- NI151: Overall employment rate
- NI 152: Working people on out of work benefits**
- NI153: Working age people claiming out of work benefits in the worst performing neighborhoods
- NI 154: Net additional homes provided**
- NI155: No. of affordable homes delivered
- NI 156: No. of households living in temporary accommodation (Community Cohesion/Health and Wellbeing)
- NI157: Processing of planning applications as measured against targets for 'major', 'minor' and 'other' application types
- NI158: Percentage of decent council homes
- NI159: Supply of ready to develop housing sites
- NI160: local authority tenants' satisfaction with landlord services
- NI 166: Average earnings of employees in the area**
- NI167: Congestion – average journey time per mile during the morning
- NI 168: Principal roads where maintenance should be considered
- NI 169: Non-principal roads where maintenance should be considered
- NI 170: Previously developed land that has been vacant or derelict for more than five years
- NI 171: VAT registration rate
- NI 172: VAT registered businesses in the area showing growth**
- NI 173: People falling out of work and onto incapacity benefits
- NI 174: Skills gap in the current workforce reported by employers (Learning and Skills)
- NI 179: Value for money - total net value of on-going cash-releasing value for money gains that have impacted since the start of the 2008-09 financial year
- NI 180: Changes in housing benefit/council tax benefit entitlements within the year
- NI 181: Time taken to process housing benefit/council tax benefit new claims and change event
- NI 182: Satisfaction of businesses with local authority regulation services
- NI 183: Impact of local authority regulatory services on the fair trading environment
- LT4: Increase the % of employment (FTE total) in Suffolk's key sectors**
- LT 9: Increase the number of affordable homes commencements on site across Suffolk (gross)**