

APPENDIX 1 - ADULT SKILLS AND EMPLOYABILITY TASK GROUP- PROGRESS UPDATE MARCH 2014

NAME OF SCRUTINY PANEL: Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel

NAME OF SCRUTINY REVIEW/TASK GROUP: Review of Adult Skills and Employability

DATE OF FINAL REPORT: June 2013 – this update is for March 2014

RECOMMENDATION	PROPOSED ACTION	LEAD OFFICER	PROGRESS UPDATE MARCH 2014
<p>1</p> <p>Recommendation 1 That Cabinet engage the councils apprenticeship group, and work closely with the Economic Wellbeing Sub Group to utilize existing good practice, to increase the number and diversity of apprenticeships available to adults from 18 years onwards (and beyond 24 years of age) to increase employment opportunities for adults.</p>	<p>Officers sit on both the Sutton and Merton Apprenticeship Forum and the Economic Well Being Group (EWG) and so information and good practice is shared between the groups. Representation includes officers from Children, Schools and Families who work with NEET's and looked after children. There are also training providers, JCP, RSL's, Merton Chamber of Commerce, Grenfell and Commonsense Trust representatives.</p> <p>The Employment and Skills</p>	<p>Sara Williams futureMerton</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>The EWG and joint apprenticeship groups continue to work together to support employment and particularly apprenticeship opportunities. Cabinet approved a sum of £200k for access to employment and skills activities and the EWG agreed to use some of the funding for this financial year to support existing programmes that are successfully delivering employment and skills.</p>

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		Action Plan (2013-14) sets out reducing youth unemployment/NEETs as a priority		
2	Recommendation 2 That Cabinet identifies and establishes 100 new apprenticeships in the borough for adults of all ages within the next 12 months.	The EWG can encourage employers to employ apprentices by promoting the benefits of apprenticeships. The EWG launched the “Take One” initiative led by Merton Chamber of Commerce. This is a programme of engagement with local businesses to encourage them to take on one new person as an apprentice, for work experience or employment. The number of apprenticeships placed can be reported back to Scrutiny within an agreed timetable.	Sara Williams futureMerton	100 new apprenticeships by December 2014. – We have successfully placed 118 apprentices since July 2013 through the joint promotion of Take One. This is delivered by Merton Chamber of Commerce and was funded by a successful bid of £20k from the National Apprenticeship Service and paid to MCC to support a business engagement officer to end of January 2014. MCC have submitted a bid to the EWG for a further £8.5k of the Councils Access to Employment and Skills (EDS funds) which will continue to support the programme until 1 st April 2014.
3	Recommendation 3 That the Council, engaging with all relevant departments increase the number of apprenticeships available for adults through the:	Merton’s Skills and Action Plan (2013-2014) sets a priority action of increasing employer demand and take-up of apprenticeships. This will be actioned by using suppliers	Kim Brown Joint Head of HR Policy Development	Ongoing Merton currently has 31 Apprentices (4 from the LAC) We have 3 further vacancies at

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tendering process; • Community Plan; and • Regeneration Plans for Merton 	and the Councils procurement policy to increase the number of apprenticeships through suppliers and contractors.		<p>recruitment stage – 2 in Accountancy and 1 in FutureMerton</p> <p>Within the last year 1 apprentice has gained FT employment with the Council and 1 a fixed term contract.</p>
4	<p>Recommendation 4- That Cabinet considers establishing an information portal for use by partner organisations to facilitate greater information sharing, working with the Economic Well Being Sub Group.</p>	<p>A portal has not been created but information is shared through the EWG minutes. Information amongst members on good practice, bid opportunities and share information is regularly discussed. This is serviced through futureMerton. Meetings take place every 6 weeks. A portal would require a dedicated officer to manage and update.</p>	Sara Williams futureMerton	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>We have discussed the possibility of HR providing a separate page which advertises apprenticeship posts within the council.</p> <p>The futureMerton Team have recruited a dedicated Employment and Skills Officer on a fixed term contract for 18 months from May2014. The officer will investigate the opportunity to set up a dedicated web page in partnership with members of the EWG which could advertise opportunities such as work experience and apprenticeships as well as shared information on access to employment and</p>

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				skills.
5	<p>Recommendation 5 That Cabinet support/endorse adult employment and skills activities being delivered through the Partnership's Economic Wellbeing (EW) Sub Group.</p>	<p>The EW Group has been recognised for the achievements to date. There is a proposal for the Group to apply for Flexible Support Funds to support adult employment and skills activities.</p>	EWG	<p>A bid is currently being prepared by a sub-group of the EWG, led by Grenfell Housing. This will focus on unemployed over 50's, single parents and will be around pre-employment training programmes that are bespoke as well as possible courses on job searching and ICT barriers The bid should be ready for submission by end of April 2014.</p>
6	<p>Recommendation 6 That Cabinet endorse the provision of tailored support programmes in local libraries to support writing applications, CV's, and accessing online resources for interview practice etc, building upon the good practice that already exists in libraries, as part of the councils assisted digital strategy.</p>	<p>There is a Citizen Advice Bureau website which is facilitated through the libraries and this provides guidance on job-ready activities such as applications and CV writing. The Council are working closely with JobCentre Plus and the voluntary sector to deliver programmes of on-line activity to support unemployed residents. In our libraries we now have support programmes.</p>	Anthony Hopkins Head of Library & Heritage Services	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>All libraries provide employability support workshops on a weekly basis. A Job Club has recently been established in Mitcham Library in partnership with Circle Housing and there are plans to develop this at other libraries too.</p>
7	<p>Recommendation 7</p>	The brief for the Inward	Eric Osei,	April 2014 –

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	<p>That Cabinet agree to debate and consider the Councils inward investment Strategy by December 2013.</p>	<p>Investment Strategy and Action Plan (IISAP) is being prepared.</p> <p>Cabinet and the Adult Skills & Employment Task Group will be consulted on the IISAP.</p> <p>When completed the IISAP will include :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Merton's offer for attracting inward investment (from foreign and UK companies) • Place marketing (marketing & promotion of Merton as a place for inward investment) • Specific projects for attracting inward investment –and the type of investment the borough can realistically attract 	<p>Business Growth Officer</p>	<p>Consultants were commissioned at the end of February and the strategy will be ready in June-July 2014 (unfortunately this is late but when the first EOI was sent out we did not get a suitable calibre of responses to take the project forward).</p>
8	<p>Recommendation 8 That Cabinet undertake an appraisal of the opportunities for exploiting the SW19 brand to attract investment to the borough, working with the Wimbledon Business Improvement District, to develop a partnership led</p>	<p>A future Wimbledon Conference took place on 17th October 2013. Information collected from businesses and developers at the event will be included in the Councils overall Inward Investment Strategy and</p>	<p>Paul McGarry futureMerton</p>	<p>April 2014 – Wimbledon and the SW19 offer will be a major element of the overall Inward Investment and Business Retention Strategy (IIBRS).</p>

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	strategic vision for the borough.	Action Plan (IISAP). futureMerton work closely with LoveWimbledon (Wimbledon BID) and the Head of Sustainable Communities sits on the BID Board so partnership is well established and any ideas on promoting SW19 within our forthcoming IISAP are/will be in consultation with LoveWimbledon.		
9	Recommendation 9 That Cabinet consider the feasibility of offering business rate incentives and more flexible packages to attract investment into the borough.	futureMerton and Revenue & Benefits have developed policy and eligibility criteria for the new Business Rate “ Discount” scheme. The proposals are pending approval. In addition, advice on business rate (including rate relief) is advertised on the Council’s website as well as the new futureMerton brochure on business support and finance for Merton businesses.	David Keppler, Head of Revenue & Benefits.	Nov 2013 - This policy has now been agreed by CMT. A scheme is in place offering business rates discounts to those that meet the eligibility criteria. This will be on the council’s website by end of March 2014.
10	Recommendation 10 That Cabinet, in consultation with local businesses, considers the	Business consultation training needs exercise to be undertaken. MAE have	Yvonne Tomlin MAE	February 2014 - Formal consultation with

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	<p>viability of offering additional courses/training that meet employer demand and may increase the employment opportunities of residents in the borough. The Task Group acknowledges that any delivery model and the courses that will be delivered are part of a wider Cabinet decision on the outcomes of the Public Value Review being undertaken of Merton Adult Education. (MAE)</p>	<p>engaged with the Tesco South Kensington and New Malden branches regarding IT and ESOL training for staff</p>		<p>businesses has not commenced as yet. MAE will design a questionnaire to be disseminated in April 2014.</p> <p>Much networking has been undertaken to capture some training needs.</p>
11	<p>Recommendation 11 That Cabinet explore the possibility of offering an enhanced set of courses and qualifications that are more attractive to employers for example, offering bespoke training to local companies or diplomas that enable students to graduate and move into the second year of a degree programme.</p>	<p>Discussion underway with the Higher Education Funding council regarding degree programmes.</p> <p>Consultation on the types of courses required will be integrated in the survey in point 10.</p> <p>Bespoke Adult Social Care courses being developed for launch in the new year. The service has undergone a staffing re-structure whereby new commercially focused sales roles have been established.</p>	<p>Yvonne Tomlin MAE</p>	<p>May 2014 -</p> <p>Meeting with ABE. a business focused examination body, scheduled to take place in March 2014</p> <p>Two report writing courses have been developed one focused on Social Workers the other a more generic audience. The course has been developed in partnership with 'Create Expectation'. The first course is due to launch in May 2014.</p> <p>Further social media, marketing and business courses under</p>

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				development, with plans to launch in June.
12	Recommendation 12 That Cabinet support the development of the Merton Adult Education service as a commercial brand, alongside longer term work on further developing the reputation and provision of MAE.	Development and implementation of commercial business plans.	Yvonne Tomlin	Dec 2013 - The service has completed the Target Operating Model (TOM) exercise and produced action plans for the commercial short courses.
13	Recommendation 13 That Cabinet consider setting up a virtual Merton Business School that will support Merton residents and existing and prospective businesses.	MAE will develop further for possible implementation in 2015	Yvonne Tomlin	April 2015 – No current update
14	Recommendation 14 That Cabinet agree to Merton Adult Education (MAE) becoming accredited to deliver higher level qualifications and to engaging local in the delivery of these courses.	Discussion underway with the Higher Education Funding council regarding degree programmes. Currently delivering the CELTA Cambridge higher level qualification	Yvonne Tomlin	May 2014 - MAE is exploring extending the curriculum offer to include Access Courses/ ABE offer degree level courses, a meeting is scheduled for March 2014.
15	Recommendation 15 That Council endorse the development and refresh of the Adult Skills Strategy and engage	The current Employment and Skills Action Plan (2013-2014) is being implemented. It is proposed that an update report	Sara Williams futureMerton	A refreshed Plan will need to be prepared from mid 2014 with the proposed actions from January 2015 –

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	<p>futureMerton and partners in this process to make the relevant linkages in terms of economic development in the borough.</p>	<p>be presented for the first years activities to Cabinet in December/January 2014. Taking forward a further Plan beyond 2014 could require additional funds to be provided for activities to support the objectives and outputs.</p>		<p>The EWG have begun to consider priorities to take forward the action plan into 2015.</p>
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Notes:-

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